

2025



AP[®] European History

Sample Student Responses and Scoring Commentary Set 1

Inside:

Long Essay Question 4

- Scoring Guidelines**
- Student Samples**
- Scoring Commentary**

Question 4: Long Essay Question, Nazism vs. Communism

6 points

General Scoring Notes

- Except where otherwise noted, each point of these rubrics is earned independently; for example, a student could earn a point for evidence without earning a point for thesis/claim.
- **Accuracy:** The components of these rubrics require that students demonstrate historically defensible content knowledge. Given the timed nature of the exam, essays may contain errors that do not detract from their overall quality, as long as the historical content used to advance the argument is accurate.
- **Clarity:** Exam essays should be considered first drafts and thus may contain grammatical errors. Those errors will not be counted against a student unless they obscure the successful demonstration of the content knowledge, skills, and practices described below.

Evaluate the most significant difference between the Nazi regime in Germany and the communist regime in the Soviet Union.

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria	
<p>Row A Thesis/Claim (0–1 points)</p>	<p>0 points Does not meet the criteria for one point.</p>	<p>1 point Responds to the prompt with a historically defensible thesis/claim that establishes a line of reasoning.</p>
Decision Rules and Scoring Notes		
<p>Responses that do not earn this point:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are not historically defensible. • Only restate or rephrase the prompt. • Do not respond to the prompt. • Do not establish a line of reasoning. • Are overgeneralized. 		<p>Responses that earn this point:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a historically defensible thesis or claim about the most significant difference between the Nazi regime in Germany and the communist regime in the Soviet Union. The thesis or claim must either provide some indication of the reason for making that claim OR establish categories of the argument.
<p>Examples that do not earn this point:</p> <p>Provide a restatement of the prompt</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“There were huge differences between communism and Nazism.”</i> <p>Provide a historically defensible claim, but do not establish a line of reasoning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“A major difference between the regimes was their attitudes towards private property.”</i> <p>Are overgeneralized</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“The two regimes differed in how they ran their countries.”</i> 		<p>Examples that earn this point:</p> <p>Establish a line of reasoning that evaluates the topic of the prompt</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Though both Nazi and Communist regimes were extremely brutal, communism proved more lasting and arguably self-destructed.”</i> <p>Establish a line of reasoning that evaluates the topic of the prompt with analytic categories</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Even though both regimes were based on the cults of personality of Hitler and Stalin, respectively, the communist regime was more stable, rooted in strong bureaucracy, and designed to function with a replaceable leader.”</i> <p>Establish a line of reasoning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Both the Nazi and communist regimes were totalitarian, but only Hitler’s ideology was based on antisemitism.”</i> [Minimally acceptable thesis/claim]
<p>Additional Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The thesis or claim must consist of one or more sentences located in one place, either in the introduction or the conclusion (which may not be limited to the first or last paragraphs). • The thesis or claim must identify a relevant development(s) in the period, although it is not required to encompass the entire period. 		

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria	
<p>Row B Contextualization</p>	<p>0 points Does not meet the criteria for one point.</p>	<p>1 point Describes a broader historical context relevant to the prompt.</p>
<p>(0–1 points)</p>	<p>Decision Rules and Scoring Notes</p>	
	<p>Responses that do not earn this point:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide an overgeneralized statement about the time period referenced in the prompt. • Provide context that is not relevant to the prompt. • Provide a passing phrase or reference. <p>Examples that do not earn this point:</p> <p>Do not provide context relevant to the topic of the prompt</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“After the Napoleonic Wars, conservative monarchies sought to prevent revolution.”</i> <p>Passing phrase or reference</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Karl Marx was a communist.”</i> 	<p>Responses that earn this point:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurately describe a context relevant to the regimes of Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. <p>Examples of relevant context that earn this point include the following, if appropriate elaboration is provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marxist-Leninist ideas of revolution • World War I and its aftermath • The Bolshevik Revolution • The Russian civil war • The German Weimar Republic • The Treaty of Versailles and its harsh treatment of Germany • Nationalism and racism/antisemitism • Social Darwinism • Stalin’s rise to power • Tsarism • Wilhelmine Germany • Bismarck • The 1905 Revolution • The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk • Comintern and Anti-Comintern • Prussian militarism • Cold War/Iron Curtain <p>Example of acceptable contextualization:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“While antisemitism always existed in Europe, it was the developments of the 19th century that gave it a modern racist justification, which was then employed by Hitler in his ideology.”</i> • <i>“Both regimes rose as a result of the devastating effects of the First World War.”</i> [Minimally acceptable contextualization]

Additional Notes:

- The response must describe broader historical events, developments, or processes that occur before, during, or continue after the time frame of the question that are relevant to the topic of the prompt.
- To earn this point, the context provided must be more than a phrase or reference.

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria		
<p>Row C Evidence (0–2 points)</p>	<p>0 points Does not meet the criteria for one point.</p>	<p>1 point Provides specific examples of at least two pieces of evidence relevant to the topic of the prompt.</p>	<p>2 points Supports an argument in response to the prompt using at least two pieces of specific and relevant evidence.</p>
Decision Rules and Scoring Notes			
<p>Responses that do not earn points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify a single piece of evidence. • Provide evidence that is not relevant to the topic of the prompt. • Provide evidence that is outside the time period or region specified in the prompt. • Repeat information that is specified in the prompt. 			
<p>Responses that earn 1 point:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify at least two specific historical examples relevant to the regimes of Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. 			
<p>Responses that earn 2 points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use at least two specific historical examples to support an argument regarding the most significant difference between the Nazi regime in Germany and the communist regime in the Soviet Union. 			
<p>Examples that do not earn points:</p> <p>Provide evidence that is not relevant to the topic of the prompt</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“The United States remained neutral through the early part of the Second World War.”</i> 			
<p>Examples of evidence that are specific and relevant include the following (two examples required):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Totalitarian policies • Soviet control of industry and the economy • Nazi antisemitism and the Holocaust • The Holodomor [Ukrainian famine] • Anti-kulak policies • Racial hierarchy under Nazism and the “New Order” • Soviet championing of the workers and the proletarian class • Nazism’s aggressive foreign policy [“living space,” the return of German minorities to German rule] • The Soviet Union’s aggressive foreign policy [dividing Poland, the invasion of Finland, the Baltic states] • The Nazi invasion of Soviet Union [Operation Barbarossa] • Soviet internationalism • Length of the Nazi regime in Germany vs. Soviet regime in the USSR • Soviet repression and the Gulag • Nazi Gestapo and secret police • Soviet military purges • Comintern and Anti-Comintern 			
<p>Examples that successfully support an argument with evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“The central importance of racism to the Nazi regime can be seen in the attempt to kill the European Jewish population and other minorities that were thought of as undesirable or dangerous.”</i> [Uses evidence to support an argument about the centrality of racial ideology for Nazism in comparison to the Soviet Union] • <i>“Communism, which was the root of the Soviet ideology was internationalist by design addressing all workers of the world while Nazism, by its design, was intended to promote the interests only of the Germans.”</i> [Uses evidence to support an argument about the potential universality of communism as ideology vs exclusivity of German Nazism] • <i>“While communist terror mostly focused on internal enemies of the state, the majority of victims of German Nazism were from other countries occupied by Germany.”</i> [Uses evidence to support an argument about the different nature and methods of terror in both regimes] 			

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nuremberg Laws and Kristallnacht• New Economic Policy (NEP)• Imperial conquest and economic exploitation <p>Example of a statement that earns one point for evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>“Hitler aggressively sought to expand Germany from its post-Versailles boundaries, annexing areas with German populations and finally attacking non-German states. In the same period, the Soviet Union also expanded but claimed it was a defensive measure against capitalist countries.”</i>	
<p>Additional Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Typically, statements credited as evidence will be more specific than statements credited as contextualization.• If a response has a multipart argument, then it can meet the threshold of two pieces of evidence by giving one example for one part of the argument and another example for a different part of the argument, but the total number of examples must still be at least two.		

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria		
<p>Row D Analysis and Reasoning (0–2 points)</p>	<p>0 points Does not meet the criteria for one point.</p>	<p>1 point Uses historical reasoning [e.g. comparison, causation, continuity and change] to frame or structure an argument that addresses the prompt.</p>	<p>2 points Demonstrates a complex understanding of the historical development that is the focus of the prompt through sophisticated argumentation and/or effective use of evidence.</p>
Decision Rules and Scoring Notes			

	<i>corporations.</i> " [Indicates a difference between economic systems of the two regimes]	
Additional Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To earn the first point for analysis and reasoning, the response must use historical reasoning to structure a response to the prompt, although the reasoning might be uneven or imbalanced, or the evidence may be overly general or lacking in specificity.• This complex understanding must be part of the argument and may be demonstrated in any part of the response.• While it is not necessary for this complex understanding to be woven throughout the response, it must be more than merely a phrase or reference.		

Sample 4A 1 of 2

World War I created heightened tensions amongst European nations as well as internal conflicts within Russia and Germany. Russia's continuation as a power in World War I created a Russian civil war internally and caused a push towards communism from Lenin as workers and peasants weren't getting enough money or food. After World War I came to a ceasefire and the Treaty of Versailles was signed, which placed heavy reparation payments on Germany, inflation occurred and made money worthless. This left room for the Nazi party to rise up with Hitler as the leader with a promise to make Germany strong again and help the citizens. Though both regimes rose up in their respective countries due to neglect of the government towards lower class and everyday civilians, they functioned very differently with their goals. The most significant difference between the Nazi regime in Germany and the communist regime in the Soviet Union was the Nazis were focused on world domination and creating the ultimate race of people while the Soviets mostly focused on control of their own people. The less significant difference between the Nazi regime in Germany and the communist regime in the Soviet Union was their differences in economic systems.

The most significant difference between the Nazi regime in Germany and the communist regime in the Soviet Union was the Nazis were focused on world domination and creating the ultimate race of people while the Soviets mostly focused on control of their own people. Within Nazi Germany, Hitler was in power. After being appointed chancellor and later taking the role as dictator- officially ending the Weimar Republic -he rebuilt Germany's military despite the limitations placed on them by the Treaty of Versailles. He started out by invading Czechoslovakia and taking over the Sudetenland. With Europe as a whole following the policy of appeasement, Nazi Germany continued to conquer lands around them which eventually triggered World War II with their invasion of Poland. From there, Germany fought with blitzkrieg tactics in an attempt to take over all of Europe, all whilst starting up concentration camps to eliminate Jews, gays, disabled people, and anyone who spoke out against their regime. The Soviet Union on the other hand primarily focused on themselves and having control over their own people versus all of Europe. Though the Russian Revolution originally worked off of Marxist ideas which called for a worldwide revolution, Lenin's main focus was just on a communist revolution within Russia. Once Stalin took over power, he kept this policy up as well. His main goal was on collectivization and keeping power over his people through this process as well as sending traitors to the gulag or to be eliminated discreetly. Though, both countries ran totalitarianistic regimes, they possessed extremely different goals as to how far their control should go during the period between the World Wars and during World War II, causing great disputes between the two, especially after Hitler broke the Nazi-Soviet Pact and invaded the Soviet Union.

The less significant difference between the Nazi regime in Germany and the communist regime in the Soviet Union was their difference in economic systems. Within the Soviet Union, starting with Lenin, they primarily focused on Marxists economic concepts within their country. Lenin took the general idea of a collectivized system where the government controlled everything and distributed food and money evenly amongst its people and transformed it for Russia to help its citizens survive. Once Stalin took power, he initiated his 5 year plan and collectivized all land which was used towards crop production and would distribute it equally throughout Russia, though this plan fell apart on him when Ukrainian farmers disobeyed him. He also had almost total control over their factories and industry with very little private business available. Nazi Germany on the other hand focused on rebuilding their economy after the hyper-inflation put on them from the Treaty of Versailles. To help pay back the Allies, Germany printed mass amounts of Marks and caused inflation to skyrocket, with a loaf of bread costing over 2 billion Marks. One of Hitler's goals in the beginning of his rise to power was fix Germany's economy and bring down inflation. As his power grew and Germany's economy started to fix itself, Hitler's main economic goal shifted to funding the war and not as much on helping struggling

Sample 4A 2 of 2

citizens. These differences would cause tensions to rise between the two nations and a general disliking between one another to form throughout their time co-existing with one another.

The most significant difference between the Nazi regime in Germany and the communist regime in the Soviet Union was the Nazis were focused on world domination and creating the ultimate race of people while the Soviets mostly focused on control of their own people. The less significant difference between the Nazi regime in Germany and the communist regime in the Soviet Union was their differences in economic systems. The combination of their differences as countries put them at odds with one another despite them both having totalitarianist regimes.

Sample 4B 1 of 1

Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union have many clear similarities, but one key difference. Hitler focused on consolidating power and building a perfect empire with the perfect people, which was his reason for the mass extermination of the Jews. But towards the end of Stalin's time in power, his goal was to catch up with the rest of Europe and even become better when it came to industrialization and innovation. While Hitler was not as focused on making Germany an innovative state, Stalin took part in late industrialization, the space race, and even the creation of nuclear weapons at the end of the cold war.

The space race took place in the mid to late 1900's and included the USSR and the United States of America. Stalin wanted to beat America to the moon and vice versa. Sputnik was the first space craft made by the Soviet Union, showing innovation and creation on Stalin's part, even if it was just to beat the United States. However, during the time when Hitler was in power, he made no efforts to find anything remotely like this or create any type of device that would change the world like Stalin did for the Soviet Union. There is a clear difference in goals between the two when you look at all Stalin created and what Hitler did not. Stalin was also in a race with the Americas to create nuclear weapons. During the Cold War, it was obvious Stalin was trying to beat the United States, but he also wanted the USSR to be industrialized and up to speed with the rest of Europe. Again, Hitler never created anything to help Germany keep up, or even show many efforts to industrialize Germany past what it already was. About halfway through the 1900's Stalin realized that while he had been focusing on gaining control of the USSR and other nations that the rest of the world was innovating and industrializing. While his original plan was to keep the states in the Soviet Union weak, he had realized that it was a bad idea due to the findings of other nations such as countries in Western Europe and America. While he was worried, Nazi Germany never cared about the fact they were under industrialized. Hitler's only focus was to conquer as many people as he could and keep the bloodlines of Germans and Austrians pure.

Overall, it is clear that Hitler and Stalin did not share some of the same values, even though they were both running dictatorships. Both dictators were cruel and ruthless, but Stalin still created things that would help innovate and modernize the Soviet Union. Many things he did even helped later innovators create and invent things to further modernize the world. Stalin was worried about the modernization of the USSR and Hitler was worried about taking over and keeping Germany under his watchful eye, to keep it just the way he wanted it.

Sample 4C 1 of 1

Soviets thought the people should have some say and they should be equal while The Germans wanted a dictatorship and that all people shouldnt be equal.

Hitler believed that not everyone was equal. He thought many different type of people were to blame for the Germans loss in WW1. The Germans believed in the perfect German who was tall blonde white and had blue eyes. Which Hitler nor did most of the people in charge of the Nazi regime look like. Hitler believed that he needed to gain control over Europe and but the Germans in charge because they were special and better than the rest. Hitler killed millions of people predominatly Jewish people because he believed that they were the reason the Germans had lost the first World War. He built concentration camps all over Europe to kill the Jewish people. Which was terrible. The soviet Union also killed millions of people that opposed them or didnt belive in communism. They also wanted to spread communism all over the world. They wanted control, money and power.

Both of the regimes did very awful things. They both killed innocent people and did anything to achieve their cause. The Nazi regime lost when they lost the war while the Societ Union was still in control of Russia. After the War the soviets wanted to spread communism all over Europe. The Americnas didnt like this so the cold war started. They split up Germany in two sections. The Soviet Union section were being mistreated and many people wanted to leave. The Soviets didnt let them leave. Then years passed the wall came down.

The Soviets had a little bit of longevity while the Nazi regime not so much. They had lost everything while the Soviet succeeded after the war. The soviet fought well and took over many countries after the dismantle of Nazi Germany.

Germany suffered a lot after the war.

Long Essay Question 4

Note: Student samples are quoted verbatim and may contain spelling and grammatical errors.

Overview

NEW for 2025: The question overviews can be found in the *Chief Reader Report on Student Responses on AP Central*.

Sample: 4A

Thesis Score: 1

Contextualization Score: 1

Evidence Score: 2

Analysis and Reasoning Score: 2

Total Score: 6

A. Thesis/Claim (0–1 points): 1

The response earned 1 point for thesis because in the first paragraph it makes the argument that the most significant difference between the Nazi regime in Germany and the communist regime in the Soviet Union was that the Nazis were focused on world domination and creating the ultimate race of people, while the Soviets mostly focused on control of their own people.

B. Contextualization (0–1 points): 1

The response earned 1 point for contextualization because in the first paragraph it details how the impact of World War I in both Russia and Germany led to the rise of the Nazis and the Soviet communists.

C. Evidence (0–2 points): 2

Providing Specific Examples of Evidence: 1

The response earned 1 point for evidence because it provides multiple pieces of evidence such as Hitler's invasion of Czechoslovakia and Poland, blitzkrieg, collectivization, and the Nazi-Soviet Pact.

Using Specific Evidence in Support of a Relevant Argument: 1

The response earned 1 point for using specific evidence in support of an argument because in the fourth paragraph, it connects the invasions of Czechoslovakia and Poland to the Nazi goal of world domination, and the role of collectivization in Stalin's goal of controlling his people.

D. Analysis and Reasoning (0– 2 points): 2

Using Historical Reasoning: 1

The response earned 1 point for using the historical reasoning of comparison because it repeatedly demonstrates that the goals and economic systems of Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union were drastically different.

Long Essay Question 4 (continued)**Demonstrating Complex Understanding: 1**

The response earned 1 point for demonstrating a complex understanding because it makes and supports with evidence multiple, distinct arguments about differences between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union and ranks them in terms of significance. It also achieves complex understanding through its use of at least 4 pieces of evidence to support arguments related to the prompt.

Sample: 4B**Thesis Score: 1****Contextualization Score: 0****Evidence Score: 2****Analysis and Reasoning Score: 1****Total Score: 4****A. Thesis/Claim (0–1 points): 1**

The response earned 1 point for thesis because in the first paragraph it argues that the most significant difference between the Nazis and the Soviets is that Hitler focused on consolidating power and building his empire, while Stalin focused more on innovation and industrialization.

B. Contextualization (0–1 points): 0

The response did not earn the point for contextualization because contextualization was not attempted; the entire first paragraph is the thesis.

C. Evidence (0–2 points): 2**Providing Specific Examples of Evidence: 1**

The response earned 1 point for evidence because it specifically references the space race, Sputnik, and the nuclear arms race.

Using Specific Evidence in Support of a Relevant Argument: 1

The response earned 1 point for using specific evidence in support of an argument because it connected its evidence of the arms race and the space race to Stalin's desire to innovate.

D. Analysis and Reasoning (0–2 points): 1**Using Historical Reasoning: 1**

The response earned 1 point for using historical reasoning because throughout the second paragraph it contrasts Stalin's desire to industrialize with Hitler's focus on conquest.

Long Essay Question 4 (continued)**Demonstrating Complex Understanding: 0**

The response did not earn the point for complexity as it does not demonstrate a complex understanding of the historical development that is the focus of the prompt through sophisticated argumentation and/or effective use of evidence.

Sample: 4C**Thesis Score: 0****Contextualization Score: 0****Evidence Score: 1****Analysis and Reasoning Score: 1****Total Score: 2****A. Thesis/Claim (0–1 points): 0**

The response did not earn the point for thesis because although it attempts a thesis in the first sentence, this thesis is vague and historically inaccurate.

B. Contextualization (0–1 points): 0

The response did not earn the point for contextualization because contextualization is not present.

C. Evidence (0–2 points): 1**Providing Specific Examples of Evidence: 1**

The response earned 1 point for evidence because it provides at least two specific pieces of evidence, including concentration camps and a description of Nazi racial ideals.

Using Specific Evidence in Support of a Relevant Argument: 0

The response did not earn 1 point for using specific evidence in support of an argument because it lists evidence rather than using it to support an argument related to the prompt.

D. Analysis and Reasoning (0–2 points): 1**Using Historical Reasoning: 1**

The response earned 1 point for using minimal historical reasoning because it uses comparison to point out that both regimes killed lots of people but also differed in length of regime.

Demonstrating Complex Understanding: 0

The response did not earn the point for complexity as it does not demonstrate a complex understanding of the historical development that is the focus of the prompt through sophisticated argumentation and/or effective use of evidence.