



Social Studies

Free Half-Length Practice Test – FPT8



Language
English

Released
2024

hiset.org

- Get the HiSET® testing experience.
- Answer questions developed by the test maker.
- Find out if you're ready for the actual subtest.

Copyright © 2025 PSI Services LLC. All rights reserved. PSI, the PSI logo and HISET are registered trademarks of PSI Services LLC.

Social Studies

Directions

Time – 35 minutes

25 Questions

This is a test of your skills in analyzing social studies information. Read each question and decide which of the four options best answers the question. Then mark your choice on your answer sheet. Sometimes several questions are based on the same material. You should carefully read this material and then answer the questions.

Work as quickly as you can without becoming careless. Do not spend too much time on any question that is difficult for you to answer. Instead, skip it and return to it later if you have time. Try to answer every question even if you have to guess.

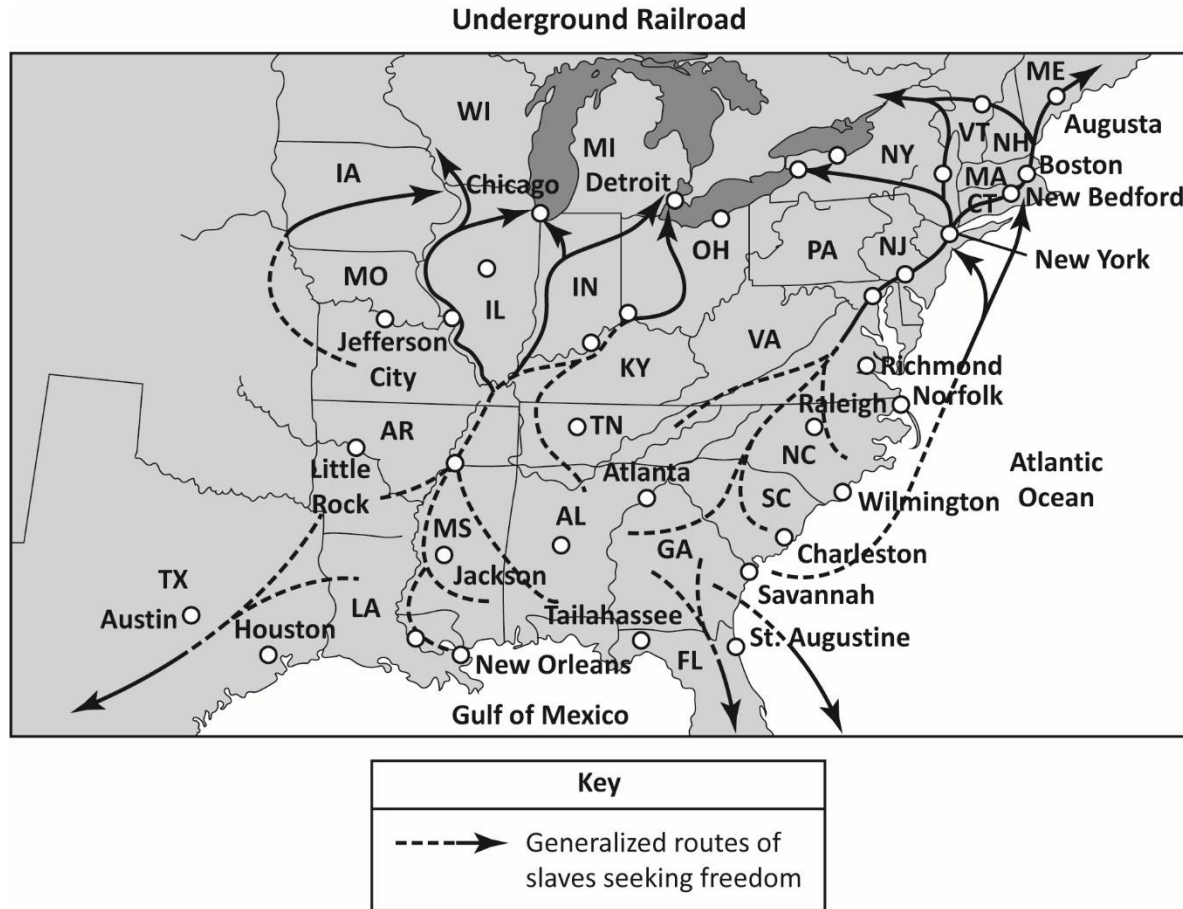
Mark all your answers on the answer sheet. Give only one answer to each question.

If you decide to change one of your answers, be sure to erase the first mark completely.

Be sure that the number of the question you are answering matches the number of the row of answer choices you are marking on your answer sheet. The answer sheet may contain more rows than you need.

Questions 1 through to 5 refer to the following information.

The map below shows the primary routes of the Underground Railroad, which was an informal, secret pipeline for helping enslaved people escape from the South to the North where they could be free.



1 _____

From which state would a person be able to take a boat or ship out of the South to freedom in the North?

- A. Florida
- B. Georgia
- C. South Carolina
- D. North Carolina

2 _____

Which branch of the Underground Railroad most likely carried enslaved people to freedom in Mexico?

- A. Tennessee
- B. Florida
- C. Mississippi
- D. Texas

3 _____

From which location would an enslaved person who had reached the North travel into Canada?

- A. Buffalo, New York
- B. Chicago, Illinois
- C. Columbus, Ohio
- D. Montpelier, Vermont

4 _____

What can be inferred from the routes shown on the map about why there were so few routes that carried enslaved people through Alabama?

- A. There were few enslaved people in this state.
- B. The terrain was too mountainous in this state.
- C. Enslaved people from Alabama escaped via Georgia.
- D. There were few places for escaping slaves to stop to get help.

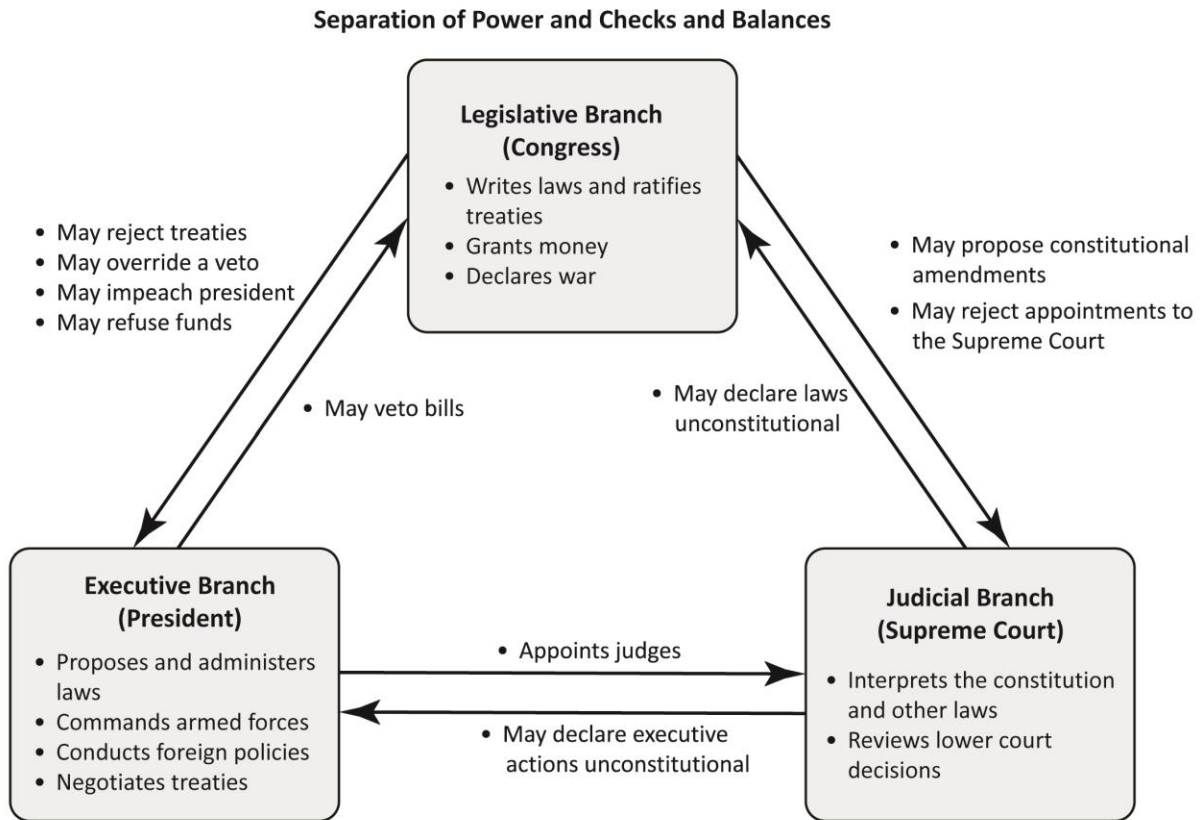
5 _____

What can be concluded about why there were no Underground Railroad routes that moved enslaved people from west to east?

- A. The west to east route was dangerous.
- B. The goal was to move north as quickly as possible.
- C. The goal was to move people out of the United States.
- D. There was only one shipping route from the east.

Questions 6 through to 10 refer to the following information.

The graphic shows the function of each of the three branches of government.



6 _____

A two-thirds vote by members of both the House and the Senate can override which of the following?

- A. A presidential veto
- B. A Supreme Court ruling
- C. An unconstitutional law
- D. Impeachment of the president

7 _____

What conflict is inherent in the execution of war powers between the Executive and the Legislative branches of government as provided by the Constitution?

- A. Congress cannot declare war that the president does not want.
- B. The president can declare war only if Congress agrees to fund it.
- C. Congress and the president may disagree on how to fight a particular war.
- D. Congress has the right to declare war, but the president has control of the armed forces.

8 _____

In several instances, the president has signed international treaties binding the United States to various international agreements, standards, or actions.

Which branch of government could block the United States from formally entering into some of these treaties by refusing to ratify them?

- A. The Supreme Court
- B. The full Senate
- C. The full Congress
- D. The House of Representatives

9 _____

Congress has the power to determine if a government law or program is put into effect. What constitutional power can the Legislative branch assert to thwart a law or program the Executive branch wants to enact?

- A. The power of impeachment
- B. The power to refuse to fund the program
- C. The power to approve a treaty to undermine the program
- D. The power to have the Supreme Court nullify the program

10 _____

Which branch of government has the fewest limitations put on it by the system of checks and balances?

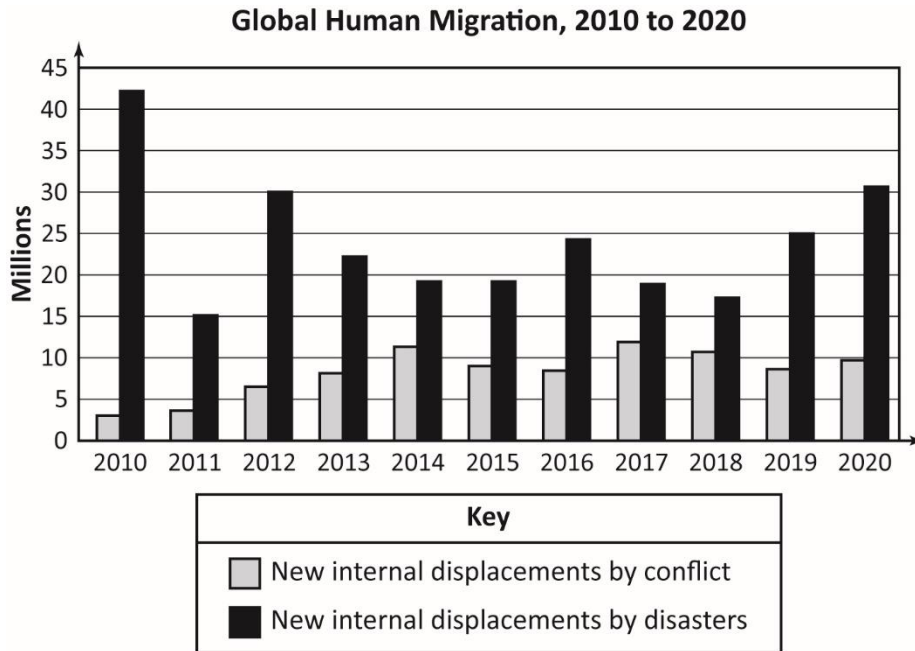
- A. Executive
- B. Legislative
- C. Judicial
- D. Military

Questions 11 through to 15 refer to the following information.

Migration

Migration occurs when people emigrate from their home country to a new country, but it can also take place when people who are internally displaced in their native country move to different regions within the same country. The graph shows global human migration from 2010 to 2020.

The graph shows the reasons for human migration as being caused either by conflict (civil war, persistent terrorist attacks, violent militia activity, etc.) or disaster (natural disasters such as volcanic eruptions or earthquakes, or climate-induced disasters such as long-term drought, extreme flooding, extensive wildfires, or persistent dangerously high temperatures).



11 _____

Approximately how many people migrated as a result of natural disasters that occurred in 2020?

- A.** 8 million
- B.** 10 million
- C.** 25 million
- D.** 31 million

12 _____

The graph shows that in most years the disaster to conflict ratio for migration is 3:1. This ratio does not apply every year. In which of the following years was the disaster to conflict ratio less than 3:1?

- A.** 2010
- B.** 2012
- C.** 2016
- D.** 2018

13 _____

Which year had the lowest number of disaster-related and second-lowest number of conflict-related migration in millions?

- A.** 2011
- B.** 2014
- C.** 2015
- D.** 2016

14 _____

Which year shows the greatest discrepancy between conflict and disaster migration?

- A.** 2010
- B.** 2012
- C.** 2016
- D.** 2020

15 _____

If migration continues to follow the trends started in 2018, what prediction can be made about future migrations due to conflicts and disasters?

- A.** There will be a steady increase in migration due to conflict.
- B.** There will be a steady increase in migration due to climate-related disasters.
- C.** There will be a steady decrease in migration due to climate-related disasters.
- D.** There will be an overall decrease in migration from all causes.

Questions 16 through to 20 refer to the following information.

The following is an excerpt from Federalist Paper 68 (March 1788), written by Alexander Hamilton. In this paper, Hamilton proposes that electors in today’s Electoral College be given power to overturn the popular vote for president. Paragraphs 2 to 6 are quotes adapted from Hamilton’s ideas as expressed in Federalist Paper 68.

Electoral College

¶1 The Founders of our nation thought long and hard about how to construct a government that would be both well-functioning and democratic. Some Founders presented their ideas in publications known as the Federalist Papers. One of the most important issues facing the Founders was the integrity of the voting process. The Founders supported a process in which a president was elected by the voting citizens of the nation, but there were some concerns about who the voters would elect as president.

¶2 *It was desirable that the sense of the people should operate in the choice of the person to whom so important a trust as the presidency was to be confided. This end will be answered by committing the right of making it, not to any pre-established body, but to men chosen by the people for this special purpose.*

¶3 *It was equally desirable, that the immediate election should be made by men most capable of analyzing the qualities adapted to the station of the president. [...] A small number of persons, selected by their fellow-citizens from the general mass, will be most likely to possess the information and discernment requisite to such complicated investigations.*

¶4 *It was also peculiarly desirable to afford as little opportunity as possible to electoral tumult and disorder. This evil was not least to be dreaded in the election of the President of the United States. The choice of several, to form an intermediate body of electors, will be much less apt to convulse the community with any extraordinary or violent movements, than the choice of one who was himself to be the final object of the public wishes. And as the electors, chosen in each State, are to assemble and vote in the*

State in which they are chosen, this detached and divided situation will expose them much less to ferment.

¶5 *[The electors shall be] opposed to intrigue, and corruption [...] and the influence of foreign powers. [...] Also, no senator, representative, or other person holding a place of trust or profit under the United States, can be an elector. Thus [...] the [electors] will at least enter upon the task free from any sinister bias.*

¶6 *The process of election affords a moral certainty, that the office of President will never fall to the lot of any man who is not in an eminent degree endowed with the requisite qualifications. Talents for low intrigue, and the little arts of popularity, may alone suffice to elevate a man to the first honors in a single State; but it will require other talents, and a different kind of merit, to establish the president in the esteem and confidence of the whole or most of the Union. [The office of the president must] be filled by characters pre-eminent for ability and virtue. We cannot acquiesce in the political heresy that says: "For forms of government let fools contest."*

¶7 Paragraphs 2-6 sum up Hamilton’s idea of establishing a body of electors, which today still exists in the Electoral College. Yet, today’s concerned citizens and pro-democracy experts are disturbed by the problems inherent in the Electoral College. A substantial number of Americans now believe that the Electoral College should be changed or abolished.

¶8 One problem with today’s Electoral College may arise from what are called “faithless electors.” “Faithless electors” do not cast their ballots for the candidate who wins their state’s popular vote for president. Instead, the electors cast their votes for the presidential candidate from the political party they support, even if that candidate loses their state’s election. When electors choose a president who has lost the popular vote, they undermine the legitimacy of the democratic process. They also cause voters to lose confidence in the integrity of the democratic process. Citizens may be so disgusted by this unfair process they may decide not to vote at all because the “faithless electors” make majority rule in presidential elections irrelevant.

¶9 A more permanent solution to the abuse of the Electoral College is to abolish it by amending the Constitution, but this is a long and difficult process. Amending the Constitution requires the support of at least two-thirds of both the House of Representatives and the Senate. It also requires that at least 38 out of 50 states approve the amendment, which is unlikely to happen in today's highly partisan political atmosphere.

16 _____

What can be inferred from the text of this Federalist Paper about Hamilton's view of the general U.S. electorate?

- A.** Hamilton views the electorate as irrelevant.
- B.** Hamilton sees the electorate as ignorant.
- C.** Hamilton thinks the electorate is too highly partisan.
- D.** Hamilton views the electorate as a poor judge of character.

17 _____

What words in Paragraph 4 describe what Hamilton thinks might occur if the election of the president is left solely to the citizens who voted in the election?

- A.** "peculiarly desirable"
- B.** "tumult and disorder"
- C.** "less apt to convulse"
- D.** "detached and divided"

18 _____

Based on Hamilton's Federalist Paper, in what way is the idea of using electors to determine who won the vote for president undemocratic?

- A.** Too few electors vote.
- B.** State electors are often corrupt.
- C.** The will of the voters may be ignored.
- D.** It may lead to violent movements against the electors.

19 _____

The appointment of state electors undermines the electoral process and voter confidence through what type of corruption?

- A. The appointed electors fail to cast ballots for any candidate.
- B. The appointed electors are “faithless” and vote for their party’s candidates.
- C. The “faithless” electors thwart the counting of votes cast for the opposing party.
- D. The appointed electors commit their votes to a candidate before the election takes place.

20 _____

Why is eliminating the Electoral College through a constitutional amendment unlikely in a highly partisan political atmosphere?

- A. It would take too long.
- B. It would require a simple majority vote in Congress.
- C. It would weaken the voting power of the partisans in Congress and reduce their party’s chances of winning the presidency.
- D. It would deter voters from voting for and electing candidates from the political party they support.

Questions 21 through to 25 refer to the following information.

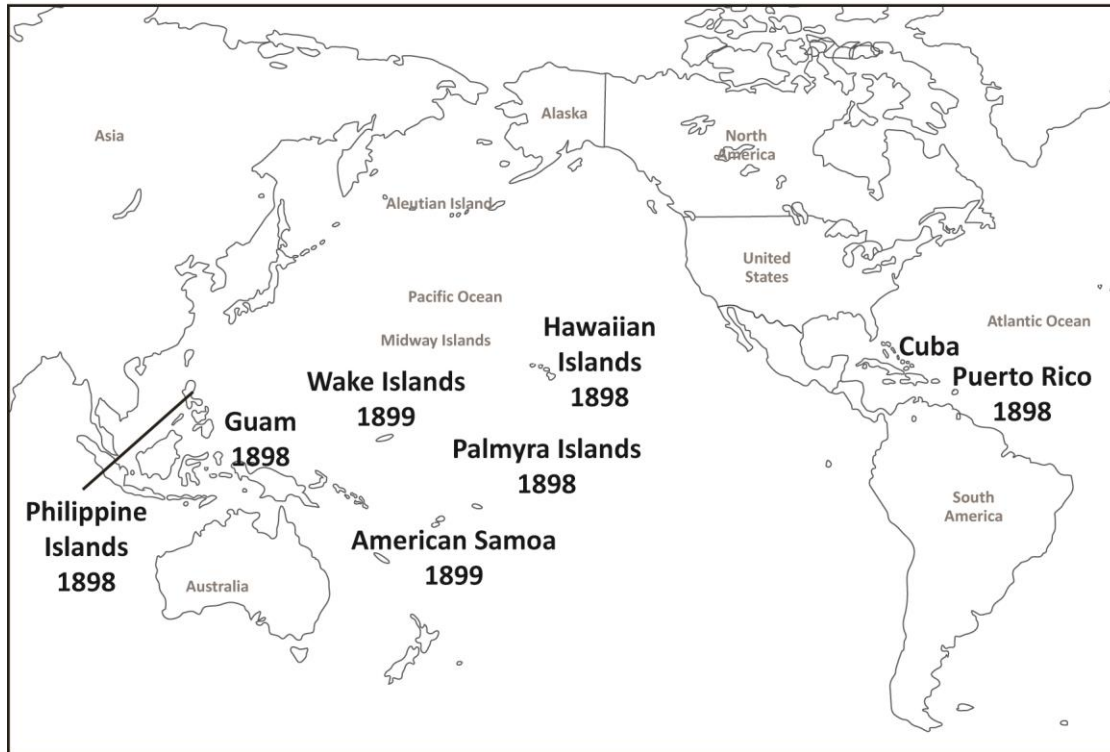
War of 1898

The most widely and enthusiastically disseminated reason for the United States going to war with Spain was Spain's inhumane treatment of Cuban rebels who fought for independence. In an effort to gain power through imperialism, Spain had taken control of Cuba and was determined to crush the rebellion and retain control of the island. Some U.S. Congressmen called for war to relieve the suffering of Cuban rebels, many thousands of whom died in concentration camps in Cuba. American newspapers sensationalized the atrocities in Cuba in an effort to build popular support for a war against Spain. But neither President Grover Cleveland nor his successor, President William McKinley, wanted to embroil the nation in a foreign war.

In late 1897, Spain tried to improve its treatment of rebel prisoners. Then, on February 15, 1898, an explosion, likely from a torpedo, destroyed the USS Maine, a U.S. battleship anchored in Havana, Cuba. The slogan "Remember the Maine, the hell with Spain" rang out across America. Backed by widespread popular support, on April 25, 1898, Congress declared war on Spain.

It must also be noted that the desire to be a global imperialist power, just like many European nations, was another important impetus for war with Spain. Senator Albert J. Beveridge (R, Indiana) admitted as much when in a speech to the Senate in 1898, he stated, "We are a conquering race, and [...] we must obey our blood and occupy new markets, and if necessary, new lands." Later, after the war was won, Senator Henry M. Teller [R, Colorado], introduced an amendment to the final peace treaty that prevented the United States from taking possession of Cuba because its production of sugar would compete with his state's sugar beet industry. The United States won the war because, although neither combatant had a large, well-equipped army, the United States had a navy that was far superior to Spain's. The terms of Spain's surrender and America's new imperialist power were written into the Treaty of Paris signed on December 10, 1898.

U.S. Imperial Acquisitions – War of 1898



21 _____

Which U.S. acquisition in the Caribbean during the War of 1898 remains a territory of the United States today?

- A. Cuba
- B. Bermuda
- C. Guam
- D. Puerto Rico

22 _____

Which U.S. acquisition in the Pacific was incorporated into the United States when it was granted statehood?

- A. Hawaii
- B. Samoa
- C. Midway Islands
- D. Philippine Islands

23 _____

Which Pacific islands were acquired by the United States after the War of 1898?

- A.** Aleutian Islands
- B.** Wake Islands
- C.** Palmyra Islands
- D.** Hawaiian Islands

24 _____

What would the Cuban rebels have gained if they were, in fact, responsible for the destruction of the USS Maine?

- A.** A certain rebel defeat of Spain
- B.** Spain declaring war on the United States
- C.** The United States declaring war on and then defeating Spain in Cuba
- D.** Crippling the U.S. Navy so the rebels would have to fight only one enemy, the Spanish

25 _____

Although the rationale for imperialist conquest was mostly to expand U.S. trade, what would have caused Senator Teller to insist that Cuba not become a state or territory of the United States?

- A.** A free Cuban territory would refuse to trade with the United States.
- B.** A Cuban territory would have nothing to trade that the United wanted.
- C.** A free Cuban territory could never compete with giant U.S. industries.
- D.** A Cuban territory could sell its sugar more cheaply than sugar produced in the USA.

HiSET Answer Key and Rationales

Sequence Number	Correct Response	Content Category	Question Difficulty
1	C	I. History	Easy
Rationale			
<p>Option C is correct because the map shows a Northern Atlantic Ocean shipping route that leaves only from near Charleston, South Carolina.</p>			

Sequence Number	Correct Response	Content Category	Question Difficulty
2	D	I. History	Easy
Rationale			
<p>Option D is correct because the map shows a route that runs from and through Texas and very likely into Mexico.</p>			

Sequence Number	Correct Response	Content Category	Question Difficulty
3	D	I. History	Medium
Rationale			
<p>Option D is correct because the west-pointing arrow from Vermont extends into southern Canada.</p>			

Sequence Number	Correct Response	Content Category	Question Difficulty
4	D	I. History	Hard
Rationale			
Option D is correct because you can infer that, as a slave state, there were likely few places where escaping slaves could stop and rest in safety.			

Sequence Number	Correct Response	Content Category	Question Difficulty
5	B	I. History	Hard
Rationale			
Option B is correct because all the routes shown on the map head as directly north as possible. You can therefore conclude that the goal was to reach the North as quickly as possible.			

Sequence Number	Correct Response	Content Category	Question Difficulty
6	A	II. Civics/Government	Medium
Rationale			
Option A is correct because Congress has the authority to override a presidential veto by a two-thirds majority vote.			

Sequence Number	Correct Response	Content Category	Question Difficulty
7	D	II. Civics/Government	Medium
Rationale			
<p>Option D is correct because the graphic shows that Congress has the power to declare war, but the president has control of the armed forces that are needed to fight a war. That is an inherent conflict between the two branches.</p>			

Sequence Number	Correct Response	Content Category	Question Difficulty
8	C	II. Civics/Government	High
Rationale			
<p>Option C is correct because the Constitution states that Congress must ratify treaties for them to go into effect.</p>			

Sequence Number	Correct Response	Content Category	Question Difficulty
9	B	II. Civics/Government	Medium
Rationale			
<p>Option B is correct because Congress has “the power of the purse strings,” which means it can refuse to allocate money to fund a program the Executive wants.</p>			

Sequence Number	Correct Response	Content Category	Question Difficulty
10	C	II. Civics/Government	Hard
Rationale			
<p>Option C is the correct answer because only Congress can check the Judicial branch of government, mainly by refusing to approve Executive appointments to the Supreme Court. Amending the Constitution is such a long and cumbersome process that it is very rare for it to be used to check the Supreme Court.</p>			

Sequence Number	Correct Response	Content Category	Question Difficulty
11	D	IV. Geography	Easy
Rationale			
<p>Option D is correct because the black line extends just above 30 million on the Y-axis.</p>			

Sequence Number	Correct Response	Content Category	Question Difficulty
12	D	IV. Geography	Medium
Rationale			
<p>Option D is correct because the Y-axis shows that in 2018 there were 11 million migrants due to conflict and about 17 million migrants due to disaster. That ratio is less than 3:1.</p>			

Sequence Number	Correct Response	Content Category	Question Difficulty
13	A	IV. Geography	Easy
Rationale			
<p>Option A is correct because the black line (disaster) is the lowest in the graph and the gray line (conflict) is the second lowest in the graph.</p>			

Sequence Number	Correct Response	Content Category	Question Difficulty
14	A	IV. Geography	Medium
Rationale			
<p>Option A is correct because, based on the Y-axis, it shows a difference of about 38 million migrants due to conflict and disaster, and this is the greatest discrepancy shown on the graph.</p>			

Sequence Number	Correct Response	Content Category	Question Difficulty
15	B	IV. Geography	Hard
Rationale			
<p>Option B is correct because the number of climate-related disasters that result in migration are shown on the graph to be steadily increasing since 2018.</p>			

Sequence Number	Correct Response	Content Category	Question Difficulty
16	D	II. Civics/Government	Hard
Rationale			
<p>Option D is correct because Hamilton describes the chaos that may ensue when an unqualified president is elected by the voters. He envisions the electors as men of higher quality, education, and judgment than the average citizens who vote.</p>			

Sequence Number	Correct Response	Content Category	Question Difficulty
17	B	II. Civics/Government	Easy
Rationale			
<p>Option B is correct because Hamilton uses these words to describe what may happen if it is only the voting public that determines who becomes president and only if they vote for someone clearly unqualified to hold that office.</p>			

Sequence Number	Correct Response	Content Category	Question Difficulty
18	C	II. Civics/Government	Medium
Rationale			
<p>Option C is correct because the electors may vote for a candidate who was not chosen by the majority of voters in the state. Ignoring the will of the voters undermines the democratic process.</p>			

Sequence Number	Correct Response	Content Category	Question Difficulty
19	B	II. Civics/Government	Hard
Rationale			
<p>Option B is correct because the passage describes how “faithless electors” cast their votes for the candidate from their party and not the candidate who gets the most votes in their state.</p>			

Sequence Number	Correct Response	Content Category	Question Difficulty
20	C	II. Civics/Government	Medium
Rationale			
<p>Option C is correct because, in a highly partisan nation, the most important outcome is the electoral victory of their party’s candidate. Supporting the elimination of the Electoral College would mean that the candidate who gets the most votes nationally wins the election. This would weaken the power of less populous states who may vote for candidates from a party that consistently loses the popular vote. Without the Electoral College, voters in more populous states would be most likely to determine the outcome of national elections.</p>			

Sequence Number	Correct Response	Content Category	Question Difficulty
21	D	I. History	Easy
Rationale			
<p>Option D is correct because Puerto Rico, which was annexed by the United States during the War of 1898, remains a U.S. territory, not a state in the Caribbean.</p>			

Sequence Number	Correct Response	Content Category	Question Difficulty
22	A	I. History	Easy
Rationale			
Option A is correct because the Hawaiian Islands were conquered during the War of 1898, and later Hawaii was granted statehood as part of the United States.			

Sequence Number	Correct Response	Content Category	Question Difficulty
23	B	I. History	Easy
Rationale			
Option B is correct because the map shows that these islands were acquired in 1899, after the war of 1898.			

Sequence Number	Correct Response	Content Category	Question Difficulty
24	C	I. History	Hard
Rationale			
Option C is correct because the rebels would have drawn the United States into the war by sinking the USS Maine. The United States would assume Spain had sunk the Maine and then would have declared war on Spain. The United States' Navy would then surely defeat Spain, and Cuba would be free.			

Sequence Number	Correct Response	Content Category	Question Difficulty
25	D	I. History	Medium
Rationale			
<p>Option D is correct because a poor island like Cuba could outcompete the sugar beet growers in Senator Teller’s state. Thus, Coloradan sugar beet growers would lose money as Americans bought the cheaper Cuban sugar.</p>			