

The Short Essay Question

After you have finished the 28 Stimulus-Based Multiple Choice Questions (Part I), you then go on to Part II which is the Short Essay Question (SEQ). There will be two (2) short essay questions on the examination.

Each essay will consist of a set of two (2) documents, which could be either a primary or a secondary source. Each document will be followed by two questions for each set.

Important: These short essays do **NOT** require an introduction or a conclusion paragraph. However, it is expected that your short essay response be **at least two or three paragraphs** in length.

Here is how the Short Essay Question works:

Set #1 will always focus on the relationship between the two documents in the set. Your first task is to identify the **historical context** surrounding the two documents. Your second task is to **identify and explain the relationship**-cause and effect, similarity or difference, or turning point-between the two documents. Definitions for *describe*, *historical context*, *identify*, and *explain* as well as the *types of relationships* will always be included in the student instructions for this set. (Examples are also attached to this handout).

Set #2 will always focus on sourcing-who created the document, why was it created- and reliability-how accurate and useful is the information found in the document is for a specific purpose.

Like in Set#1, your first task is to identify the **historical context** surrounding the two documents.

However, your second task is to **analyze one of the documents and explain how audience, purpose, bias, or point of view affects the reliability of the document.**

The exam will tell you which document you need to focus on for this second task **but you choose** whether to focus on audience, purpose, bias, or point of view.

The student instructions for this set include definitions for *describe*, *historical context*, *analyze*, *explain*, *purpose*, *bias*, or *point of view*. (Examples are also attached to this handout).

Short Essay Question Definitions

Describe means “to illustrate something in words or tell about it.”

Historical Context refers to “the relevant historical circumstances surrounding or connecting the events, ideas, or developments in these documents.”

Identify means “to put a name to or to name.”

Analyze means “to examine a document and determine its elements and its relationships.”

Explain means “to make plain or understandable; to give reasons for or causes of; to show the logical development or relationship of.”

Reliability is determined by how accurate and useful the information found in a source is for a specific purpose.

Types of Relationships:

Cause refers to “something that contributes to the occurrence of an event, the rise of an idea, or the bringing about of a development.”

Effect refers to “what happens as a consequence (result, impact, outcome) of an event, an idea, or a development.

Similarity tells how “something is alike or the same as something else.”

Difference tells how “something is not alike or not the same as something else.”

Turning Point is “a major event, idea, or historical development that brings about significant change. It can be local, regional, national, or global.”

Below are samples of what your questions will look like on the Regents exam.
The start of each essay will be similar in the introduction and task.

SHORT ESSAY QUESTION – SET #1

This Short Essay Question is based on the accompanying documents and is designed to test your ability to work with historical documents. Each Short Essay Question set will consist of two documents. Some of these documents have been edited for the purpose of this question. Keep in mind the language and images used in a document may reflect the historical context of the time in which it was created.

Task: Read and analyze the following documents, applying your social studies knowledge and skills to write a short essay of two or three paragraphs in which you:

- Describe the historical context surrounding these documents
- Identify and explain the *relationship* between the events and / or ideas found in these documents (Cause and Effect, *or* Similarity / Difference, *or* Turning Point)

In developing your short essay answer of two or three paragraphs, be sure to keep these explanations in mind:

Describe means “to illustrate something in words or tell about it.”

Historical Context refers to “the relevant historical circumstances surrounding or connecting the events, ideas, or developments in these documents.”

Identify means “to put a name to or to name.”

Explain means “to make plain or understandable; to give reasons for or causes of; to show the logical development or relationship of.”

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Difference tells how “something is not alike or not the same as something else.”

Turning Point is “a major event, idea, or historical development that brings about significant change. It can be local, regional, national, or global.”

SHORT ESSAY QUESTION – SET #2

This Short Essay Question is based on the accompanying documents and is designed to test your ability to work with historical documents. Each Short Essay Question set will consist of two documents. Some of these documents have been edited for the purpose of this question. Keep in mind the language and images used in a document may reflect the historical context of the time in which it was created.

Task: Read and analyze the following documents, applying your social studies knowledge and skills to write a short essay of two or three paragraphs in which you:

- Describe the historical context surrounding documents 1 and 2
- Analyze **Document 2** and explain how *audience, or purpose, or bias, or point of view* affects this document's use as a reliable source of evidence.

In developing your short essay answer of two or three paragraphs, be sure to keep these explanations in mind:

Describe means “to illustrate something in words or tell about it.”

Historical Context refers to “the relevant historical circumstances surrounding or connecting the events, ideas, or developments in these documents.”

Analyze means “to examine a document and determine its elements and its relationships.”

Explain means “to make plain or understandable; to give reasons for or causes of; to show the logical development or relationship of.”

Reliability is determined by how accurate and useful the information found in a source is for a specific purpose.

Below are two documents that we will use as examples of what might be on the examination. We can use these documents twice in this exercise, once as examples for Set #1, and as an example for Set #2.

Document 1

The following is an excerpt from the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, passed as part of the Compromise of 1850.

Section 7

And be it further enacted, That any person who shall knowingly and willingly obstruct, hinder, or prevent such claimant, his agent or attorney, or any person or persons lawfully assisting him, her, or them, from arresting such a fugitive from service or labor, either with or without process as aforesaid, or shall rescue, or attempt to rescue, such fugitive from service or labor, from the custody of such claimant, his or her agent or attorney, or other person or persons lawfully assisting as aforesaid, when so arrested, pursuant to the authority herein given and declared; or shall aid, abet, or assist such person so owing service or labor as aforesaid, directly or indirectly, to escape from such claimant, his agent or attorney, or other person or persons legally authorized as aforesaid; or shall harbor or conceal such fugitive, so as to prevent the discovery and arrest of such person, after notice or knowledge of the fact that such person was a fugitive from service or labor as aforesaid, shall, for either of said offences, be subject to a fine not exceeding one thousand dollars, and imprisonment not exceeding six months. . . .

Section 8

And be it further enacted,. . . . and in all cases where the proceedings are before a commissioner, he shall be entitled to a fee of ten dollars in full for his services in each case, upon the delivery of the said certificate to the claimant, his agent or attorney; or a fee of five dollars in cases where the proof shall not, in the opinion of such commissioner, warrant such certificate and delivery

Source: Fugitive Slave Act, 1850

Document 2

CAUTION!!
COLORED PEOPLE
OF BOSTON, ONE & ALL,
You are hereby respectfully CAUTIONED and advised, to avoid conversing with the
Watchmen and Police Officers
of Boston,
For since the recent **ORDER OF THE MAYOR & ALDERMEN,** they are empowered to act as
KIDNAPPERS
AND
Slave Catchers,
And they have already been actually employed in **KIDNAPPING, CATCHING, AND KEEPING SLAVES.** Therefore, if you value your **LIBERTY,** and the *Welfare of the Fugitives* among you, *Shun* them in every possible manner, as so many **HOUNDS** on the track of the most unfortunate of your race.
Keep a Sharp Look Out for
KIDNAPPERS, and have
TOP EYE open.
APRIL 24, 1851.

Now that you have seen the practice documents, what key terms, events and answers would you use of the following tasks? Note: The first question for each set of documents is the same.

Set # 1

Task: Read and analyze the following documents, applying your social studies knowledge and skills to write a short essay of two or three paragraphs in which you:

- Describe the historical context surrounding these documents
- Identify and explain the *relationship* between the events and / or ideas found in these documents (Cause and Effect, *or* Similarity / Difference, *or* Turning Point

Set # 2

Task: Read and analyze the following documents, applying your social studies knowledge and skills to write a short essay of two or three paragraphs in which you:

- Describe the historical context surrounding documents 1 and 2
- Analyze **Document 2** and explain how *audience, or purpose, or bias, or point of view* affects this document's use as a reliable source of evidence.
