

So Many Choices, So Little Time: Strategies for Understanding and Taking Multiple-Choice Exams in History

Robert Blackey
California State University, San Bernardino

“DON’T WORRY, HOWARD,” says a wife to her husband in a *New Yorker* cartoon (by Victoria Roberts) from a few years ago, “The big questions are multiple choice.” And so they may be if the ubiquity of standardized and regular classroom testing is any indication. Taking these often high-pressure, high-stakes tests presents, if not overwhelms, students with numerous questions and four-to-five times as many choices accompanied by time constraints. When the correct answer is not immediately identified, many students guess randomly or choose blindly. Such rash approaches save time by taking just a fraction of a second, but they do not allow the students to apply their knowledge to a question, increasing the chances for poor grades. There are, instead, more effective ways to resolve the virtually inevitable indecision when taking such exams.

Learning as much as possible about what to expect and how best to select among response choices enables students to improve their scores so as to reflect more fully their knowledge and abilities, whether taking the SAT, ACT, AP history exams, multiple-choice exams in college courses, the GRE, or any other standardized examinations that include multiple-choice questions in history, including required statewide exams for grades 6 through 12. With this in mind, many students across age levels enroll

in test preparation courses while others search websites or purchase test prep books, some of which do, indeed, provide useful information and suggestions along with sample questions—although many of these sample questions are available online or have been published by state teaching commissions or boards and testing organizations such as the College Board. What follows is a thorough collection of strategies and insights that are useful, if not critical, for maximizing performance, especially in the areas of history and social studies (although most can also be adapted to other academic areas). By way of a caveat, however, it should be stressed that these strategies will work optimally only when coupled with the development of skills to think historically¹ as well as with significant understanding and studying of course or subject matter material.

For his own preparation to write this essay, the author has compiled more than thirty years of experience writing and reviewing multiple-choice questions for Advanced Placement and other College Board and Educational Testing Service (ETS) programs; he has served on several test development committees at the state and national level; he has read and, in some cases, adapted suggestions from published test preparation books²; he has examined published multiple-choice questions from the California Standards Tests (CST)—administered to secondary school students—and from the California Subject Examinations for Teachers (CSET)—taken by prospective secondary school teachers; he has reviewed banks of multiple-choice questions that are available to teachers and typically accompany textbooks for United States, Western, and world history survey courses; he has surveyed recently published multiple-choice questions from United States, European, and World History AP exams; and he has written, and revised, many multiple-choice questions for his own courses.³

Structure and Types of Multiple-Choice Questions

To begin, this section highlights a few terms commonly used by the College Board, ETS, and many others test administrators.⁴ Multiple-choice questions typically begin with a *stem*, which directs students to pick the correct answer from among four or five choices, or *options*. Ordinarily, each of the options is comparable in length to some or all of the remaining options for the question, so that no single option, and certainly not the correct one, stands out by virtue of its length or brevity. The wrong answers among the options are called *distractors*, whereas the correct answer option is the *key*. To minimize students from being caught unaware when actually taking multiple-choice exams, teachers should familiarize themselves and their students with the following **types of questions** included in most, although not all multiple-choice exams:

- (1) *Traditional linear questions*, for which the correct—or sometimes the most correct—option that answers the question is to be chosen.
- (2) *Complete the stem questions*, in which the stem is the first part of an incomplete sentence, and the option that most accurately completes the sentence is to be chosen.

In terms of the structure of multiple-choice exams, these first two types of questions are typically the most common, even as they may incorporate some variations from the following additional types:

- (3) *Analysis questions*, in which options offer conclusions or judgments rendered upon the causes, effects, or changes for a specific topic, movement, event, policy, person, etc. Analysis questions require familiarity with historical context and greater understanding than simple factual recall or mere recognition.
- (4) *Missing word, words, or phrase questions*, in which the stem is almost complete, except for one or more missing words which can be found among the available options.
- (5) *Questions that include visuals*, such as graphs, tables, maps, prints, posters, paintings, sculptures, political cartoons, photos, and engravings are akin to traditional questions, with the capacity to assess students' ability to understand and interpret visuals, especially within historical context and with an awareness of possible distortions or bias. These images should neither frighten students nor should they be over-analyzed or over-interpreted, as the questions themselves are typically straightforward.
- (6) *Questions based on quotations or short passages*, in which materials from a book or other source are matched to corresponding author names, concept terms, or other relevant information. Presumably, the authors of the quotations and the sources from which the passages are taken should be familiar to the well-prepared student.
- (7) *Interpretive questions*, in which quotations or short reading passages in the stem are rephrased in the options with a complete statement of a problem to be solved.
- (8) *Cross-chronological and cross-geographical questions*, which concern cause-and-effect, historical interpretations, degree of change over time, or seeing how some themes and subjects (e.g., the African slave trade, the Industrial Revolution, Imperialism) connect chronologically and geographically.

Ordinarily, only a small number of questions will involve simple recall of factual material, especially on both college-level exams and on standardized exams such as the SAT and AP subjects. Most exam questions will instead require *understanding the material* (as opposed to merely memorizing it), although such questions will surely cover a range of degrees of difficulty. In most cases, students will *not* be able to choose the correct

option with instant recognition. And, as already noted, many questions will blend more than one of the above types of questions.

Strategies for Converting Knowledge into a Correct Multiple-Choice Answer

Just as the types of questions incorporate somewhat predictable stem and option structures, the stem itself often contains certain information or keywords that can help students find the right path. For instance, dates (in the form of specific dates or years for events, or as centuries for movements or broader trends) are often included in question stems, rather than in the options for standardized tests because assessments are not typically, if ever, based solely on the memorization of dates (such a rote memorization approach to history teaching results in students associating the subject with the word “boring”). What is more vital than memorizing dates in developing an understanding of history is to improve one’s sense of chronology, to be aware of the order of key events and people and to comprehend their relationships to one another, especially in terms of cause and effect.

Multiple-choice questions can also be phrased to elicit analytical skills from student test takers, and students can prepare themselves by **identifying the recognizable phrasing**, categorized as such for the purpose of this discussion:

(1) Stems asking to compare options may contain phrasing such as “the BEST answer,” “the MOST important,” “the MAIN point,” or “the LEAST important.” [As an aside, note that AP, SAT, and other standardized multiple-choice questions rarely, if ever, include the “all of the above” or “none of the above” as options.]

(2) Stems asking to contrast options may contain phrasing such as “all of the following EXCEPT,” “which of the following was NOT,” or “all but which one of the following.”

Questions that include these or similar words or phrases tend to be more difficult for some students, often because students are unclear about what is being asked. The confusion may be further amplified when such directions are implicitly rather than explicitly stated. When students encounter a question asking to compare options, they should be prepared to make a judgment or to discriminate between or among more than one option that might appear to be correct and thus must understand the material being tested at a more sophisticated level. Students should be certain to weigh all the options carefully, and to look for nuances and subtleties, before deciding which one is the best possible answer.

Consider the following example from the 2002 World History AP exam in which, upon consideration, at least two of the options might be safely eliminated because they are out of the time period covered in the stem, and two others can also be rejected with a little understanding of what the states represented and where their trading energies were focused:

Which of the following are the states that dominated the Mediterranean trade during the sixteenth century?

- (A) *Italian city-states and the Ottoman Empire*
- (B) *The Byzantine Empire and the Ottoman Empire*
- (C) *Spain and Portugal*
- (D) *The Habsburg Empire and France*
- (E) *The Crusader states⁵*

Using chronology alone, Option B can be eliminated because the Byzantine Empire effectively ended with the fall of Constantinople, in 1453. Likewise, Option E can be dropped from consideration because the Crusader states (i.e., twelfth- and thirteenth-century feudal states created by western European crusaders in Greece, Asia Minor, and the Holy Land) did not survive very long after the Crusades. Comparing the remaining options, geographically, the trade of Spain and Portugal was focused on the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, not the Mediterranean (eliminating Option C), whereas that of the Habsburg Empire and France never dominated in the Mediterranean (eliminating Option D). Thus, by a process of elimination and some understanding of the roles of states involved in trade, the correct answer can be deduced as Option A.

When students encounter a question asking to contrast or exclude options, they might try rewording the stem from negative to positive phrasing—instead of having to decide which answer to exclude, such rewording leads students to identify which options actually do apply, whereupon the one option that does not will be the correct answer to the original question. By way of example, the following question appeared on the 2006 United States History AP exam:

All of the following contributed to the decline of open-range cattle ranching at the end of the nineteenth century EXCEPT

- (A) *excessively cold winters*
- (B) *federal recognition of American Indian land claims*
- (C) *a drop in cattle prices*
- (D) *over grazing*
- (E) *production of crops for distant markets⁶*

If reworded in the positive, the question could read: “Which four among the following options contributed to the decline of open-range cattle ranching at the end of the nineteenth century?” In this way, the process

of elimination is applied to the options that fulfill the modified question, leaving the option that is the least correct or is incorrect (Option B) more readily apparent as the exception.

In answering the questions themselves, it is important to impress upon students the value of **always reading all answer options** for each question because, although more than one choice might appear to be right, only one is the best—and thus the correct—answer. Before deciding which choice *is* correct, students should be directed to try to **identify which options might be safely eliminated**. Students can quickly eliminate an option which:

- (1) is out of the time period covered in the stem of the question;
- (2) involves absolute phrases (e.g., “never,” “always,” “all,” “every,” “complete”) that cannot be qualified; options that include such words effectively indicate that the phrase or statement is universally true—which is seldom the case; or
- (3) might be true in another context but otherwise has little to do with the subject covered in the stem

As students read each question, they should, if permitted, **underline the critical words in the stem**. This helps them to focus precisely on what is being asked and thus to reduce the chance of making careless mistakes with regard to the intent of the question. And as they read the stem—but before they actually read the options—a useful strategy is for students to **anticipate a potential correct answer**, after which they can compare their anticipated answer to each of the options before deciding which one best answers the question. This approach has the advantage of encouraging students to think about the subject before they choose or guess, which in turn should help to minimize any potential confusion when more than one option appears to be correct. The following example, with underlining added by the author, from the 1994 European History AP exam can be used to illustrate how these two strategies can be made to work:

Which of the following best expresses Voltaire's views concerning religion?

- (A) *Catholics should obediently follow the dictates of the pope.*
- (B) *Protestants should be excluded from French government service.*
- (C) *Religious unity is fundamental to enlightened monarchies.*
- (D) *Organized religion perpetuates superstition and ignorance.*
- (E) *Criticism of religious doctrines and authorities should be condemned.⁷*

Underlining the most important words in the stem, students should think about what Voltaire’s views on religion were: as most textbooks emphasize, he relentlessly criticized the Catholic Church and he was associated

with the phrase *Écrasez l'infame* ["Crush the infamous thing"], which referred to the superstition and ignorance he was convinced the Church used to manipulate believers. Armed with that information to produce an anticipated answer, not only does the correct answer, Option D, readily reveal itself, but the four distractors also become clearly wrong.

To differentiate among given options, especially with questions that appear to be more difficult or complicated, another helpful strategy encourages students to **translate or summarize each option** either into more familiar words and/or fewer words; that is, students could rewrite the answer choices in their own words so that each option possibility makes more sense to them. This promotes understanding much the same way that re-reading or re-typing one's class notes does; it is also a variation on what teachers often do when they explain and rephrase sophisticated or difficult ideas and concepts to their students. This practice can be illustrated with the following question from the 2006 United States History AP exam:

In 1950 a major factor in President Harry Truman's commitment of American troops to combat North Korean aggression was a desire to

- (A) *force Congress to appropriate more money for the armed services*
- (B) *preserve South Korea's markets for United States exports*
- (C) *overcome the stigma that the Democratic party had "lost" China to communism*
- (D) *convince Americans that containment was an insufficient way to deal with communist expansion*
- (E) *direct the focus of American postwar foreign policy away from Europe*⁸

Following pre-exam practice with this technique, students might be able to simplify the stem and the options to a more manageable, easier to understand question and thus be clearer about concluding that C is the correct option:

A major reason Truman sent troops to fight in North Korea was to

- (A) *get Congress to vote more money for the army*
- (B) *help U.S. trade interests in South Korea*
- (C) *show the Democrats to be tough enough to stop communism*
- (D) *show that containment didn't stop the spread of communism*
- (E) *prove that we had vital interests away from Europe*

Yet another helpful technique is to train students to **read the stem along with each of the options**, one at a time, as if the combination of stem and each option were either a **true or false statement or answer**. If doing so makes the statement or answer false, that option should be rejected; if it seems to be true, it should be considered as a possible correct answer, but students should be reminded of the importance—as with other suggestions

made above—to use this approach with all options before one is finally chosen as the best possible answer. This approach to answering multiple-choice questions can be demonstrated with the following question from the 1994 European History AP exam (note: the bracketed material, not included in the original question, represents sample thinking on determining whether an option is true or false):

Which of the following was a major demographic change in Western Europe between 1850 and 1914?

(A) *A dramatic shift of population to urban areas*

[Urbanization and growing urban populations were characteristics of the time period, so this option appears to be true, but before marking A as the correct answer, the accuracy of each of the other options should be tested in a similar manner.]

(B) *A rapidly increasing birth rate*

[This is false, as advancing industrialization saw birth rates decline, even in the face of overall population increase.]

(C) *A rapidly increasing death rate*

[This is false, as urbanization and health improvements saw the death rate decrease.]

(D) *A pronounced trend toward larger families*

[This is false, as greater longevity and enlightened attitudes toward child labor contributed to a diminishing need for large families.]

(E) *A marked decline in emigration⁹*

[This is false, because figures show no abatement in emigration. With four of five options tested as incorrect, Option A is, indeed, the correct answer.]

Because there is a quarter-point penalty in many standardized exams for a wrong answer (but not for a non-answer, that is, not choosing any answer at all or leaving the answer box blank), the decision to leave any question unanswered should be based on whether students can eliminate one or more of the options. Statistically, it is actually advantageous to guess when at least one option can be eliminated, but **guessing intelligently** increases the odds of guessing correctly. One aspect of guessing intelligently involves teaching students to divide the history they have been studying into periods or eras, conceptualizing each of the “boxed” time periods or labeled groups perhaps even as rooms in a house. Organizing the subject matter of history into these familiar periods (or boxes, or groupings, or rooms) should help students to recall the material more readily during the exam, especially if they are encouraged to visualize in their mind’s eye what is in each period (or box, or group, or room). This ancient technique to improve memory is a form of *association* that can help students to make connections and prompt them to think about what comes to mind in reference to periods, such as the Age of Exploration, the Mughal Empire, the

Reformation, the Industrial Revolution, or any other periods being tested. [This, not incidentally, is akin to the technique of *brainstorming*, which is often recommended for use in preparation to respond to essay exam questions.] Remembering key themes, names, and events from each period should help students to eliminate clearly wrong options and thus guess more intelligently. When students do not readily know the correct answer, they can start by deciding the period (or box, or group, or room) to which the question belongs. Then, as in every instance, students should read *all* the options to determine if any clearly do not relate to the period in question. Of the remaining options, the one that best relates to the era being tested is an intelligent guess. This strategy is applied in the following example from the 2002 World History AP exam (note: once again, the bracketed material, not included in the original question, represents sample thinking on visualizations leading to intelligent guessing):

Which of the following is true of both Russia and Japan by 1914?

[The key terms “Russia,” “Japan,” and “1914” quickly call to mind the information housed in both my “Russia box” and my “Japan box,” as well as history from the period from the second half of the nineteenth century to the eve of World War I.]

(A) *Both were characterized by a high degree of ethnic homogeneity.*

[I remember that Japan, a culturalist state, was ethnically homogeneous, but Russia, a pluralist state, especially as it expanded to the Pacific Ocean, was ethnically diverse. Thus, I eliminate this option.]

(B) *Both had effective democratic institutions that restrained the power of their monarchs.*

[Although both countries had government institutions below their autocratic rulers, they could hardly be described as democratic, much less as effective, in restraining the power of their monarchs. I reject this option.]

(C) *Both had low literacy rates.*

[This may have been true for Japan, but I am pretty certain it was not true for Russia. So, unless both of the remaining options are clearly false, I will eliminate this option.]

(D) *Marxism had become a strong influence among urban workers in both countries.*

[This was probably true for Russia, but not so for Japan, although Japan would later develop a communist party that was perceived by many as a threat to the emperor in the waning days of World War II. So this option is rejected.]

(E) *Rapid, state-sponsored industrialization had occurred in both countries.¹⁰*

[Yes, this was true of both countries starting in the second half of the nineteenth century; this was covered in the required readings on industrialization and on the world on the eve of World War I. E, therefore, is the correct option.]

Teachers should advise students that a distractor might be true in and of itself, but that does not make it the key (or correct option) if it is only partially correct or completely incorrect in connection with the stem. Questions including distractors of this variety are likely to be fairly common in standardized and other challenging multiple-choice exams; planning for them accordingly makes for effective test preparation. A variation on these misleading distractors is where the distractor is plausible, but otherwise is incorrect with regard to the stem. With potential pitfalls in both the stem and option portions of a question, **understanding the material is critical to answering questions accurately**. The following question from the 2006 United States History AP exam should help to explain the importance of mastering this strategy (note: again, the bracketed material represents added sample thinking):

Parliament enacted the Stamp Act (1765) primarily to

(A) regulate trade between the colonies and European nations

[This is plausible in that the British government wanted to regulate trade with the colonies, which did not preclude trade with other nations, but it was not the case with the Stamp Act.]

(B) strengthen the communication network within the colonies

[This is plausible insofar as Britain wanting the colonies to cooperate, but that has nothing to do with the Stamp Act.]

(C) raise revenue to pay for British troops in the colonies

[This is true in that the Stamp Act was meant to raise revenue rather than to regulate trade, which would have been an aim more difficult for the colonists to oppose. Thus, this is true both as a British intention and as it relates to the Stamp Act; C appears to be a correct option.]

(D) regulate commercial activity within colonies

[Here again is a plausible characterization of British policy, but not as it applied to the Stamp Act.]

(E) control population movement to the colonial backcountry¹¹

[If the stem had focused on the Quebec Act (1774), this option would have been correct; but it is irrelevant to the Stamp Act. With all options evaluated, Option C is the intelligent guess.]

Even after committing to a readily apparent correct answer or a more elusive intelligent guess, lingering concern over point penalizations cause students to wonder whether they should change an answer previously entered. Ordinarily, students **should not second-guess themselves**, unless it is subsequently determined that they have misread the question or some of the options. It is natural to be fairly certain one has chosen correctly, yet simultaneously fear one may have chosen wrongly, especially in the high-stakes realm. As long as students have prepared well, they should trust that they have chosen correctly the first time. They should also be

cautioned against assuming that their choice must be wrong because they found the question and answer “too easy.” Questions are generally meant to be straightforward, not purposely complicated or confusing, and most multiple-choice exams include a variety of questions that run the gamut from fairly easy to especially challenging. Indeed, there will be some truly difficult questions, but their difficulty will likely be the result of the subject being tested rather than the trickiness of the choices or the caliber of the words employed to express them.

As the second-guessing indicates, students aspire to do well and avoid mistakes. Some simple logistical advice to pass along to students is that, when taking the exam itself, they would be wise to check periodically to make sure the number of the question on the test page they are reading corresponds to the number of the answer on the bubble sheet they are filling in; this is the equivalent of the carpenter’s rule of measuring twice so as to cut once. This **check for consistency** is worth the second or so it takes, with the consequence for making a mistake along these lines being self-evident, as well as potentially disastrous. At the same time, students should, prior to actually taking an exam, know the maximum time allowed to complete the multiple-choice section as well as how many questions comprise the exam, so as not to miss any accidentally, as some students invariably do. Armed with this information, they might want to divide the allotted time into quarters or halves so as to determine which number question should be reached when, for example, a quarter of or half the time has elapsed. Doing so will help students to **pace** themselves and to increase their chances of responding to all or at least most of the questions. Because each multiple-choice question is worth the same number of points as every other one, students should always skip those that cannot be answered quickly rather than dwell on or worry over them. These more difficult questions can always be returned to, time permitting, after all others have been answered.

Structure, Study Guides, and Scoring for AP Exams

AP History exams, regardless of particular subject, as well as exams based on comparably structured programs, will test student understanding of the following major components:

- (1) themes and trends;
- (2) changes occurring over time and across geographical regions;
- (3) events and movements;
- (4) documents;

- (5) historical figures from all theme areas;
- (6) writings by key figures; and
- (7) concepts and terms (including some in their original language that are also typically included in current textbooks).

Popular impressions and conventional wisdom notwithstanding—and even if the term appears in newspaper and magazine articles—for AP exams, there is no such thing as a “passing score” (typically identified as a 3 on a scale of 1 to 5). Instead, each college and university (and sometimes each academic department) determines what number scores they will accept (or whether to accept any score at all, as it is their choice) and how they will apply those scores (e.g., for advanced standing; in lieu of lower-division courses but without units earned). Secondary schools that have prepared students to take the exam also utilize reported scores as they wish in terms of their AP courses (e.g., the AP exam score counts toward the course grade; is independent of the course grade).

These components are visited throughout the AP test, in the Multiple-Choice Section as well as the Document-Based Question (DBQ) and the Free Response Question (FRQ) sections.¹² The total test score is calculated with all three test sections. Because the multiple-choice section is just one-third of the test, a student could leave as many as 20 of 80 questions on the exam unanswered, answer another 9 incorrectly, and still receive an overall score of 3 if results from the other sections are comparable or better. In other words, a sub-total equivalent to a 64% on the multiple-choice section works to secure a reported score of 3 as long as the DBQ and FRQ sub-totals are at comparable levels. To be sure, on teacher-generated multiple-choice exams in their classes, such a percentage would be unacceptably low to most students and teachers—perhaps equivalent to a letter grade of D—but in this pivotal way, AP scoring is decidedly different. Realizing this is an important psychological component for taking AP exams, and being aware of it should help to relieve student anxiety as the exam is being taken, especially for those students who might otherwise find their confidence waning as they read questions they are unable to answer. Students can familiarize themselves with scoring information from the organizations that sponsor or generate standardized exams, including the College Board for AP exams, who usually compile and make available the statistics on the percentage of students who receive the range of reported scores.¹³

Although the authors and editors of test preparation study guides no doubt do their best to characterize the exams generated by the College Board accurately, this does not mean that those guides are free of **misin-formation**. For example, with regard to the AP European History exam,

some assert that the multiple-choice questions on the exam are organized in rough chronological order. Any careful review of actual published AP exams, however, will demonstrate the inaccuracy of such an assertion, although there often are more pre-1789-to-1815 questions in the first half of the test and more post-1789-to-1815 questions in the second half. Other test prep guides state, with regard to AP tests in general, that the first twenty-to-twenty-five questions are usually the easiest, with the most difficult questions coming at the end of the test. This, too, is not reflected—at least not universally—in the published exams, although the assertion is perhaps based upon the usually sound test construction practice of avoiding confronting students with more difficult questions at the outset. Still, other guides suggest that questions tend to be organized in groups of four-to-seven questions, with each group focused on a chronological period and with the difficulty of the questions increasing within each group. However, the degree of difficulty of AP and other standardized exam questions is not something that can be pronounced readily by so-called test-prep experts, because the difficulty is determined so subjectively. For example, ETS statisticians deem a question difficult based on a series of pre-tests in college classrooms; questions answered incorrectly by students whose total scores are otherwise high indicate a difficult question, whereas questions answered correctly by those who score poorly on the entire exam are considered easy. Another piece of advice proffered by study guides is that students should look for hints or bits of information from previously answered questions that might serve them in figuring out another question. Although some teachers might not peruse their own multiple-choice exams for such unintended hints and information, standardized exams are usually carefully scrutinized to root out any such overlapping of question information and to avoid giving clues to a question within the correct option.

Much like crafting a scholarly essay, a successful multiple-choice test experience will involve applying a combination of historical subjects and skills. For those who fear that multiple-choice tests depend on mere rote memorization, there is much to learn about multiple-choice questions and the variety of strategies that can be employed when taking such exams. Knowing what to expect before multiple-choice exams are taken allows students to demonstrate their good study habits and historical thinking skills, as well as the actual materials they have studied and learned, in this assessment technique so commonly levied upon them. All are vital to being thoroughly prepared in the classroom, in the test room, and also relating to the sometimes underrated area of mental preparation and building confidence in a high-stakes world.

Notes

1. See Thomas C. Holt, *Thinking Historically: Narrative, Imagination, and Understanding* (New York: The College Board, 1990); Robert Blackey, ed., "Thinking Historically in the Classroom," *Perspectives* 33, no. 7 (October 1995): 1, 4, 23-35, 37; Robert Blackey, ed., *Perspectives on Teaching Innovations: Teaching to Think Historically* (Washington, D.C.: American Historical Association, 1999); Samuel Wineburg, *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2001); Thomas Andrews and Flannery Burke, "What Does It Mean To Think Historically?" *Perspectives* 45, no. 1 (January 2007): 32-35. In addition, the following web sites offer videos wherein historical thinking is demonstrated: <<http://www.teachinghistory.org>> and <<http://www.historicalthinkingmatters.org/why/>>.

2. Grace Roegner Freedman, *Cracking the SAT U.S. and World History Subject Tests* (New York: The Princeton Review/Random House, 2007); Kenneth Pearl, *Cracking the AP European History Exam* (New York: The Princeton Review/Random House, 2006); *DAC Study Guide for AP European History* (DAC Educational Publications, 2001); Nathan Barber, *AP European History* (Stamford, CT: Arco/Thomson Learning, 2001); Martha Moore, *AP European History* (New York: Kaplan Publishing, 2008); Michael Romano, *Cliffs AP European History* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Publishing, 2003); Chris Freiler, *AP Achiever Advanced Placement European History Exam Preparation Guide* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2008); Louise Forsyth and Lenore Schneider, *Fast Track to a 5: Preparing for the AP European History Examination* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 2008).

3. For advice on constructing multiple-choice questions, see Ann McCormick Scott, "Life Is a Multiple-Choice Question" and Ray W. Karras, "A Multidimensional Multiple-Choice Testing System," both in Robert Blackey, ed., *History Anew: Innovations in the Teaching of History Today* (Long Beach, CA: The University Press, California State University, Long Beach, 1993).

4. These are the terms used by the College Board and the Educational Testing Service, among others.

5. Copyright © 2008. The College Board. Reproduced with permission. <<http://apcentral.collegeboard.com>>.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

12. For more on writing free response questions as well as on preparing students to respond to essay questions, see Robert Blackey, "A Guide to the Skill of Essay Construction in History," *Social Education* 45, no. 3 (March 1981): 178-182; Robert Blackey, "Bull's-Eye: A Teacher's Guide for Developing Student Skill in Responding to Essay Questions," *Social Education* 52, no. 6 (October 1988): 464-466.

13. For example, on the 2006 AP history exams, in European History, 69.1% of students taking the exam earned a grade of 3 or higher; for U.S. History, it was 53.1%; for World History, it was 51%. On the 2007 exams, for European History, it was 65.9%; for U.S. History, it was 53.2%; for World History, it was 54.2%.