

THE RICHEY DOCTRINE

AP History Multiple Choice Strategy



The Multiple Choice portion of your AP History exam is an existential threat to your way of life. Here is how to contain it:

This Test is Four Things:

A Content test	<i>Do you know the material?</i>
A Comprehension Test	<i>Can you interpret source material?</i>
An Intuition Test	<i>Are you generally clever? Do you have intuition?</i>
A Preparedness Test	<i>Are you knowledgeable about the test format?</i>

The Multiple Choice section is made up of several “stimulus” items (predominantly text, but also includes charts, graphs, cartoons, photographs) which are each followed by 3-4 questions. You’ll need to do three things:

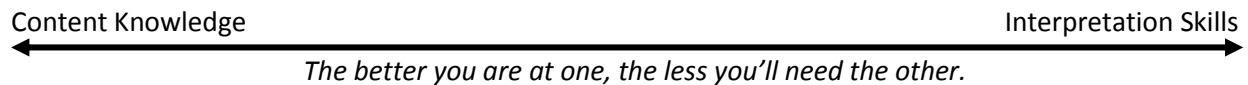
- 1) Examine the Document, then (one question at a time)
- 2) Read the Question Carefully and
- 3) Choose the Best Answer

WHEN EXAMINING THE DOCUMENT, CONSIDER:

1. The historical period, movement, or individual being discussed (all of the questions will address this topic)
2. The Speaker’s Point of View
3. What is the document’s *context*? This is often more important than the document’s *content*. A stimulus item is intended to *stimulate* knowledge that is already in your brain... if it’s there.

MINE the document.
Get what you’ll need to answer the questions and **ONLY** what you’ll need to answer the questions..

A SLIDING SCALE



The next part is to consider the QUESTION TYPE. For each question, determine whether the stimulus is:

NECESSARY (about 25%)

The question cannot be answered without the stimulus item, although it may require some additional outside knowledge. *This type of question is most likely to appear as the first item in the set.*

HELPFUL (about 25%)

The stimulus can be helpful in answering the question if the student is not knowledgeable about the particular topic. Students who have a lot of background knowledge and can apply it will not need the stimulus.

UNHELPFUL (about 50%)

The stimulus is simply a “window dressing” that could potentially distract you from considering what the question is really asking.

DON'T BE FOOLED! Often, this type of question makes a reference to the stimulus as if it matters. **IGNORE IT!**

*It would be helpful to write **N**, **H**, or **U** next to the question to get yourself in the right mindset, at least until it becomes second nature for you to go through this process with each question and intuitively see what kind of question it is. Remember the general principle that as the question set continues, the questions will generally be less directly dependent on the stimulus.*

ELIMINATE YOUR WAY TO THE CORRECT ANSWER.

There are THREE REASONS why a distractor (incorrect answer) would be incorrect:

OUT OF PERIOD

The distractor makes a correct statement but it's a century or more removed from the document.

Sometimes, something from an adjacent period may be valid if the question is about causation.

IRRELEVANT

The distractor is in the same time period as the question and makes a correct statement, but it is not relevant to the question.

*When you see the word **directly**, be on the lookout for irrelevant answers.*

WRONG

The distractor makes a false statement that you know or believe (trust your instincts) to be untrue.

One of the keys to the multiple choice is realizing that not all incorrect answers are wrong.

*It would be helpful to write **O**, **I**, or **W** next to each eliminated distractor instead of a / or an X.*

Answers that meet the above criteria should be eliminated first, then

1. **Consider the remaining choices.** (There should be one or two left in most cases.)
2. **Pick the better answer.** (Sometimes, you will have to guess. It's okay!)

DIRECT CAUSE AND EFFECT:

The new questions seem to use the word **DIRECT** a lot in reference to cause and effect. Be wary of this.

HISTORICAL THINKING SKILLS:

The new questions emphasize historical thinking skills (comparison, cause and effect, continuity and change, periodization) so be ready to use these skills when tackling these questions.

DO THE QUESTIONS IN ORDER:

I'm still testing this hypothesis, but I think that the questions start with a more basic assessment and move on to more interpretive questions *and the answers you give to one of the first questions might affect how you approach the questions that follow.* It looks to be the case that you should ALWAYS answer the questions in order (because they build upon each other).

EXAMPLE: Fall 2014 Sample APUSH Questions Period 1-5 (Look at question 1 and question 3)

There should NEVER be a case when this would work in reverse (e.g., when AP would design a question set so that it benefits you to answer the questions out of the order that they are presented to you on the test?).

A FEW MORE WORDS OF ADVICE:

FINISH THE JOB

You don't have time to look at a question twice.
Help is not on the way.
Every resource you will have is in front of you.
You either know it or you don't.

QUICKLY!

You need to be 100% focused at all times on the task at hand.

BE WILLING TO BE WRONG. You will leave soldiers on the field. Trying to get every item right and spending too much time on a difficult question could end up working against you because you may not have time to answer the questions you DO know.

50/50 Chance – You won't get it right every time but will a good bit of the time.

DON'T SECOND GUESS First, you don't have time. Second, you should NEVER change an answer unless you're 100% sure your original answer was wrong – and if that's the case, you shouldn't have picked that answer in the first place.

If you have prepared for the test and know the content, you need to TRUST YOURSELF. If you don't know enough about the content of this test to be able to trust your instincts, then it's no use second guessing yourself... because you're going to fail anyway.

NEED PRACTICE? My friends at [Albert.io](https://albert.io) have created hundreds of great questions in the style of the questions you will find on your AP History exam. For a discount code, [visit my website](#).



My [Romulus](#) review apps for US and European History have hundreds of practice questions to review the content you'll need to master in order to be successful on multiple choice exams. Romulus US History and Romulus European History are both available at the App Store!

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