**How To Answer History Test Questions**

**I. Short Answers:** These are possibly the easiest questions to answer on a history test/exam. If you can provide the five W’s (Who, What, When, Where, Why), you are virtually guaranteed to get the answer right.

**• WHO:** who was involved in the incident/historical event?

**• WHAT:** what was the incident/historical event?

**• WHEN:** when did the incident/historical event occur?

**• WHERE:** where did the incident/historical event take place?

**• WHY:** why does it matter? Why is it important? What was the impact of the incident/historical event on the world (locally, globally, and/or in the historical timeline)?

**II. Essay Questions:** To answer an essay question, you essentially expand on the answers you would give if it were an Identification. Essay questions require you to answer the five W’s (Who, What, When, Where, Why) in a more detailed way. The essays allow you to expand on your explanation of the five W’s, to include material and interpretations that you would not have space for in a short answer ID question. Remember, too, that an essay question requires structure – an introductory paragraph, then comes your evidence (this is the main body of your essay answer), and a concluding paragraph that wraps up everything that came before it.

**Other Tips:**

• **NEVER LEVE AN ANSWER BLANK!** Even if you are unsure of your answer (or flat out do not know it), there is nothing to be gained by leaving an ID answer blank. Take a shot at it anyway. Even a WAG (Wild-A@# Guess) is better than nothing. And you might even get lucky. Partial credit is better than zero credit.

• **Be aware of your time.** Spending too much time on your ID answers will leave you short when it comes to your essay answer. Keep your ID answers short, sweet, and to the point. Then move on to your essay.

• **Unless the question specifically asks for your opinion, keep your answer formal and impersonal.** There is a certain form for writing history. Unless your opinion is sought, all of your answers need to be supported by evidence from the historical record. Write in the third person, and write in the past tense.

• **Take a minute to plan what you are going to write!** If you plot out your answer before hand, it will help you organize your thoughts and make the answering process flow smoother.