

American history exam essay samples

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Question: How did some urban housing reforms of the late nineteenth century eventually add to urban blight? New forms of property and property ownership emerged in the nineteenth century in response to cultural and technological changes in American society. During the nineteenth century, reformers clashed with absentee landlords and the result of controversies involving property rights and the living conditions of the poor. Reformer uproar kept pace with investor enthusiasm as tenements were created in urban centers across the United States. This was basically slum housing, tiny mazes of buildings and alleys with no ventilation and all matter of filth and vermin. Infant mortality was high in these areas as was the spread of infectious diseases. For the most part, the slums were inhabited by poor immigrants from Southern Europe or by blacks or by Mexicans, depending on the region of the country. Reform movements and zoning laws aimed at separating people from contaminated garbage piles and industrial waste. The rapid development of factories led to polluted air and polluted waterways. Reformers wanted the government to step in and take land away from private landlords. They claimed that when landlords bought housing developments for the sole purpose of renting it out in order to make as much money as possible, abuse of the system and urban blight were to be expected. Some reformers went so far as to demand the government not allow people to go into the landlord business as a business. Before the huge migrations from farm to city worldwide occurred, it was more common for people to rent or even own their own bit of farmland. Sometimes people would take boarders into their homes. The move to the city combined with the ability to build tenements rapidly turned into investments schemes with

absentee landlords who exploited the poor and who plundered the inner city physically and economically.

Question: Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of progressivism.

The Progressive Movement was a huge reform drive that took place at the end of the nineteenth century. It was mostly a push by Christian organizations and individuals who wanted to correct what they saw as major problems in America. The industrial revolution was in full swing at this time and the Western frontier was rapidly evaporating. Bigger cities and bigger businesses seemed to be taking over the United States, yet with all of these strides little or nothing was being done to improve society. Progressive reforms that had begun before the Civil War, such as abolition, women's rights, and temperance were still around in the late nineteenth century in one form or another. Slaves had been freed but blacks were disenfranchised, some married women had gained rights but suffrage was a long way away. People who were sent to asylums for the mentally ill people and prisoners were still being brutalized. The urban poor were a newly developed problem that reformers turned to as developers built tenements and philosophical types sought to establish utopias. In communities in which reforms were limited to their participants. Nineteenth-century American progressivism had blacks, women, and the poor at the center of most arguments.

Unfortunately, while many reformers were motivated by Christian kindness there were many others who were motivated only by science. Some of that science was bad science and gave rise to an entire Eugenics movement that not only reinforced racism and sexism but also gave people the idea they

could potentially create a perfect race of people if they bred correctly. Some reforms were very effective, for example, factory food production had developed without restraints or regulations and reformers managed to get laws passed whereby inspections were required. Some of the most corrupt politicians were revealed and removed from office, but not all. More money was available for public schools, which was good, but as soon as the schools were established people sought to restrict student attendance to white males only. Progressives thought that the government should play a bigger role in the development of new capitalist enterprises and intervene on behalf of the poor in urban centers. Progressives sought to reclaim control of the government from industry captains in the Railroads and Trusts business so as to offer some protection to working people.

Question: Describe the major war aims of the Allied Powers. The most pressing goal of the allied powers was to stop Hitler and Nazi Germany, particularly on the western front. Another goal was to defeat and stop Japan's rampage throughout the Pacific. General Pershing wanted to not only defeat Germany, but he wanted it to be absorbed into France. The French did not share this goal. The United States finally entered the war on moral grounds and to safeguard democracy, thwart tyranny, and hasten the peace process. The most powerful of the Allied Powers of World War II were England, France, Russia, and the United States. By 1942, Roosevelt was already talking about post war aims. For him the idea of the United Nations was central to establishing an enduring peace after the war. The Soviets and Stalin wanted reparations because Germany had invaded them twice and they felt a pressing need to secure their western border from future attacks.

Churchill and England had goals which included preserving the British Empire and its economically profitable colonies so as to main their status as a world power. After entering the war, Roosevelt became extremely worried about China. He was afraid they would join would Russia and he was also afraid that they would fight each other. The United States was worried about the long-term objectives of Churchill and Stalin, and so a secondary goal developed which was to control diplomacy and maintain the power to stop Russia from spreading communism. Roosevelt and Churchill had developed goals that included keeping Stalin and Russia under control. Russia meanwhile had the goal of fighting off Germany within its borders. Churchill and Roosevelt aimed to ensure that no country established a separate peace with Hitler, and that the end of the war would entail an unconditional surrender of the Axis Powers.

Question: Compare the achievements and shortcomings of President Lyndon Johnson's Great Society with Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal. Lyndon Johnson accomplished a great deal domestically while at the same time his presidency was a foreign policy disaster. The 1964 Civil Rights Act, which Johnson backed, was the most momentous civil rights legislation of the era. It simultaneously safeguarded voting rights for blacks and desegregated public services. Johnson's Great Society was comparable to Roosevelt's New Deal. Both programs were an effort to help and support the poor. Johnson created Medicare, which gave health care to the poor. He also ensured that Housing and Urban Development focused on low-cost housing in urban centers. These programs were much like Roosevelt's New Deal programs, which included Social Security and the Works Progress Administration.

Johnson waged a war on poverty at the same time he waged war in Vietnam. This made him unpopular because Vietnam was not a popular war like the one Roosevelt had championed. Johnson's Great Society was like Roosevelt's New Deal because they were aimed at raising up the most destitute Americans. The problem was that Vietnam did not spark an economic boom like World War II did and so Johnson has a mixed legacy. Many blacks and others claimed that Johnson needed to remove the troops from Vietnam where Americans had no business being in the first place. They referred to it as the Lyndon Bloodbath Johnson and claimed that there was no way the actions in Vietnam were that of a Great Society. Roosevelt on the other hand remained popular. World War II was a popular war and did not tarnish his reputation after the fact. The New Deal was heralded as a Godsend and people supported Roosevelt through three terms of office.

References

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