

Section II, Part B

Long Essay Question 2 Commentary

Overview

This question asks students to consider the causes and degree of change and continuity over time in labor systems in colonial British North America. Students must write an essay that contains a plausible thesis, makes a persuasive argument about the degree and causes of change and continuity in the period, and synthesizes the information to make a larger argument about American history. This question primarily assesses student understanding of events in Periods 2 (1607–1754) and 3 (1754–1800); the theme of Work, Exchange and Technology; and the historical thinking skill of awareness of historical continuity and change over time, historical argumentation, and synthesis.

Sample: 2A

Score: 6

A. Thesis (+1 point):

This essay earns the thesis point. The first paragraph implies a continuity in growth in population while stating clear changes. This idea is fleshed out in the last paragraph of the essay, which states a fully developed thesis that addresses both continuity and change. In the last paragraph, the essay directly addresses continuity in stating, “it was a constant throughout the colonies for poor white families to be farming just to feed themselves” and it also specifies the changes.

B. Support for Argument (+2 points):

This essay relates factual historical continuities in the fur trade and various ways in which some colonists supported themselves in a subsistence fashion (farming and fishing) throughout the colonial period. The essay further develops an extensive argument about change in the plantation labor system, from mostly using indentured servants to mostly using enslaved labor. The essay earns two points because of the direct links established between the evidence and trans-Atlantic interactions.

C. Application of targeted historical thinking skill (+2 points):

This essay earns two points for applying the historical thinking skill of analyzing continuity and change over time through explanation of historical examples of both continuities (methods of fur traders and subsistence farming) and change (the change to slave labor).

D. Synthesis (+1 point):

This essay qualifies for a synthesis point by referencing the Caribbean to make a larger argument about American history. This reference also represents an extra geographical region not explicitly called for by the prompt.

Sample: 2B**Score: 4****A. Thesis (+1 point):**

In the first paragraph this essay states a clear change by discussing the introduction of slaves into the colonies and a clear continuity by discussing the ongoing importations of indentured servants. The paragraph also links both situations to trans-Atlantic interactions.

B. Support for Argument (+1 point):

This essay earns one point for outlining some general factual historical information about servitude (connected to continuity) and slavery (connected to change), but it makes no substantive linkages to trans-Atlantic interactions and describes rather than argues. The essay does not introduce additional historical examples.

C. Application of targeted historical thinking skill (+1 point):

This essay earns one point for basic application of the skill of continuity and change over time by describing both a change and a continuity. The essay would have to offer more analysis of the degree and causes of continuity and change by making stronger connections to trans-Atlantic interactions. The essay makes broad, vague generalizations and would need specific supporting examples to earn the second point in this category.

D. Synthesis (+1 point):

This essay earns the synthesis point by referencing a different time period by noting the persistence of the slave labor system “until passage of the 14th Amendment, which gave African Americans ‘equal protection under the law.’” While the 13th Amendment might have been the historically preferable reference in terms of ending the slave labor system, the essay still earns the synthesis point for connecting the topic of the essay to a relevant later period or event.

Sample: 2C**Score: 1****A. Thesis (+0 points):**

This essay merely restates the prompt without introducing anything to indicate specific arguments about trans-Atlantic interactions and continuity and change and therefore earns no point in the thesis category.

B. Support for Argument (+1 point):

This essay includes correct historical information (triangular trade, slaves from Africa and the West Indies, and cash crops) pertinent to relevant arguments. However, it does not make clear and consistent connections between this information and the way in which it supports relevant arguments, falling short of clear linkages to the thesis.

C. Application of targeted historical thinking skill (+0 points):

This essay does discuss change (slavery) but lacks any discussion of continuity connected to trans-Atlantic exchanges or labor systems. In order to earn one point for applying the skill of continuity and change, the essay must discuss BOTH continuity and change.

D. Synthesis (+0 points):

No synthesis point is earned, as the essay does not extend its thesis, introduce an additional category of analysis, or connect its argument to other periods of United States history.