

Major Field Test in History

Sample Questions

The following questions illustrate the range of the test in terms of the abilities measured, the disciplines covered, and the difficulty of the questions posed. They should not, however, be considered representative of the entire scope of the test in either content or difficulty. An answer key follows the questions.

1. The marked increase in the proportion of aristocrats in top positions in the Prussian civil service under Frederick the Great supports the proposition that
 - (A) the Prussian government was a meritocracy
 - (B) many philosophes favored aristocratic government
 - (C) the Prussian Junkers had made peace with absolute monarchy
 - (D) Prussia was poor, and aristocratic officials needed less salary than did middle-class officials
 - (E) the Prussian aristocracy provided better civil servants than did the French aristocracy
2. Which of the following concepts did Marx derive from Hegel?
 - (A) The withering away of the state
 - (B) The moral nature of the state
 - (C) The spiritual nature of historical forces
 - (D) The dialectical method
 - (E) The theory of surplus value
3. Which of the following was the first major attempt to use nonviolent mass protest to secure equality for African Americans?
 - (A) The Niagara movement of 1905
 - (B) The Harlem Renaissance of the 1920's
 - (C) The Montgomery bus boycott of 1955-1956
 - (D) The sit-ins of the early 1960's
 - (E) The March on Washington of 1963
4. During the nineteenth century, indigenous peoples were removed or exterminated in order to provide valuable land for White settlement and development in all of the following countries EXCEPT
 - (A) South Africa
 - (B) the United States
 - (C) Australia
 - (D) Sudan
 - (E) Argentina
5. Which of the following contributed most to the rise in wages after the Black Death (1346-1351)?
 - (A) The rise in taxes necessitated by a reduced tax base
 - (B) The decline in labor-intensive agriculture
 - (C) The abandonment of marginal lands
 - (D) The rebellion of the peasants
 - (E) The labor shortage resulting from the general population decline
6. The partition of the Indian subcontinent into India and Pakistan in 1947 was primarily the result of
 - (A) ideological conflicts between communist and anticommunist movements
 - (B) competition for scarce mineral resources
 - (C) the personal ambitions of a few leading politicians
 - (D) United States efforts to prevent a unified, independent state from emerging on the Indian subcontinent
 - (E) religious differences that became incorporated into rival nationalist movements

7. Practitioners of “liberation theology” in Latin America in the late twentieth century held that the Roman Catholic Church should
- (A) urge the United States to intervene more forcefully in Latin America to prevent the spread of communism
 - (B) press for reform of corrupt regimes as a means of improving the lives of the poor
 - (C) concentrate its efforts on preventing the growth of Protestantism in Latin America
 - (D) invest Church funds in large construction projects as a way to spur economic growth in Latin America
 - (E) teach the poor to free themselves from material desires and concentrate on spiritual improvement
8. Which of the following is the most accurate statement concerning the economic performance of the Soviet bloc countries in the 40 years following the Second World War?
- (A) They surpassed capitalist countries in agricultural production and consumer goods, but lagged behind in the development of military technology.
 - (B) They quickly abandoned central planning in favor of a “new economic policy” that favored free markets.
 - (C) They failed to rebuild the region’s industries that had been largely destroyed in the Second World War.
 - (D) They achieved significant industrial growth, but generally lagged behind capitalist economies in consumer goods and technology.
 - (E) Though Communist Party elites prospered, there was no improvement in the living standards of the general population.
9. The establishment of Confucianism as China’s state ideology during the Han dynasty (206 B.C.E. to 220 C.E.) resulted in the
- (A) gradual implementation of a meritocratic system of government
 - (B) persecution of followers of Buddhism
 - (C) deification of Confucius as the dominant god
 - (D) suppression of all other philosophies
 - (E) building the Great Wall to keep out foreign influences

10. In the first decade of the twentieth century, England, France, and Russia reconciled a number of their outstanding differences primarily because of
- (A) increasing pressure to halt the expansionist tendencies of the Mediterranean countries
 - (B) increasing concern over Germany's actions and aims
 - (C) a need to bring democratic socialist ideas to newly emerging nations
 - (D) a wish to preserve their overseas holdings and markets
 - (E) a desire to see hereditary monarchies preserved
11. In order to increase the population of its colony, the Virginia Company
- (A) provided bonuses for every new child born in the colony
 - (B) encouraged settlers in the neighboring colony of Maryland to relocate to Virginia
 - (C) advertised Virginia’s natural beauty and fertile soil in Scotland and Germany
 - (D) created a head right system that granted extra acreage to any man who paid for the passage of additional settlers to the colony
 - (E) encouraged English intermarriage with Native Americans

12. Which of the following occurred in Japan in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries following the Japanese government's expulsion of foreigners, limitation of foreign trade and ban of Christianity?

- (A) Japan's economy suffered a lengthy depression.
- (B) European powers launched numerous attacks on Japan in an effort to reintroduce Christianity.
- (C) Secret Japanese expeditions to Europe brought back important new scientific information.
- (D) Japan's population and economic productivity increased markedly.
- (E) Samurai warriors lost their political power.

13. "When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one portion of the family of man to assume among the people of the earth a position different from that which they have hitherto occupied, but one to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes that impel them to such a course."

The passage above is from which of the following documents?

- (A) *The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan
- (B) Frederick Douglass' Fourth of July speech
- (C) *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* by Mary Wollstonecraft
- (D) Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions
- (E) *Common Sense* by Thomas Paine

14. The Roman Empire made a lasting conquest of all the following regions EXCEPT

- (A) Asia Minor
- (B) Britannia
- (C) Egypt
- (D) Gaul
- (E) Germania

15. In the Proclamation of 1763, the British government temporarily banned White settlement west of the Appalachian Mountains in order to

- (A) prevent conflicts between White settlers and Native Americans
- (B) create a buffer zone between English and French territory
- (C) have time to have the region carefully surveyed
- (D) prevent the population of the thirteen colonies from expanding too quickly
- (E) put an end to intercolonial conflicts about claims to western lands

16. During the Second World War, A. Philip Randolph lobbied successfully for President Franklin D. Roosevelt to sign an executive order that

- (A) banned racial discrimination in workplaces receiving federal contracts
- (B) desegregated the United States military
- (C) provided strengthened collective bargaining rights to unions
- (D) declared lynching to be a federal crime
- (E) created an agency to provide low-cost housing in inner cities

17. According to some historians, European technological development eventually surpassed China's in the early modern period, in large part because, unlike China, Europe at that time was

- (A) better endowed with natural resources that fueled industrial and technical development
- (B) never threatened by external invasions during the period and thus able to devote more time and resources to scientific research
- (C) almost entirely within the temperate climatic zone and thus protected from extremes of harsh weather
- (D) divided into many independent states whose rivalries spurred scientific and technological competition
- (E) dependent on wheat, rather than rice, as its chief cereal crop

18. Which of the following were major reform causes during the antebellum period in the United States?

- (A) Abolition and women's rights
- (B) Prison reform and direct election of senators
- (C) Temperance and government corruption
- (D) Corporate regulation and the eight-hour workday
- (E) Free silver and poorhouses

19. The stated purpose of the First Crusade (1095-1099 C.E.) was to

- (A) open direct trade routes between Europe and India
- (B) conquer all Muslim-held territory in Asia
- (C) free the Christian holy sites in the Middle East that were under Muslim control
- (D) establish a Latin Christian principality in the Middle East to counter the Byzantine Empire
- (E) establish overseas colonies to ease population pressure in western Europe

Answer Key		
1.	C	11. D
2.	D	12. D
3.	C	13. D
4.	D	14. E
5.	E	15. A
6.	E	16. A
7.	B	17. D
8.	D	18. A
9.	A	19. C
10.	B	20. A

Note: The Major Field Test in History uses the chronological designations B.C.E. (Before the Common Era) and C.E. (Common Era). These designations correspond to B.C. and A.D., respectively, which are also used in historical writing and sources.

20.

**AFRICA: NATIONAL BOUNDARIES
2000**



The boundaries on the map of Africa above were mostly the creation of

- (A) European powers at the time of decolonization
- (B) ethnic secessions from existing African states in postcolonial times
- (C) wars of conquest by a few powerful African states in postcolonial times
- (D) negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War
- (E) territorial exchange by African states shortly after independence



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