



**Preparing for Spring  
Semester, 2009 District American History Assessment**

Dear Students:

Working with the practice activities below can help you prepare to respond thoughtfully to this semester's district assessment question for American history. Below is the question you will be asked to answer.

Question

How successful were the "Great Society" programs and policies of President Lyndon Johnson? By 1972 had America become a "great", "almost great", or "not so great" society?

Here are some important ideas to consider as you prepare to write this essay.

**I. Preparing to write the essay: What criteria will you use to evaluate (judge) Johnson's Great Society programs?**

As you learned in 10<sup>th</sup> grade World History, a DBQ (document based question) asks you to write a persuasive essay. Like the Progressive Era essay you wrote during fall semester, your Great Society essay will be composed using information learned in class and information provided in the source documents in the assessment.

It is important to understand and define for yourself the terms of the question. This means that an important part of developing a thoughtful answer to the question on the Great Society will be to decide what makes a society "great." On the Progressive Era (1900 - 1920) assessment you were asked to decide how successful Progressive Era reformers were in creating a more "free and humane" society. This essay question asks you to decide how successful President Johnson's "Great Society" programs of the 1960s were in creating a great society.

In 1964 President Lyndon Johnson said three of the central goals of the Great Society were building great cities, protecting the environment, and improving education. He also said that this Great Society rests upon "abundance and liberty for all and demands an end to poverty and racial injustice...a place where every child can find knowledge to enrich his mind and enlarge his talents..."

Your task on the assessment is to judge how successful Johnson's policies and practices were in achieving this goal.

**II. Preparing to write the essay: The importance of integrating historical background knowledge with source documents.**

An important key to success on this assessment and in writing history is to weave together what you learn about know and understand about a topic with evidence that illustrates and supports that knowledge. When teachers scored student papers from the fall Progressive Era assessment they observed that a number of students had some difficulty in writing an essay in which they have to include both evidence from source documents and information taken from what was learned in class through readings and discussion. Weaving the two together is an important skill because it means you are able to successfully demonstrate a fundamental academic literacy task—making an historical argument [a claim], providing background to the argument, and then supporting the argument with evidence.

**This activity is designed to help you practice this skill. Below are a series of charts that contain both background information and sources about some key pieces of President Johnson’s Great Society program. The left hand column of the chart contains pieces of background information about a particular program, while the right hand column contains evidence that connects to the content information.**

<b>Topic: Specific Program, Policy, or Law</b>	
Background Information	Sources

**Your task is to combine the two columns into a paragraph that...**

- 1) Provides some background information that introduces the topic of the paragraph.
- 2) Contains the claim [argument] or “baby thesis” of the paragraph.
- 3) Uses evidence to support baby thesis of paragraph.
- 4) Concludes with a sentence that supports the claim made earlier in paragraph.

To practice this skill you will work with information on the following topics:

- 1) *Civil Rights Act of 1964* (work is completed to model one possible way to complete the assignment)
- 2) *Economic Opportunity Act of 1964*
- 3) *Medicare and Medicaid Acts of 1965*
- 4) *Voting Rights Act of 1965*
- 5) *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965*

*Example of how to work with this assignment.*

**I. 1964 – Passage of the Civil Rights Act**

I. Background Information	II. Sources about the Civil Rights Act
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• After President Kennedy's assassination on November 22, 1963, the new president, Lyndon Baines Johnson, received public support.</li> <li>• Building on the public support Johnson was able to get a number of laws passed that were first proposed under Kennedy, including the Civil Rights Act of 1964. - From <a href="http://www.pbs.org/johngardner/chapters/4c.html">http://www.pbs.org/johngardner/chapters/4c.html</a></li> <li>• The Civil Rights Act of 1964 made discrimination on the basis of race in employment and in public accommodations, including gas stations, restaurants, hotels (serving more than five people), movie theaters, and airline terminals, illegal in the United States - from "The Almost Great Society: The 1960s," <a href="http://us.history.wisc.edu/hist102/lectures/lecture27.html">http://us.history.wisc.edu/hist102/lectures/lecture27.html</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "We have talked long enough in this country about equal rights...We have talked for one hundred years or more. It is time now to write the next chapter, and to write it in the books of law." - from President Lyndon Johnson, Speech before Congress, November 27, 1963 (five days after President Kennedy's assassination)</li> <li>• "The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was the first major Civil Rights law since Reconstruction, but it lacked many enforcement powers. For example, it outlawed discrimination in employment but gave the government little power to make sure the law was followed. This and other problems would have to be dealt with in future legislation." - from <u>Civil Rights Chronicle</u>, Legacy Publishing, 2003, p. 271.</li> </ul>

Use the information from both columns to write a paragraph that makes a claim [has a thesis] and supports it with evidence.

1) Background information that introduces the topic of the paragraph.

2) The claim or "baby thesis" of the paragraph. [in bold print]

3) Evidence to support baby thesis of paragraph.

4) Concluding sentence that supports claim made earlier in paragraph.

1) After the assassination of President Kennedy in 1963, the new President, Lyndon Johnson, received a great deal of public support. He used that support to help pass a number of laws first proposed by Kennedy. These laws included the Civil Rights Act of 1964. **2) *The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was an important step in the struggle for Civil Rights, but it was also limited in what it could accomplish.*** 3) When President Johnson proposed law, he said, "We have talked long enough in this country about equal rights...We have talked for one hundred years or more. It is time now to write the next chapter, and to write it in the books of law." (Speech to Congress, November 27, 1963) The law, passed in 1964, made it illegal to discriminate on the basis of race in public accommodations such as gas stations, hotels, and movie theaters. The first major Civil Rights law since Reconstruction, it was a step in the right direction, but it was also limited since it lacked many enforcement powers. For example, it outlawed discrimination in employment but gave the government little power to make sure the law was followed. (Civil Rights Chronicle, 1963, p. 271) 4) This meant that the problems it tried to solve would have to wait until future laws were passed.

## II. 1964 – Economic Opportunity Act

I. Background Information	II. Sources about the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building on the success in passing the Civil Rights Act, Johnson introduced his own vision for America: "the Great Society".</li> <li>• The first piece of Great Society legislation, the Economic Opportunity Act 1964. It created a federal Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO).</li> <li>• People debated how successful this Act was in bringing about the elimination of poverty.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The Great Society rests on abundance and liberty for all...But that is just the beginning.” - President Johnson, May, 1964</li> <li>▪ “The purpose of community action is to change the environment that keeps the poor in their place...Major components will be pre-school and pre-college programs, adult literacy...housing and a variety of counseling programs offered through neighborhood centers. - Sargent Shriver, Director of the Office of Economic Opportunity, 1965.</li> <li>▪ Republican Senator Goldwater opposed passing this bill because it relied on the national government to solve the problems of the poor. He accused the president of "playing politics with poverty." <a href="http://www.answers.com/topic/economic-opportunity-act">http://www.answers.com/topic/economic-opportunity-act</a></li> <li>▪ The act failed to achieve its purpose "to eliminate the paradox of poverty in the midst of plenty" because of the Vietnam War and the lack of funding. – Michael Harrington, in <i>The New American Poverty</i>, 1984.</li> <li>• The Economic Opportunity Act focused the attention of the nation and the federal government on poverty and the need to reduce, if not to eliminate, its root causes. <a href="http://www.answers.com/topic/economic-opportunity-act">http://www.answers.com/topic/economic-opportunity-act</a></li> </ul>

1) Background information that introduces the topic of the paragraph.

---

---

---

2) The claim or "baby thesis" of the paragraph.  
**[in bold print]**

---

---

---

---

3) Evidence to support baby thesis of paragraph.

---

---

---

---

---

4) Concluding sentence that supports claim made earlier in paragraph.

---

---



#### IV. 1965 – Expansion of Voting Rights

##### I. Background Information

##### II. Sources about Voting Rights

##### Voting Rights Act of 1965

- After the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 the focus on many civil rights organizations shifted from integration to voting rights.
- In 1964 hundreds of college students participated in “Freedom Summer,” an organized effort to register African Americans in Mississippi to vote.
- In Selma, Alabama in 1964 there were 15,000 eligible black voters, yet only 335 had been able to register to vote.
- In early 1965, nonviolent protesters came to Selma to march from that city to the state capitol in Montgomery. Governor George Wallace sent in state troopers to stop the march and violence ensued.
- In response to this violence, Congress passed the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which eliminated various barriers to voter registration--such as literacy tests-- used by white southerners to restrict African-American voting.

In December 1964 the President [Johnson] told me it was impossible to get a voting rights bill, but three months later the same President was on television calling for the passage of a voting rights bill in Congress. The President had said nothing could be done. But we started a movement.

- Martin Luther King Jr., discussing the impact of the Selma, Alabama voting rights campaign., from the Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr., p. 271.

1) Background information that introduces the topic of the paragraph.

2) The claim or “baby thesis” of the paragraph.  
**[in bold print]**

3) Evidence to support baby thesis of paragraph.

4) Concluding sentence that supports claim made earlier in paragraph.



Urban renewal and conservation was the third major component of the Great Society. Ever since the end of World War II, cities faced a shortage of good, affordable housing. At the same time, the suburbanization of America along with the changing economy meant that many businesses began to leave city centers, an exodus that was accelerated by urban rioting that began in earnest after the Watts riot in 1965 in Los Angeles, and continued throughout Johnson's term. As part of a response, Johnson signed the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1965 that established the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and expanded funding for public housing. In addition, he provided aid to cities to rebuild blighted areas.

President Lyndon B. Johnson submitted a bill to Congress in March 1965 proposing the rent-supplement program as part of his Great Society program. In his message on housing accompanying the bill transmitted to congress, President Johnson argued that "the most crucial new instrument in our effort to improve the American city is the rent supplement." He proposed the program to assist low- and moderate-income renters whose incomes were above the initial limits set for those who sought public housing.

1) Background information that introduces the topic of the paragraph.

2) The claim or "baby thesis" of the paragraph.  
**[in bold print]**

3) Evidence to support baby thesis of paragraph.

4) Concluding sentence that supports claim made earlier in paragraph.

Johnson's ambitions for a Great Society were checked by his ambitions in Vietnam. The cost of the war in Vietnam along with the costs of his domestic programs strained the economy. Moreover, as the war became more and more unpopular, Johnson lost the political capital needed to continue these reforms. Critics of the Great Society also charged that these programs just created bureaucracies and threw money at problems without producing results. Still others rejected the notion that the federal government should be undertaking these tasks at all. Nevertheless, the impact of the Great Society in many areas is undisputed as political leaders today still wrestle with how to deal with these issues of poverty, health care, and education.

--

1) Background information that introduces the topic of the paragraph.

2) The claim or "baby thesis" of the paragraph.  
**[in bold print]**

3) Evidence to support baby thesis of paragraph.

4) Concluding sentence that supports claim made earlier in paragraph.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---