

LONG ESSAY QUESTION #4

The long essay question requires students to do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a **historically defensible thesis** or claim that establishes a line of reasoning.
- Describe a **broader historical context** relevant to the prompt.
- Support an argument in response to the prompt using **specific and relevant** examples of evidence.
- Demonstrate a **complex understanding** of the historical development that is the focus of the prompt, using evidence to corroborate, qualify, or modify an argument that addresses the question.
- Students must select one of the three long essay questions. Each question focuses on the same reasoning process, but historical developments and processes in different time periods. The first option focuses primarily on historical developments or processes between 1450 and 1700, the second primarily on historical developments or processes between 1648 and 1914, and the third primarily on historical developments or processes between 1815 and 2001.

Evaluate the most significant cultural effect of the Cold War during the period 1945-1980.

Structuring your essay:

It is recommended that you spend 40 minutes planning and writing your essay.

In this essay, you will want to create a strong thesis statement that makes a clear statement about the MOST significant cultural effect of the Cold War. In essence, you will want to rank the effects from most important to lesser importance. In general, you should try for three historical examples that you can base the body of the essay on, each example will be approximately a paragraph in length.

You can choose to begin the essay with a description of the broader historical context. Very simply: Ask yourself, what events led to the Cold War? If you can, in a paragraph, discuss the factors that led to the Cold War and then connect it to your thesis. You can also begin your essay with the thesis and then discuss the events leading to the Cold War, but both of these requirements should be in the beginning of the essay.

Once you have completed the **Thesis** and **Contextualization**, begin the “body” of your essay using the three examples you stated in your thesis. Using your knowledge of the period, and **specific facts** that you can recall, explain **WHY and HOW** these examples are significant. It is not enough to describe them, you must explain the **WHY and HOW**.

The last paragraph of your essay you should try to demonstrate complex understanding. Complex Understanding refers to a modification or qualification of your argument. It may be as simple as saying “On the other hand some argue the most significant effect is...” or you can make the argument that the Cold War was primarily a political and economic event and had very little effect on the culture of Europe.

Thesis Examples that earn a point:

The most significant cultural effect of the Cold War on Europe was the influence of American culture as shown in movies, music and television. American influence led to a great deal of enthusiasm as well as criticism.

In spite of the political division of Europe along democratic and communist lines during the Cold War, the most significant effect was the adoption of the consumer culture by many western European countries which stood in stark contrast to the communist states in the East which emphasized equality with a classless society.

During the Cold War the most significant cultural effect was the division of Europe not just on political or economic basis but culturally with the adoption of a consumer culture in the west, creation of the welfare state in the west and the unfulfilled promise of communist governments to provide for its citizens.

Thesis Examples that do NOT earn a point:

The most significant effect of the Cold War in Europe was the creation of NATO and the Warsaw Pact and the Berlin Wall.

The Cold War had a great effect on Europe because of the divisions created after World War II and the establishment of communist governments in places like Poland and Czechoslovakia.

There were many cultural effects because of the division of Europe.

Contextualization:

Description of events or factors that led to the Cold War.

- Defeat of Germany and Italy in WWII by the Allies. The western democracies in Europe and the United States allied with the communist Soviet Union to defeat Nazism. They put aside their political differences in order to focus solely on victory.
- Terrible loss of lives in the Soviet Union led Stalin to want “buffer zones” between the Soviet Union and Germany.
- Despite holding several conferences, the Big 3 Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt could not come to an agreement about the state of eastern Europe after the defeat of Germany. Almost by default, where the armies were at the end of the war, was where the new borders of Europe would be. Eastern Europe would be controlled by the Soviets and Western Europe would be controlled by the US.
- The division of Berlin and Germany as a result of the Potsdam conference.

Evidence:

The essay MAY include explanation and analysis of some of the following:

- After the war western Europe adopted the concept of liberal democracy as their system of government. Including the rule of law, individual liberties and a representative government. Most Western European nations used a combination of free enterprise and an extensive

welfare system, including national health care, unemployment benefits and retirement pensions. The result over time was the creation of mass consumer societies where products like washing machines, televisions and automobiles became symbols of the new prosperity.

- The German Economic miracle of the 1950's and 60's in which the West German focused their efforts on creating a country that was economically powerful, not militarily. Aided initially by the US Marshall Plan, German GDP, wages and living standards steadily rose throughout the Cold War, eventually emerging as the largest economy in Europe.
- The embrace of American movies, television and popular music. Although Europe produced countless films that were well made and thought provoking, American made films were extremely popular in Europe, playing a role in "Americanization" of Europe. Along with the automobile, and owning a home the television became a symbol of the American inspired "middle class dream". American programs were sold to European television networks for broadcast. Most significantly was the embrace of American Rock n Roll with performers such as Chuck Berry, Little Richard and Elvis Presley. Ironically, in the 1960's British groups such as the Beatles made rock n roll their own and exported it back to the US as well as the rest of the world.
- In Eastern Europe, reconstruction from the devastation of war was much harder and took more time. The communist nations developed an unwritten pact with their citizens in which the people would endure political repression and a lack of individual freedom for cradle to grave welfare and gradual improvements in material life. These communist regimes failed to keep up with consumer demand. Waiting lists of months or years were common for such consumer products as washing machines and cars. To compensate for the lack of consumer products, emphasized a better social safety net, larger access to education and scientific breakthroughs like the development of space technology such as Sputnik.

Analysis and Reasoning:

To earn this point you will need to demonstrate a complex understanding of the historical development in the prompt, using evidence to corroborate (confirm or support), qualify or modify an argument. (Examples)

Example of Nuance:

Although the Western European Nations embraced the consumer culture begun in the United States, many in Europe reacted negatively toward this idea. The student protests of 1968 in Paris, was in many ways a protest of the commercial culture that had been established after the war. The green party in Germany and elsewhere advocated for environmental issues and an end of the development of nuclear weapons.

Example of Nuance:

In Eastern Europe, communist governments established greater educational opportunities for all of its citizens including women. Women participated fully in economic life, often outnumbering men in the workforce. Also a majority of doctors and teachers were women. Soviet women for example were well represented in all levels of government. On the other hand, in the "freer" societies of the west women were often relegated to second class citizen status. The modern feminist movement began with the publication of Simone de Beauvoir's work *The Second Sex*. Beauvoir called for

women to expand their role in society by working and having careers. This argument was assisted by the development of the birth control pill allowing women to decide when and if they were to have children. By the 1980's women had achieved much regarding equal access to professions, education and equality.

Changes in countries:

Having carried on the war against Germany alone, after the war the British people called for and got a greater share of the economic pie. The Atlee government instituted cradle to grave social welfare policies, most notably the creation of the National Health Service. The Scandinavian countries also led the way in granting generous social welfare benefits to their citizens. However, the programs were costly and during the 1970's and 1980's many governments began curtailing aspects of these programs. Most notably the actions of Margaret Thatcher's tory governments in the 1980's.

Changes in countries:

Despite the intense propaganda of the communist nations of eastern Europe many of their citizens desired not only freedom, but the consumer goods that were plentiful in the West. Disputing this communist propaganda broadcasts from Western Europe including Radio Free Europe exposed the citizens of the East to uncensored news, western style programs and most importantly popular music. Many rock n roll artists were extremely popular behind the iron curtain despite the fact that they were officially banned. Also, American made blue jeans were particularly prized by the young people of Eastern Europe as a symbol of fashion and freedom.