

# How to Answer a Multiple-Choice Question

Besides possessing the knowledge and skills that are being tested, you have to be a good test-taker to do your best on this or any test. Here are the three basic steps we recommend for answering multiple-choice questions on Florida's U.S. History End-of-Course Assessment. In fact, these same steps can be used to answer multiple-choice questions on almost any test.

## 1 Understand the Question

Make sure you read the question carefully. Take special care in examining any document or data that may be contained in the question itself. Also, make sure you understand what the question asks for. Questions on the U.S. History End-of-Course Assessment will most likely ask you one of the following:

- ▶ to identify the **cause** of something: *what made it happen?*
- ▶ to identify or analyze the **effect** or **impact** of something: *how did it influence people or change things?*
- ▶ to **explain** or **describe** an event or development: *how did it happen? what was it like?*
- ▶ to **identify** or **define** something: *what is it?*
- ▶ to **compare** two or more things: *what are their similarities and differences?*
- ▶ to **sequence** events: *in what order did they occur? which was first or last?*

- ▶ to **interpret** a document, an illustration, a cartoon, a map, a table, or a graph: *what issue is addressed in this cartoon?*
- ▶ to provide an **example** of something: *which best illustrates this principle?*
- ▶ to make a **prediction**: *what is most likely to happen next?*
- ▶ to **categorize** people events, places, or concepts: *which action furthered the goal of international peace?*
- ▶ to make a **generalization** or to draw a **conclusion**: *Based on the photograph, what conclusion can be made about child labor in the United States in the 1880s?*

## 2 Think About What You Know.

Here comes the hardest part! Many students wish to rush ahead: they want to finish the test early. To do your best, however, you have to take your time. Once you have read and understood the question, take a moment to think about the topic that it asks about. For example, if the question asks about the causes of the Civil War, think about what you can remember about the causes of the Civil War. You might think about sectionalism, states' rights, slavery, the abolitionists, and the conflicts and compromises in Congress. You might also recall how the election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860 divided the nation. Then think how you might answer the question, based on what you can recall, *without looking at the answer choices.*

### 3 Answer the Question.

Now you are ready to answer the question. Review the question. Look carefully at the answer choices. Eliminate any answer choices that are obviously wrong or irrelevant (*not related to the question or its topic*). Then

choose the best of the remaining answer choices, based on your knowledge and understanding.

If you have extra time after you have finished the test, be sure to check your work again to eliminate any careless mistakes.

## Special Types of Questions

Many questions on Florida's End-of-Course Assessment will ask about a "graphic" that is a part of the question. It is important for you to be able to interpret these different types of graphics, including maps, graphs, charts, tables, political cartoons, illustrations, photographs, and timelines. Each of these is simply another way of presenting or displaying information.

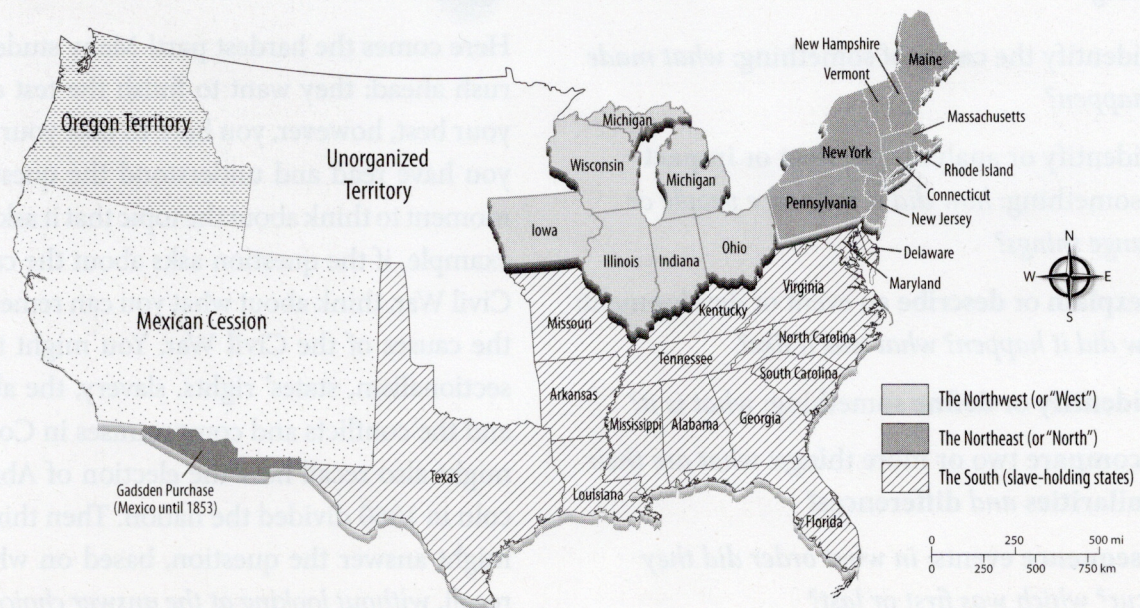
Questions may ask what the graphic shows, or they may ask you to make an inference or draw a conclusion about the graphic. You might also be asked to identify the causes or effects of the situation or event described by the picture, timeline, photograph or other graphic. Often you will have to apply your knowledge of U.S. history to answer the question.

The rest of this chapter looks at six of the most important types of graphics that may appear on the test.

### Maps

A map is used to show geographical information. It may show the boundaries between countries, the location of cities, or the physical characteristics of a place. A *key* or *legend* will often explain any symbols on the map. Maps may also have a *scale* to show what their dimensions represent in real life, and a *compass* (or *direction indicator*).

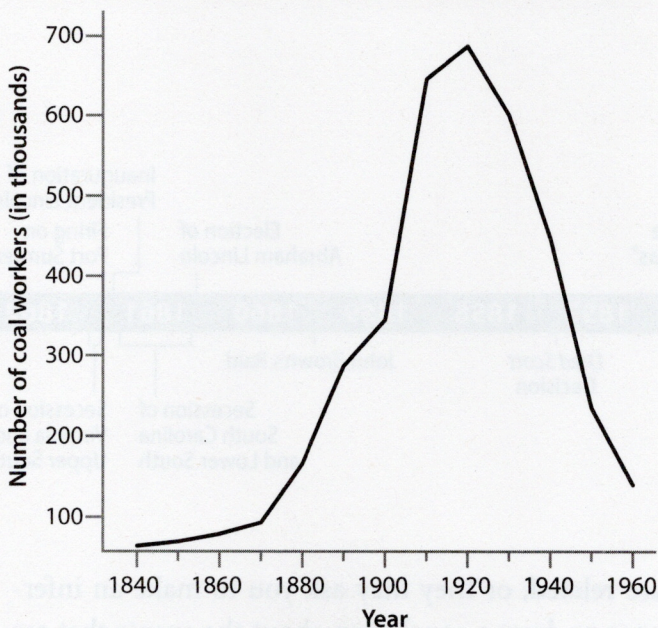
- ▶ What does this map show?
- ▶ Based on the map, which states permitted slavery in 1850?
- ▶ What conditions led to the divisions shown on this map?
- ▶ What conclusions can you draw from this map?



## Graphs

Graphs are used to display quantitative information. A *bar graph* has bars representing different amounts. Often it is used to compare things, such as the number of Union and Confederate soldiers killed in the Civil War, or the number of battleships of each power in the 1920s. *Line graphs* show how the amount or size of something has changed over time. For example, a line graph might show the number of workers in the coal industry from 1850 to 1950. Or it could show the average income for Americans from 1900 to 2000. To interpret a line graph, be sure to understand both the “Y-axis” on the left side and the “X-axis” on the bottom. Usually the Y-axis is a “yard stick” providing the numbers for measuring, such as how many thousands of workers, while the X-axis indicates the passage of time.

Numbers of Workers in U.S. Coal Mining (in thousands)



Source: Historical Statistics of the United States

- ▶ On a separate sheet of paper, turn this line graph into a bar graph showing the number of American coal miners in 1860, 1900 and 1960.

## Charts and Tables

Charts and tables often present information in rows and columns. This format makes it easy to locate particular facts or numbers. The top row usually provides headings, telling the reader what each col-

umn stands for. The left column lists the individual items the chart or table describes.

- ▶ From the line graph above, create your own table showing the number of American coal miners every decade from 1850 to 1920.

## Political Cartoons

A political cartoon is a cartoon by an artist commenting on current affairs, social conditions or events. Political cartoonists often question authority, draw attention to corruption, or expose insincerity and hypocrisy. Cartoonists frequently use satire, exaggerate features, or make comparisons with their art to make their point. For example, a cartoonist might draw the American President with a crown and the robes of a king. What would the artist be trying to say? The artist probably thinks the President is assuming too much power, or acting without consulting Congress or the public. When looking at a cartoon, be sure to understand what it shows. What is the time period of the cartoon? Who is represented? What are the people in the cartoon doing? Are there any special symbols or references? What were some of the key issues of that time period? Finally, what is the cartoonist’s point of view?



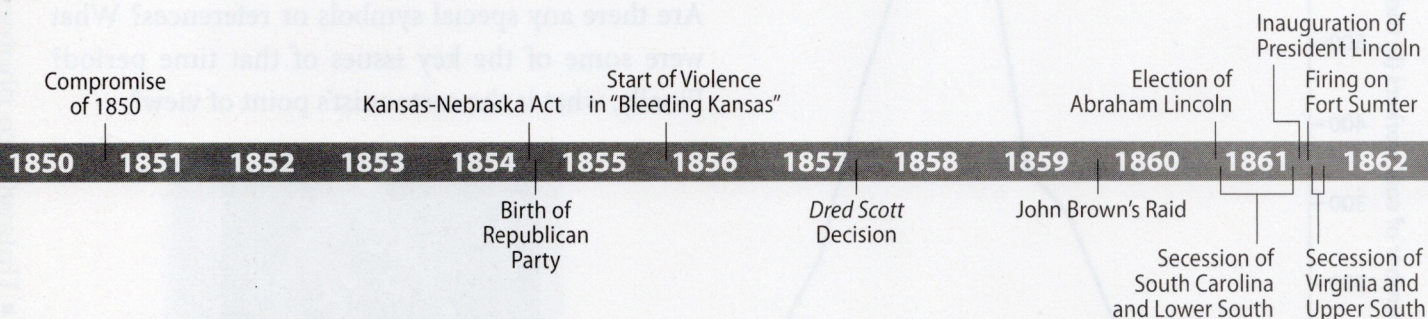
- ▶ Andrew Jackson was President of the United States from 1829 to 1837. What is this cartoonist’s view of Andrew Jackson?
- ▶ Which features of the cartoon helped you to determine the cartoonist’s point of view?

## Photographs and Illustrations

A photograph, drawing or painting gives us a snapshot into the past. Historians use these sources to understand what the past was really like. To interpret a photograph or illustration, you have to be a good detective. What details does the picture show? Consider the faces and clothing of any people in the photograph or picture. Also, consider the setting or background. What can you learn from it? Think of the photograph or illustration as a piece of evidence. A photograph might be used, for example, to show conditions for workers in an early 20th century coal mine. From the picture, you could see what equipment was used, how crowded the mine was, how much personal space each worker had, and how safe conditions were. You might also judge how energetic or tired the workers seem, their ages, and their gender and racial background. Questions on a photograph or illustration may also ask you what the picture shows or to draw conclusions from it.



- ▶ How old are the workers in this coal mine?
- ▶ What equipment are they using?
- ▶ Why do you think this photograph was taken?
- ▶ What conclusions can you draw from this photograph?



## Timelines

A timeline shows a series of events arranged along a line in the order, or sequence, in which they occurred. Usually, the left side of the timeline marks the beginning of the time period it shows, and the right side marks the end. As dates move from left to right, they move closer to the present. A timeline usually shows a series of related events. It is useful because we can see exactly when they occurred and how they relate to each other. Questions on timelines may ask about how the events on the timeline

are related, or they may ask you to make an inference or draw a conclusion about the events that are shown.

- ▶ What other events might be placed on this timeline?
- ▶ What were some of the consequences of the events shown on the timeline?
- ▶ Make your own timeline showing how you spent yesterday.