

Historical Themes: “BAGPIPE”

Just as each question on the AP exam deals with one or more of the historical thinking skills, it also relates to one or more of seven historical themes. The seven themes address broad, recurring concerns in U.S. history. They help you think about how political, economic, and cultural institutions, along with foreign relations, developed and changed over more than five centuries. The themes also include the study of interactions with the natural environment, effects of internal and external migration on people, and changes in national and group identities.

The tracing of multiple themes through each period of U.S. history is an effective way to study and review both during the course and before the AP exam. A thematic approach encourages one to think about specific events in a larger framework and to make judgments about continuity and change over time, comparison, and contextualization.

Beliefs: Culture and Society

This theme focuses on the roles that ideas, beliefs, social mores, and creative expression have played in shaping the US, as well as how various identities, cultures, and values have been preserved or changed in different contexts in US History. Learning objectives include being able to explain how 1) religious groups and ideas have affected American society and political life; 2) artistic, philosophical, and scientific ideas have developed and shaped society and institutions; 3) ideas about women's rights and gender roles have affected society and politics; and 4) different group identities, including racial, ethnic, class, and regional identities, have emerged and changed over time.

America in the World: Global Context

This theme focuses on the interactions between nations that affected North American history in the colonial period, and on the influence of the US in world affairs. Learning objectives include being able to: 1) explain how cultural interaction, cooperation, competition, and conflict between empires, nations, and peoples have influenced political, economic, and social developments in North America; and 2) analyze the reasons for and results of US diplomatic economic, and military initiatives in North America and overseas.

Geography and the Environment

This theme focuses on the role of geography and both the natural and human-made environments on social and political developments in what would become the US. The learning objective include being able to: 1) explain how geographic and environmental factors shaped the development of various communities; and 2) analyze how competition for and debates over natural resources have affected both interactions among different groups and the development of government policies.

Peopling: Migration and Settlement

This theme focuses on why and how the various people who moved to and within the US both adapted to and transformed their new social and physical environments. The learning objectives include being able to: 1) explain the causes of migration to colonial North America, and later, the US, and analyze immigration's effects on US society; and 2) analyze causes of internal migration and patterns of settlement in what would become the US, and explain how migration has affected American life.

Identity: American and National Identity

This theme focuses on how and why definitions of American and national identity and values have developed, as well as on related topics such as citizenship, constitutionalism, foreign policy, assimilation, and American exceptionalism. The learning objectives include being able to: 1) explain how ideas about democracy, freedom, and individualism found expression in the development of cultural values, political institutions, and American identity; 2) explain how interpretations of the Constitution and debates over rights, liberties, and definitions of citizenship have affected American values, politics, and society; 3) analyze how ideas about national identity changed in response to US involvement in international conflicts and the growth of the US; and 4) analyze relationships among different regional, social, ethnic and racial groups, and explain how these groups' experiences have related to US national identity.

Politics and Power

This theme focuses on how different social and political groups have influenced society and government in the US, as well as how political beliefs and institutions have changed over time. Learning objectives include being able to explain: 1) how and why political ideas, beliefs, institutions, party systems, and alignments have developed and changed; 2) how popular movements, reform efforts, and activist groups have sought to change American society and institutions; and 3) how different beliefs about the federal government's role in US social and economic life have affected political debates and policies.

Economics: Exchange, Work, and Technology

This theme focuses on the factors behind the development of systems of economic exchange, particularly the role of technology, economic markets, and government.

BAGPIPE

One way to remember these themes is the acronym "BAGPIPE". This stands for Beliefs: Culture and Society (B), America in the World (A), Geography and Environment (G), Peopling: Migration and Settlement (P), Identity: American and National (I), Politics and Power (P), and Economics: Work, Exchange, and Technology (E).

Beliefs (Culture & Society)	America in the World (Global)	Geography & Environment	Peopling (Migration & Settlement)	Identity (American & National)	Politics & Power	Economics (E, W, & T)
Art	Competition for Resources	Climate	Impact of immigration on society	Assimilation	Authority & power	Agriculture
Cultural values	Diplomacy	Geography	Movement to, from, and within the US	Gender and gender roles	Citizenship	Capitalism (free markets)
Ideologies	Expansion & Imperialism	Environment (natural & man-made)	Nativism	National and regional identities	Federalism	Commerce and trade
Literature	Global conflicts	Exchanges of plants, animals, & disease		Nationalism and patriotism	Liberty and rights	Communism and socialism
Morality and moral values	Global communication & trade	Natural resources		Racial and ethnic identities	Political process	Labor systems
Philosophy	Foreign policy			Socioeconomic class	Role of government in society	Land distribution
Popular culture	US economic role in developing countries				Role of political parties	Manufacturing
Religion	US military role in developing countries					Technology and innovations
Science	World wars					Transportation

