

Writing the Essays

OVERVIEW

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Section II of the AP U.S. Government & Politics Test consists of four essay questions. You will have 100 minutes to answer all questions. There are no optional questions in this test; all four questions are mandatory. Together, these essays make up 50 percent of your score. Of course you want to earn a 9 on each of the essays, but you don't need to score that high to earn a 5 for your composite score. To perform well on the essay portion, you need to plan and practice now so that on the day of the test, you will have the self-confidence to excel, not panic.

NOTE

Check the “Study Plans for the AP U.S. Government & Politics Test,” in Chapter 1.

PRACTICE PLAN

This chapter will help you to understand what the data-based and the free-response questions require and how to answer each type of question. You will have an opportunity to review the specifics of good essay writing and to learn some helpful techniques to use when you take the test. You will also practice writing sample essays and then use the rubric, or scoring guide, to pinpoint your weaknesses and to improve your writing skills as you tackle each new practice essay.

Use the practice tests as tools to improve your writing too. Apply the techniques described in this chapter to plan and write each essay within 25 minutes, the approximate time allowed per question on the actual Advanced Placement test. When you have completed the essays, turn to the Answer Key and Explanations section following each test. First, score your essay with the Self-Evaluation Rubric. Then, compare your work against the list of suggested points that you might have discussed in your essay. Look for your weak points and ask yourself how you can improve. Take several of the points from the list and rework your essay using those points to strengthen ineffective areas.

Reevaluate your essay. Again compare the points you made with the ones we suggest. Were you better able to dissect the question and discern what was required to answer it more effectively? By using our suggestions, did you improve your response by writing a more focused and more clearly developed answer? Ask yourself how much your work improved. Determine any remaining weak points and concentrate on improving them in subsequent essays.

Don't continue to revise your essay. You will not have the opportunity to polish your work to perfection on the test, and the evaluators know that you cannot write a perfect essay in 25 minutes. The purpose of reworking a practice essay is to help you pinpoint what the question is really asking and how you can best answer it with a clear, coherent, and unified essay. Keep in mind what you learned on your first attempt at the essay. Then go to the next essay question and repeat the process, building confidence as you go in your analytical skills and your ability to develop effective essays.

TIP

Use a watch to pace yourself as you write the practice essays. That way you will become comfortable with the time limit of the test.

BASIC INFORMATION ABOUT SECTION II

- Section II contains four essay questions, all of which you must answer.
- You have 100 minutes to write your responses, so you should allow about 25 minutes for each question.
- Most essays ask you to analyze, assess, or evaluate an aspect of government or politics.
- Essay questions may be based on:
 - A formal thesis

- An introductory statement that lists the tasks you must answer
- Data (charts, graphs, tables, quotations, political cartoons)
- Each essay is scored from 1 to 9, with 9 being the highest.
- The readers, using a scoring guide developed by the College Board, evaluate each of the essays holistically.
- The essays together account for 50 percent of your final composite score.
- The essays will not have a single correct answer. Your answers will come from what you have learned in class. In addition, the essays often ask for your point of view, which you must support with evidence.

SOME PRACTICAL ADVICE

If you consider these facts, you will realize that you need to do some planning and practicing. Since you have 100 minutes to write four essays, you cannot spend half the time on one essay and leave only 50 minutes for the remaining three. When you write the practice essays in this book, take 3 to 4 minutes to read the question and any data carefully and then plan what you will say. Use the remaining 20 minutes to write your essay and the final minute for a quick revision.

Although you must answer all four questions, begin with the essay that seems easiest. It will build your confidence. Because your four essays will be read by four different people, you do not have to worry that one weak essay will pull down the scores for the other three essays. Instead, you can be confident that your clear, coherent, unified—and neatly written—essays will stand out.

WHAT TO EXPECT IN THE AP ESSAYS

The essay questions you will have to answer will probably remind you of ones you have worked with in your AP class. You must discuss major issues in U.S. government and politics, and most essay questions will ask you to evaluate, assess, or analyze. Many questions relate to the formulation and implementation of public policy and the issues surrounding that process. Recent tests have included essay questions on a number of topics:

- The balance of powers at the federal level
- Implementation of public policy by the federal bureaucracy in relation to lobbies and special interest groups; how special interest groups accomplish their goals through electoral process and lobbying

NOTE

If you answer more than half the multiple-choice questions correctly and score in the middle or higher on the essays, you will receive at least a 3.

ALERT!

While neatness and legible handwriting do not count, they do matter. If graders have difficulty reading your responses, they may tend to undervalue your essay.

- Differences between the Democratic and Republican Parties, especially in relation to public policy
- The relationship of voter characteristics to political party; socioeconomic, ethnic, age, and gender base of the electorate for each party
- Recent trend of women's involvement in politics
- Impact of increasing political participation by ethnic groups on economic policy, politics, and social policy
- Civil liberties; legislation and Supreme Court decisions as well as social and political factors countering efforts to end discrimination
- Balancing the budget versus actual budget policies
- Changes in the importance and influence of the party system
- Iron triangles or subgovernments
- Supreme Court decisions and their relationship to public policy
- Your view of political parties since the 1960 elections

In addition to knowing likely topics that you may encounter in the essay questions, it is useful to know key phrases that you are likely to find.

Some Key Terms Used in the Essay Questions

KEY PHRASES FOR ESSAY QUESTIONS		
Phrase	Task	Example
To what extent	Explain relationship and role	To what extent have special interest groups influenced the development and implementation of federal policies?
Evaluate the claim	Determine the validity	Evaluate the statement that an individual's vote is no longer important in the governmental process.
Assess the accuracy	Determine the truth of the statement	Assess the accuracy of the statement that the media, not platforms, determine elections.
Critically evaluate evidence that both supports and refutes	Give examples that agree and disagree	Critically evaluate evidence that both supports and refutes the statement that the Supreme Court has infringed upon the powers of the legislative branch of government through its decisions.

KEY PHRASES FOR ESSAY QUESTIONS— <i>continued</i>		
Phrase	Task	Example
Define and evaluate the contention	Give a definition and analyze the point of view	Define the term <i>iron triangles</i> and evaluate the thesis that the impact of iron triangles is more negative than positive.
Analyze the effects	Evaluate the impact	Analyze the effects of the aging population on public policy.
Compare the strengths and the weaknesses	Show differences	Compare the strengths and weaknesses of third parties in presidential elections.
Explain	Offer meaning, cause, effect, influence	Explain the impact of public opinion on policy implementation related to health care and social security.
Discuss	Give examples that illustrate	Discuss the nature of federalism and the impact of its changing nature on unfounded mandates.

Specifically About Data-Based Essay Questions

As we have mentioned, you are likely to find a data-based essay on the exam. These questions use statistical data in various formats, political cartoons, and perhaps a quotation as the basis for your writing. The data you may be asked to write about may be in the form of:

- A chart, graph, or table of government data or public opinion survey results
- A diagram
- A drawing
- A historical or contemporary political cartoon
- A quotation or short excerpt
- A flowchart
- Political campaign material

No matter what kind of stimulus is used, you must analyze, interpret, and often evaluate the material while incorporating it into a discussion of U.S. government and politics. Using your analytical skills, you must draw conclusions relating the data to the question and fitting the data into its governmental or political context.

Some of the phrases you might encounter in a data-based question:

- Identify trends
- Explain

TIP

While a data-based essay may not require a formal thesis statement, it is a good idea to write one.

- Using the data, identify/describe/explain
- Give similarities and differences
- Give an argument supporting or refuting a position
- Identify/explain/describe the point of view of the writer/artist/cartoonist

In planning and writing your data-based response, follow the suggestions in this chapter. The format and techniques for the data-based essay are the same as for the other essays. The major difference is that you need to be sure to include evidence from the data to support your contentions when you write your data-based essay.

Understanding the Directions

The directions for Section II will read something like this:

Directions: You have 100 minutes to answer all four of the following questions. It is suggested that you take a few minutes to outline each answer. Spend approximately one fourth of your time (25 minutes) on each question. Support the ideas in your essays with substantive examples where appropriate. Make sure to number each of your responses with the number corresponding to the question.

Nothing in the directions should surprise you since you have already familiarized yourself with Section II's requirements by reading this chapter. However, by examining the instructions you will discover what the College Board finds important. The fact that the instructions mention outlining indicates how vital the College Board considers planning.

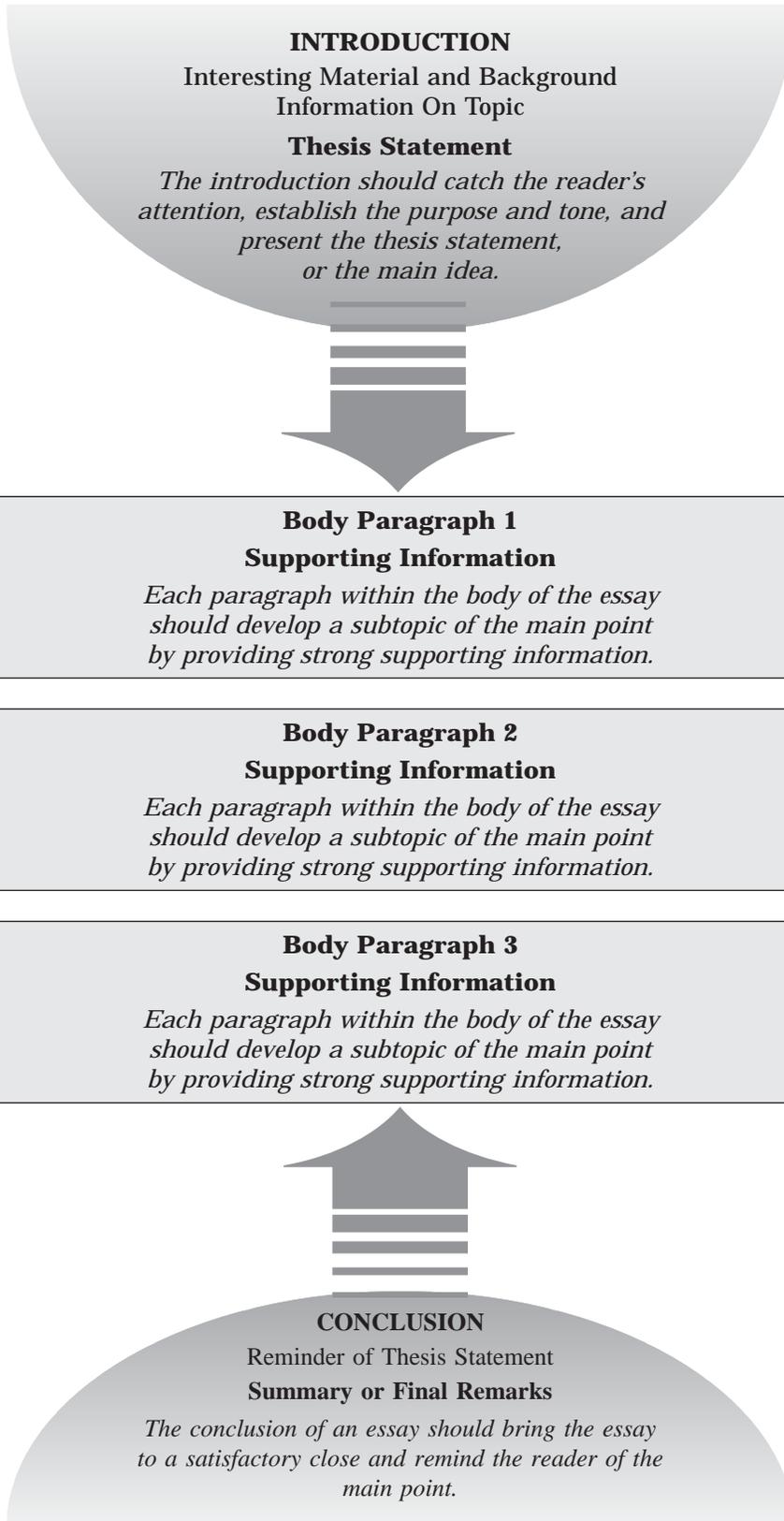
Note that the directions suggest spending about 25 minutes on each essay. Why? All four essays are equally important. If you manage your time as suggested, you will not lose points for an incomplete answer on your fourth response. Finally, the directions tell you to support your ideas with evidence. Without support, even the most insightful comments will be given minimal credit.

THE ESSAY: A QUICK REVIEW

You will recall that an essay is a group of paragraphs that work together to present a main point, or thesis. An essay contains an introductory paragraph, separate paragraphs that develop the thesis, and a concluding paragraph. You can see the parts of a five-paragraph essay—the beginning, called the introduction; the middle, called the body; and the ending, called the conclusion—on the next page.

Not all of your AP essays may require five paragraphs and one or two of your essays may have more than three body paragraphs. However, keeping this structure in mind will give you direction and help you organize your essay.

Writing an Outstanding Essay



WRITING AN OUTSTANDING ESSAY

TIP

Spending a little more time on your opening paragraph and your conclusion. You want to make a good first and last impression on your reader.

As obvious as it seems, you accomplish the results you want—a good score—not only by demonstrating your knowledge of U.S. government and politics but also by communicating your expertise in a well-constructed essay. You may have to plan and write your essays in a short period of time, but the characteristics of these essays are no different from those of any good writing: unity, coherence, and adequate development. First, you must determine your audience. Second, you need to establish your purpose. Third, you have to choose the appropriate tone. You can determine these three elements with a great deal of certainty even before you see the questions.

Audience

You have an audience of one—a College Board-trained reader who teaches high school or college U.S. government and who will be reading hundreds of papers similar to yours. He or she will have a scoring guide, or rubric, to aid in evaluating your paper. He or she will score your essay holistically—that is, there is no single score for things like content, grammar, and punctuation. The reader will consider every aspect of your writing for its contribution to the overall impression your essay makes.

NOTE

We provide a rubric at the end of this chapter and answer suggestions to help you prepare. Our rubric singles out the various descriptors so you can pinpoint your weaknesses to work on and increase your overall score.

Purpose

Your purpose is to get a score of 5 or better. To do that, you need to write a unified, coherent, and consistent essay that answers the question. A well-written essay that misses the point of the question will not get you a good score. That is why you need to read this chapter.

Tone

Your tone is the reflection of your attitude toward the subject of the essay. A writer's tone, for example, may be lighthearted, brusque, or serious. The safest tone to adopt is formal and persuasive, since you are often asked to take a position and support it. You do not want to be stuffy and pretentious by using phrases such as “one understands” or “we can surmise.” On the other hand, do not be too casual either by writing things like “you know what I mean.” Most students, however, err on the side of “faux” erudition, using big words and convoluted constructions. When in doubt, write what you mean simply and directly.

Style

Remember, you can determine your tone even before you walk into the testing venue. Perhaps you are wondering how to create that proper tone. You achieve the tone you want through style. Your style should be your own natural style that you use for school essays. That means:

- Using proper grammar and punctuation
- Choosing words that convey your meaning in an interesting rather than a pedestrian or vague way: “The outcome hinges on the Whip’s ability to corral enough

votes from the party's mavericks" versus "The Whip must try to convince the recalcitrant members of her party."

- Avoiding the use of several words when one will do: "There were a number of factors involved that added to the problem . . ." versus "The four factors most responsible for the problem were . . ."
- Avoiding hackneyed phrases and clichés such as "The candidate was on cloud nine as she accepted her party's nomination" versus "The candidate was smiling and waving at the delegates."

Your style adds interest to the paper. Fresh words and phrasing as much as a unique point of view about a subject can make a paper interesting to read.

Unity and Coherence

Unity is extremely important to ensure that you communicate effectively. Unity is another word for clarity. A unified paper is one that is clearly developed. Each paragraph has a topic sentence, and every sentence in the paragraph relates to every other and adds to the development of the topic sentence.

In the same way, each paragraph relates to every other, and every paragraph supports the overall thesis. This means, of course, that you need a thesis to develop. This chapter will help you with developing thesis statements that answer the essay questions.

Remember that your thesis statement contains the central argument that you have developed from brainstorming ideas to answer the essay question. As the *Harbrace College Handbook*, that venerable college English manual, states: "[Your thesis statement] is basically a claim statement; that is, it indicates what you claim to be true, interesting, or valuable about your subject."

Although you can place your thesis statement anywhere in your essay, it is probably safest to put it in the first paragraph, so you can refer to it as you write to be sure that everything you are writing develops and supports it. Putting the thesis first also gets you started writing.

Adequate Development

What is adequate development? You have a limited time to read and plan and then develop your ideas—neatly. The five-paragraph structure presented earlier will give you a format to work with: a one-paragraph introduction, a three-paragraph middle, and a one-paragraph ending. In the body of the essay, develop only one idea for each paragraph, and be sure to include information from your own experience and reading where relevant. You may need more than three paragraphs in the body of the essay to make your points, but this format provides a framework to begin.

You may be wondering why we include all this information about writing when the test is about U.S. government. Remember that you must show the evaluators you can work at a college level. Knowledge about the workings of government is not enough. You must communicate to your readers what you know and understand. Graders are not mind readers. If you cannot write the information in a comprehensible manner, you cannot demonstrate your expertise. A well-written essay that clearly communicates your knowledge and the position you are supporting will impress the evaluators and earn you a high score.

TECHNIQUES FOR ACING SECTION II

You have reviewed the elements of a good essay, learned what topics you are likely to find, and discovered what form the questions may take. Here are specific techniques to help you ace Section II. The following advice works both for essay prompts that use a visual or data as the stimulus and those that present you with a statement or situation to analyze or evaluate.

Planning Your Essay

- Read the question carefully. If it is a data-based question, examine the cartoon, graph, chart, or quotation.
- Determine if you are required to give an opinion.
- Underline what the question is asking you to do (compare, contrast, analyze, assess, and so on). Circle any terms, events, and people that the question mentions.
- For a data-based question, also underline significant points in the data, including the title and any parameters given (span of years, type of data such as revenue, labels for x - and y -axes, and so on).
- Restate to yourself what the question is asking. Look at your underlining to verify that you understand what you are to do.
- Do not take time to write a formal outline, but make a list by brainstorming all the ideas and supporting evidence as well as counterarguments that come to mind as you read.
- If the question asks you to compare and contrast data or argue pros and cons, create a table to list the information.
- Be sure to include relevant outside information, especially for any data-based questions.
- Create a thesis statement from the ideas you generated.
- Turn this brainstorm into an informal working plan by numbering the items that you want to include in your essay in the order in which you want to include them. Do not be afraid to cross out some that no longer apply now that you have a thesis.

NOTE

Use the test booklet to jot down your quick list.

TIP

One way to write a thesis statement is to restate the question as a definitive statement.

Writing Your Essay

- Begin writing your first paragraph by stating the thesis clearly. Take a minute or two to be sure that you are writing a clearly stated and interesting introduction.
- Once you have written the first paragraph, read it to be sure that your ideas follow one another logically and that they support the thesis.
- Write a transition into the second paragraph. Check your list of ideas.
- Use the vocabulary of political science, but do not overdo it or use words with definitions you are not sure of. Using the terminology of the subject lets your reader know that you are comfortable and familiar with the subject.
- Define your terms as you use them and any terms that have several denotations or connotations.
- Use transitions.
- Write one paragraph for each major idea or concept. Include examples to substantiate the points you make in the paragraph.
- Keep writing until you have used all the RELEVANT ideas on your list. Check how well you are doing at incorporating supporting evidence and refuting counterarguments.
- Allow time to write a solid concluding paragraph. There are several ways to approach the conclusion: rephrasing the thesis, answering the questions by summarizing the main points of your argument, referring in some way back to your opening paragraph, or using an appropriate quotation.

Revising and Proofreading

- Pace yourself so that you have at least 1 or 2 minutes to proofread your essay and revise if necessary. Cross out any irrelevant ideas or words and make any additions—neatly. If you have been following your plan to develop your thesis, this time should be spent making sure your grammar and mechanics are correct and your handwriting is legible.

Your final product should include the following:

- A solid introductory statement: formal thesis, explanation of what is asked of you, references to the data
- Adequate support
- Specific examples as support
- A response that answers the question completely and accurately
- Satisfactory concluding remarks

NOTE

Transitions are words or phrases that connect sentences and paragraphs; for example, words such as *second*, *in the third place*, *in addition*, *moreover*, *however*, *more importantly*, *next*.

TIP

If you think of additional ideas as you write, quickly jot them down in the margin or by your quick list. That way you will not lose your train of thought. Then, you can include the new ideas where appropriate.

TIP

Take a watch on testing day to ensure you keep within the time frame.

A WORD OF CAUTION

You have now read extensively about what to do when writing the free-response essays. The following are some suggestions about what not to do:

- Do not write an improbable or vague or unrelated thesis.
- Do not be wordy in an effort to appear knowledgeable and impress the readers. They won't be.
- Do not make unsupported statements.
- Do not include irrelevant data, no matter how interesting.
- Do not use incorrect information. If you are not sure of some of your facts, leave them out.
- Do not use your opinions, thoughts, and feelings as fact. Express your opinion only when asked, and then support it with evidence.

TIP

Don't panic. Everyone will be as nervous as you. If you draw a blank, take a deep breath, think about the topic, and jot down anything that comes to mind about the subject. That will help get you over your nervousness.

A WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT

Your readers know that the writing time is limited, so you cannot produce four perfect, insightful, groundbreaking, definitive essays. They are looking for responses that show you have the ability and knowledge to produce college-level work. You will do well on your free-response essays if you:

- Address the question
- Define your terms
- Thoroughly explain the issues
- Express yourself clearly and logically
- Support your position with evidence
- Recognize other points of view

NOTE

Express your personal opinion where appropriate, but be sure to support it with evidence.

PRACTICING

Using what you have studied in your AP class and what you have learned in this chapter, practice writing the following four essays. Do one at a time. Evaluate each one using the Self-Evaluation Rubric at the end of the chapter. Then review the suggestions we provide and revise your essay once using points from our list to strengthen your position.

EXERCISE 1

SUGGESTED TIME—25 MINUTES

Directions: You are to answer the following question. In writing your essay, you should use specific examples to support your answer.

Since *Marbury v. Madison*, the Supreme Court has often embraced the principle of judicial activism. Define “judicial activism” and use one of the following cases to analyze the effect of judicial activism on public policy.

Virginia v. United States (1995)

Shaw v. Hunt (1996)

Reno v. American Civil Liberties Union (1996)

Printz v. United States (1997)

EXERCISE 2

SUGGESTED TIME—25 MINUTES

Directions: You are to answer the following question. In writing your essay, you should use specific examples to support your answer.

In recent years, critics have suggested that the United States adopt a parliamentary structure in order to be a better, more responsive government. Evaluate that contention by comparing the strengths and weaknesses of the governmental systems of democratic republics, such as the United States and France, and parliamentary democracies, such as Japan and Great Britain.

EXERCISE 3

SUGGESTED TIME—25 MINUTES

Directions: You are to answer the following question. In writing your essay, you should use specific examples to support your answer.

Answer the following question based on these statistics.

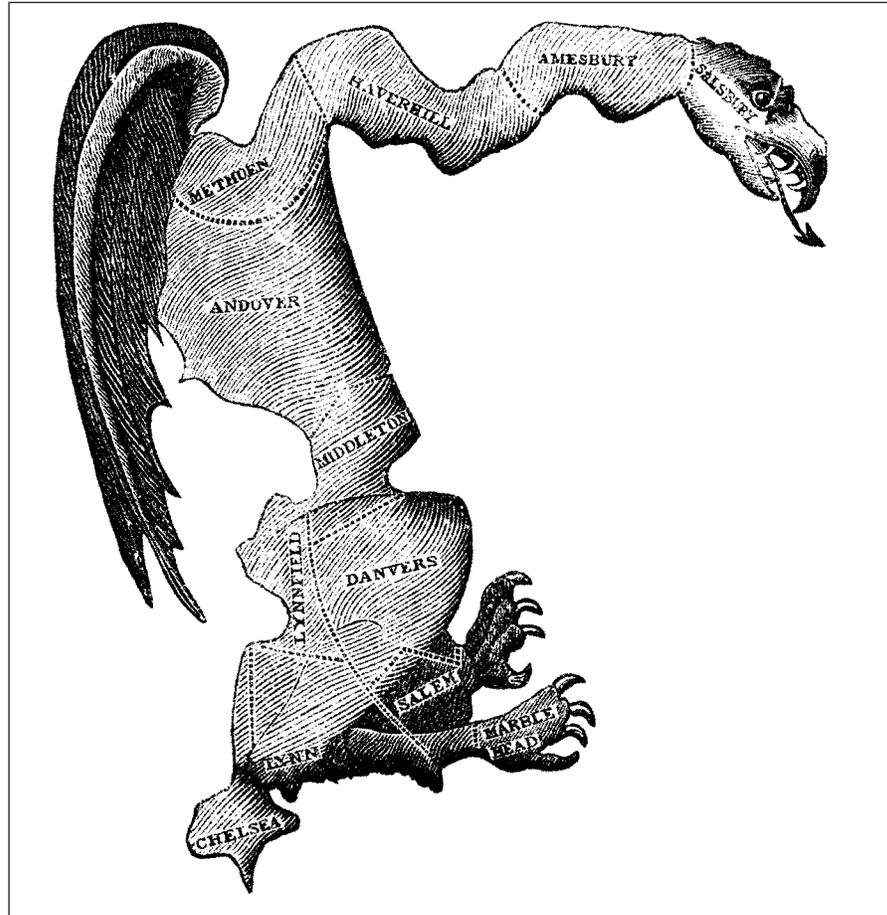
Nations Possessing Nuclear Weapons	Nations that May Have Nuclear Weapons
<i>United States*</i> <i>Russia*</i> <i>Great Britain</i> <i>France*</i> <i>China*</i> Belarus Kazakhstan* Ukraine* India Pakistan	Israel North Korea

Italics identify nations that ratified the nuclear nonproliferation treaty. The asterisk (*) identifies nations with 500 or more nuclear warheads.

Based on the data presented in this table, interpret the proliferation and probable proliferation of nuclear weapons and analyze the implications for the foreign policy of the United States.

EXERCISE 4*SUGGESTED TIME—25 MINUTES*

Directions: You are to answer the following question. In writing your essay, you should use specific examples to support your answer.



This cartoon was drawn in 1812. However, many people might feel that it still applies today. Analyze the cartoonist's point of view about gerrymandering, and discuss its relevance to the present.

SUGGESTIONS FOR EXERCISE 1

5 Steps to the Answer

- 1 Note that this question asks you to offer meaning, cause, effect, or influence as well as to define a term.
- 2 Think about what you know about judicial activism. Beginning with John Marshall's tenure, the Supreme Court has had a significant impact on public policy and has served an important role in the public arena. This is true of the court system in general.
- 3 Using the ideas you developed in your planning, create a thesis to serve as the core of your essay. Then select the three court cases that you know most thoroughly and that best support your thesis. Write about each one in a separate paragraph.
- 4 Write a thorough definition of judicial activism. Refer to earlier cases or include a brief history to add to your definition.
- 5 Write your essay using the organizing and writing suggestions contained in this chapter. Use transitional words and phrases to make your essay cohesive.

You might have chosen the following points to write about judicial activism and three of the cases listed. Consider them as you complete your self-evaluation.

Defining Judicial Activism

- The courts should play an active, creative role in shaping public policy.
- The courts should protect the long-range interests of the people against the short-range wishes of the government and, through them, the voters.
- The Constitution should be applied to important problems of social and political life.

Court Cases

Virginia v. United States (1995)

- Sex-discrimination case
- Virginia Military Institute (VMI), an all-male school
- A separate school for women existed
- Decision: VMI must admit women

Shaw v. Hunt (1996)

- First case to deal with minority gerrymandering
- Decision: Minority-majority gerrymandered districts declared unconstitutional

Reno v. American Civil Liberties Union (1996)

- First case to deal with the Internet
- Decision: Part of the Communications Decency Act held unconstitutional
- Guarantees of First Amendment extend to Internet

Printz v. United States (1997)

- According to the Brady Handgun Violence Protection Act, state and local law enforcement authorities were required to perform background checks on people purchasing handguns.
- Decision: That part of Brady Bill declared unconstitutional
- State and local officials could not be required by Congress to carry out a federal law.

SUGGESTIONS FOR EXERCISE 2

6 Steps to the Answer

- ① Note that your answer must compare and contrast forms of government.
- ② You are asked to discuss the aspects of republican democracy and parliamentary democracy and offer your own ideas about their strengths and weaknesses.
- ③ Using the ideas you developed in the planning stage, create a thesis expressing your opinion as the core of your essay. Key words here are *responsive* and *better*. You must consider whether a parliamentary system is more responsive and if it would make the government of the United States better.
- ④ To describe how the government would be more responsive and better, you need to define for yourself and then your reader what those two terms mean to you.
- ⑤ Since you will be writing an essay that compares and contrasts, determine if you will organize your response point-by-point or block style.
- ⑥ Interpret the data you present. Do not simply list them and explain them. Be sure to acknowledge the strengths of the opposing point of view. Consider doing so in the introductory paragraph or in the conclusion.

You might have chosen the following points about a republican democracy and a parliamentary democracy to compare and contrast. Consider them as you complete your self-evaluation.

GREAT BRITAIN	
Constitution	Only partially written; written parts called the laws of the constitution; unwritten parts called the conventions of the constitution; flexible, open to change
Head of State/Government	Hereditary ruler; a constitutional monarch, head of state, living symbol of Great Britain; prime minister as head of government
Legislative Branch	Bicameral; House of Lords, little power; House of Commons, popularly elected from districts; elections five years apart at the most
Executive Branch	Fused with the legislative branch; prime minister leader of majority party; selects cabinet
Elections	No fixed time; no more than five years apart; held when prime minister's party's chances of holding power are good or when government faces a loss of confidence
Other	Nine law lords serve as final court of appeals; do not possess power of judicial review

FRANCE

Constitution

Written constitution, its sixteenth

Head of State/Government

President true chief executive; chooses premier

Legislative Branch

Bicameral parliament; parliamentary power limited; some matters, such as defense, outside its jurisdiction; laws must be passed by both houses and signed by president

Executive Branch

Runs foreign affairs and commands the military; can call for a referendum on national issues; can use dictatorial authority in emergency; presides over cabinet meetings; can dissolve parliament and call for general elections; control over legislation in hands of the government

Elections

The Senate chosen by electoral college for nine-year terms; limited power to propose legislation; the National Assembly directly elected for five-year terms unless parliament is dissolved

JAPAN

Constitution

Written; extensive list of basic freedoms; antimilitary clause

Head of State/Government

Emperor head of state with no real power; prime minister head of government

Legislative Branch

Bicameral national Diet; upper house, called House of Councilors, serves an advisory role; lower house, called House of Representatives, has greater power; no-confidence vote forces prime minister to resign or dissolve government; can make treaties, raise and appropriate funds

Executive Branch

Prime minister must be member of Diet; prime minister and cabinet perform executive function; prime minister represents the majority party, appoints cabinet, can dissolve House of Representatives

Elections

House of Councilors serves six-year terms; three fifths elected from districts, two fifths from nation as a whole; House of Representatives serves terms of four years or less, elected by districts

Other

Bureaucracy wields great power, plays key role in economy; Japan practices consensus politics, politicians seek broad agreement on issues

THE UNITED STATES**Constitution**

Written constitution

Head of State/Government

President head of state and head of government

Legislative Branch

Bicameral: Senate and House of Representatives

Executive Branch

President, cabinet, and bureaucracy

Elections

Representatives every two years by districts; senators every six years by statewide election; president every four years by electoral college reflecting a popular vote

Other

Judicial branch separate; can review and overturn federal laws

SUGGESTIONS FOR EXERCISE 3

5 Steps to the Answer

- 1 Note that the question requires you to interpret, analyze, and evaluate the data on the chart.
- 2 Before you can present your thinking about how nations with nuclear weapons might affect U.S. foreign policy, you must describe and discuss what the data on the chart presents.
- 3 Then, you must discuss the implications of the chart for U.S. foreign policy, so you need to formulate your own point of view. Next, gather evidence from the chart and from your education, reading, and experience to offer as support for your opinions. Using the ideas you developed in the planning stage, create a thesis expressing your opinion as the core of your essay.
- 4 Since you will be writing an essay in which you present and support an opinion, your most effective organization is to discuss your ideas in the order of their importance, beginning with an explanation of the data and ending with your strongest argument. Then, write the essay.
- 5 Address the question again in your conclusion and consider including a policy solution or recommendation.

You might have chosen the following points about the implications of the nuclear powers chart on U.S. foreign policy. Consider them as you complete your self-evaluation.

- Many nations have signed the nuclear nonproliferation treaty, but the threat of nuclear disaster continues.
- At least five nations possessing nuclear weapons are not signatories, so their weapons are not inspected.
- Those that do not admit to having weapons are also a danger.
- Several nations with nuclear capacity have antipathy toward the United States and/or each other.
- Even signatories possess large numbers of nuclear weapons.
- The United States is allied with several nations that are capable of firing nuclear weapons, which means that the potential for U.S. involvement in nuclear conflict is strong.
- The potential for terrorist organizations gaining nuclear weapons is a danger.
- Nations such as Israel, India, and Pakistan refuse to sign the nonproliferation extension.

- The development of nuclear deterrents, mothballing, and aiding other nations in deactivating weapons all raise budget concerns—“guns versus butter” argument.
- Foreign policy questions arise from dealing with nations that refuse to follow the letter or spirit of nonproliferation treaty.
- Selling U.S. nuclear technology raises economic and foreign policy issues.

SUGGESTIONS FOR EXERCISE 4

5 Steps to the Answer

- ① Note that the question requires you to identify and explain the cartoonist's point of view and then discuss its relevance to the contemporary period.
- ② Remember to define terms, especially gerrymandering.
- ③ Although the question does not specifically ask for this, consider a brief recitation of the history of gerrymandering.
- ④ Using the ideas you developed in the planning stage, create a thesis as the core of your essay.
- ⑤ Since you will be writing an essay in which you define and explain a historical aspect of U.S. government, a chronological presentation is your most effective organization. In other words, after your introductory paragraph, begin with a historical overview and then relate that to the present. Develop your quick list with this organization in mind. Then, write your essay.

You might have chosen the following points about gerrymandering to use in your essay. Consider them as you complete your self-evaluation.

- Fierceness of the salamander indicates the cartoonist's disapproval of gerrymandering.
- Gerrymandering means electoral districts are drawn to the advantage of the dominant party or faction in the legislature to:
 - Concentrate the opposition's vote in a few districts.
 - Spread opposition so thinly among districts that it cannot carry an election.
- In 1842, state legislatures were made responsible for drawing congressional districts of contiguous territory.
- In 1872, Congress required districts to have approximately the same number of inhabitants.
- In 1901, districts were required to be compact.
- Reapportionment Acts of 1929 and 1932 left some requirements out, and the Supreme Court held that they were repealed.
- Gerrymandering, along with poll taxes and white primaries, were used to prevent African Americans from voting in the South.
- In 1960, *Gomillion v. Lightfoot* outlawed gerrymandering for the purpose of racial discrimination as a violation of the Fourteenth Amendment.

- In 1962, the decision in *Baker v. Carr* caused reapportionment of almost all federal, state, and local districts.
- In 1964, the decision in *Wesberry v. Sanders* held that population differences in Georgia's congressional districts were so great as to violate the "one person, one vote" principle.
- Also in 1964, in *Reynolds v. Sims*, the Supreme Court held that both houses of a state legislature must be apportioned on the basis of population.
- In spite of court decisions, gerrymandering continued, but it was now used to create districts to ensure the election of minority representatives.
- In 1993, in *Shaw v. Reno*, the Supreme Court struck down North Carolina's creation of a district created to elect an African American. The district was found to violate the rights of white voters under the Fourteenth Amendment.
- In 1996, in *Shaw v. Hunt*, the Supreme Court struck down North Carolina's creation of two gerrymandered districts drawn to elect African Americans. Using race as the determining factor in drawing the districts violated the Voting Rights Act.
- In 1996, in *Bush v. Vera*, Texas districting to ensure the election of minority representatives was also struck down.
- In 1999, in *Hunt v. Cromartie*, the federal district court of appeals for North Carolina invalidated on summary judgment the districts that had first been at issue in *Shaw v. Reno* and the *Shaw v. Hunt*. (Each time they had been redrawn and were the subject of new challenges.) The Supreme Court sent the case back to the appeals court for a full trial.
- In 2001, the Supreme Court in *Easley v. Cromartie* (formerly *Hunt v. Cromartie*) found that race could be a factor in drawing district boundaries so long as it was not the controlling factor.

SELF-EVALUATION RUBRIC FOR THE ADVANCED PLACEMENT ESSAYS

	8–9	5–7	2–4	0–1
Overall Impression	Demonstrates excellent understanding of U.S. government and legal system; outstanding writing; thorough and effective; incisive	Demonstrates good understanding of U.S. government and legal system; good writing competence	Reveals simplistic thinking and/or immature understanding of U.S. government and legal system; fails to respond adequately to the question; little or no analysis	Very little or no understanding of U.S. government and legal system; unacceptably brief; fails to respond to the question; little clarity
Understanding of the U.S. Government	Scholarly; excellent understanding of the question; effective and incisive; in-depth critical analysis; includes apt, specific references; acknowledges other views	Mostly accurate use of information about U.S. government and legal system; good understanding of the question; often perceptive and clear; includes specific references and critical analysis	Some inaccuracies in information regarding U.S. government; superficial understanding and treatment of the question; lack of adequate knowledge about U.S. government; overgeneralized	Serious errors in presenting information about U.S. government and legal system; extensive misreading of the question and little supporting evidence; completely off the topic
Development	Original, unique, and/or intriguing thesis; excellent use of fundamentals and principles of U.S. government; thoroughly developed; conclusion shows applicability of thesis to other situations	Adequate thesis; satisfactory use of knowledge of U.S. government; competent development; acceptable conclusion	Inadequate, irrelevant, or illogical thesis; little use of knowledge of government; some development; unsatisfactory, inapplicable, or nonexistent conclusion	Lacking both thesis and conclusion; little or no evidence of knowledge of U.S. government
Conventions of English	Meticulously and thoroughly organized; coherent and unified; virtually error-free	Reasonably organized; mostly coherent and unified; few or some errors	Somewhat organized; some incoherence and lack of unity; some major errors	Little or no organization; incoherent and void of unity; extremely flawed