

# Thematic Review

The Regents Examination takes a thematic approach to history. This section of the book will help you to review the themes that are mostly likely to be tested on the thematic essay and document-based parts of the exam.

## CHANGE

Change means basic alterations in things, events, and ideas. Throughout global history, major changes have had significant and lasting impacts on human development.

- **Neolithic Revolution** Some 11,000 years ago, people first developed farming methods and lived in permanent settlements. As a result, the first civilizations emerged.
- **Industrial Revolution** This change began in Europe in the 1700s and gradually spread throughout the world. Power-driven machinery in factories became the dominant means of production. The results of this change have included urbanization, a higher standard of living, and pollution of the environment.
- **Chinese Communist Revolution** In 1948, Mao Zedong established a Chinese Communist state. Since then, China has become a world economic power. Today, it works to control its growing population, as well as to adapt communism to modern needs.

Other examples of change are the Crusades, the spread of bubonic plague, the Renaissance, the Scientific Revolution, the Enlightenment, the Agrarian Revolution, the Reformation, African independence movements, and the emergence of Pacific Rim nations.

## TURNING POINTS

Turning points are times when decisive changes occur. Turning points often have political, social, and cultural impact.

- **Fall of Constantinople** This event, which occurred in 1453, marked the end of the Christian Byzantine empire and the emergence of the powerful Ottoman empire, a Muslim power that dominated the region for centuries.
- **Voyages of Columbus** The voyages of Columbus began the European race to colonize the Americas. A far-reaching exchange

of people, plants, animals, and ideas occurred between Europe, the Americas, and Africa.

- **French Revolution** The French Revolution of 1789 had a powerful influence well beyond France, spreading democratic ideals and a spirit of nationalism throughout Europe and around the globe.
- **Collapse of Communism in the Soviet Union** The collapse of communism in the Soviet Union initiated years of change in Eastern Europe and brought an end to the Cold War.

Other examples of turning points include the signing of the Magna Carta, the American Revolution, independence movements in Latin America, and the Russian Revolution.

## BELIEF SYSTEMS

Belief systems are the established, orderly ways in which groups or individuals look at religious faith or philosophical tenets.

- **Hinduism** A religion more than 3,000 years old, Hinduism has had an enormous effect on India, Southeast Asia, and the rest of the world.
- **Buddhism** A religion founded in the 500s B.C. in India, Buddhism spread throughout Asia.
- **Judaism** The first great monotheistic religion, Judaism has had an important effect on several other world religions.
- **Christianity** Greatly influenced by Judaism, Christianity is a monotheistic religion centered on the teachings of Jesus Christ.
- **Islam** Also greatly influenced by Judaism, Islam is a monotheistic religion and has followers all over the world, especially in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia.

Other examples of belief systems are animism, Confucianism, Taoism, Shintoism, and Sikhism.

## GEOGRAPHY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

This theme has to do with relationships among people, places, and environments. Environment means the surroundings, including natural elements and elements created by humans.

- **Early River Civilizations** Early civilizations grew up around rivers. Rivers provided water for crops and for drinking, as well as a means of transportation.
- **Chinese Influence on Japan** Through the bridge of Korea, China had a strong influence on the culture of Japan.
- **Industrialization in Britain** Britain's natural resources, together with such geographical factors as rivers and natural harbors, allowed the Industrial Revolution to begin there.
- **Industrial Revolution: Impact on Environment** The Industrial Revolution had a lasting impact on the natural environment. For



example, new sources of energy often created new types of pollution. Urbanization changed the landscape as cities and their suburbs grew.

Other examples of the impact of geography and the environment are the development of city-states in ancient Greece, the importance of the Middle East as a crossroads between three continents, and environmental problems such as desertification and the destruction of tropical forests.

## ECONOMIC SYSTEMS

Economic systems include traditional, command, market, and mixed systems. Each must answer the three basic economic questions: What goods and services are to be produced and in what quantities? How shall these goods and services be produced? For whom shall goods and services be produced?

- **Traditional Economy** An economic system based on farming, often subsistence farming, is a traditional economy.
- **Manorialism** The economic system of Western Europe in medieval times was called manorialism. It was based on the manor, an estate that often included one or more villages and the surrounding lands.
- **Mercantilism** The economic policy in which nations sought to export more than they imported is known as mercantilism. Overseas empires were central to mercantilism, which led to imperialism.
- **Capitalism (Market Economy)** Capitalism is an economic system in which the means of production are privately owned and operated for profit. It developed as an economic system in the 1500s.
- **Marxist Socialism (Command Economy)** Marxist socialism is the economic system found in communist states such as the former Soviet Union and its satellites. It is characterized by ownership of property and operation of businesses by the state rather than by private individuals.

Other examples of topics connected with economic systems are *laissez-faire* economics, the commercial revolution, cash crop economies, and imperialism.

## POLITICAL SYSTEMS

Political systems, such as monarchies, dictatorships, and democracies, address certain basic questions of government such as: What should a government have the power to do? What should a government not have the power to do?

- **Monarchy** In monarchies, a king or queen exercises central power. Monarchies have been common since ancient times, and a few are still in existence today.
- **Feudalism** Feudalism was most prominent in medieval Europe and in Japan from about 1600 to the mid-1800s. It is a decentralized political system. In Europe, it declined with the growth of nation-states.

- **Democracy** Democracy, a system in which the people hold the ruling power—either directly or through elected representatives—had its roots in ancient Greece. It is a primary political system in the countries of the West today.
- **Totalitarianism** In a totalitarian system, a one-party dictatorship regulates every aspect of its citizens' lives. The Soviet Union under Stalin was a totalitarian state.

Other examples of political systems are the limited democracy of Athens, the militarism of Sparta and of Japan, absolutism, theocracy, communism, fascism, and apartheid.

## CULTURE AND INTELLECTUAL LIFE

Culture includes the patterns of human behavior (encompassing ideas, beliefs, values, artifacts, and ways of making a living) that a society transmits to succeeding generations to meet its fundamental needs. Intellectual life involves ways of thinking, studying, and reflecting on aspects of life.

- **Roman Civilization** Rome left a great cultural and intellectual legacy to the western world, including a commitment to law and justice, the Latin language, and a body of great literature.
- **Gupta Golden Age** In India, from A.D. 320 through 550, lasting achievements in mathematics, medicine, arts, and architecture occurred, supported by the stable reign of the Gupta dynasty.
- **Islamic Golden Age** Between A.D. 750 and 1350, Islamic empires experienced a golden age. The roots of modern mathematics and science can be traced to this period.
- **African Civilizations** From the mid-1200s through the mid-1500s, Africa was the site of great activity in scholarship and art.
- **Renaissance Europe** The Renaissance in Europe, which began in the mid-1300s, was a time of great cultural and intellectual activity. Humanism—which recognized the importance of individual worth in a secular society—guided the Renaissance.

Other important eras of cultural and intellectual activity included early river civilizations, classical Chinese civilization, Mesoamerican civilizations, and the Enlightenment in Europe.

## NATIONALISM

Nationalism is a feeling of pride in and devotion to one's country or the desire of a people to control their own government. It is sometimes a divisive force and sometimes a force that unifies. In many cases, it is a source of conflict.



- **German and Italian Unification** In the mid-1800s, both Germany and Italy experienced unification. In each case, many small states joined into one nation.
- **India** Ideals of western democracy, as well as devotion to traditional Hindu and Muslim culture, sustained Indian nationalism through the first half of the 1900s, leading to independence in 1948.
- **Zionism** Since Roman times, Jews had dreamed of returning to Palestine. This dream grew into an international movement in the 1900s. By 1948, the nation of Israel had been created.
- **African Independence Movements** In 1945, just four European powers controlled nearly all of Africa. Less than 25 years later, a tide of nationalism had liberated many African peoples and set them on the road to self-determination.

Other historical situations in which nationalism had an impact are the development of the nation of Turkey, conflicts in the Balkans, the breakup of the Ottoman empire, Latin America in the 1800s and 1900s, Pan-Africanism, and Pan-Arabism.

## IMPERIALISM

Imperialism is the domination by one country of the political and economic life of another country or region. Imperialism has had both positive and negative effects on colonies.

- **British in India** The British controlled India by the late 1700s. Although railroads and the British educational system benefited some Indians, local industries and Indian culture suffered, and Indians were treated as inferiors. India gained its independence in 1948.
- **European Powers in Africa** European nations carved up the continent of Africa in the late 1880s. Africa was a continent made up mainly of colonies until after 1945, when African peoples began to demand independence. The legacy of imperialism still affects Africa today.
- **Japan** An imperialist power from the Meiji period, Japan ruled Korea from 1910 to the end of World War II. It also controlled areas in China and Southeast Asia. Japanese imperialism was a cause of World War II.
- **Imperial Rivalry** Competition between imperial powers was one of the causes of World War I. Germany and France, especially, clashed over territory in Africa. Imperial rivalry was also a cause of many smaller wars.

Other civilizations that practiced imperialism include the Chinese Han dynasty, the Romans, the Byzantines, and the Mongols. The collapse of European imperialism still affects many regions of the world today.

## DIVERSITY AND INTERDEPENDENCE

Diversity involves understanding and respecting oneself and others, including differences in language, gender, socioeconomic class, religion, and other human characteristics and traits. It is closely related to interdependence, the reliance upon others in mutually beneficial interactions and exchanges. Sometimes the refusal to accept diversity leads to conflict.

- **Byzantine Empire** The Byzantine empire blended many diverse cultures. This diversity allowed it to preserve many differing traditions.
- **Balkans** This region of Eastern Europe has always been an area of great religious and ethnic diversity. Often this diversity has led to conflict.
- **Global Economy** In the 1900s, the world economy became more interdependent, a process that started during the age of imperialism. Today, the world's economy is truly global.
- **Environmental Issues** The global population shares the Earth, and what occurs in one part of the world often has an impact on many other areas. Increasingly, environmental decisions are reached by many nations working together for mutual benefit.

Other examples of diversity and interdependence include the links between East and West during the time of the Mongol empire, tensions that have arisen as a result of Islamic fundamentalism, and interactions among Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs in India.

## JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Justice is fair, equal, proportional, or appropriate treatment given to individuals in interpersonal, societal, or government interactions. Human rights are those basic political, economic, and social rights to which all human beings are entitled. At times throughout history, justice and human rights have been violated.

- **Code of Hammurabi** Because the Code of Hammurabi was carved on a pillar in Babylon (around 1800 B.C.), all people could see what the laws were. This was the first major collection of laws in history.
- **English Bill of Rights** The English Bill of Rights was an important document because it limited the power of the monarchy and returned traditional rights to English citizens.
- **Irish Potato Famine** A blight that affected the main food crop for the Irish people in the mid-1800s created widespread famine when the British, who ruled the island, continued to export crops that could have fed the Irish. At least a million Irish people died during the famine, also called the Great Hunger.
- **Tiananmen Square** When students in China demanded greater political freedom in the late 1980s, Chinese Communist authorities cracked down, wounding and killing many demonstrators.



Other examples of important developments in justice and human rights include the Laws of the Twelve Tables, Justinian's Code, the Sharia, and the Magna Carta. Violations of human rights include the Armenian massacres, the Holocaust, apartheid, the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, and international terrorism.

## MOVEMENT OF PEOPLE AND GOODS

Cultural diffusion is the constant exchange of people, ideas, products, technology, and institutions from one region or civilization to another. Cultural diffusion has occurred throughout history.

- **Muslim Influence on Africa** Muslim traders spread Islam across Africa. Their contacts with diverse cultures allowed them to spread a great number of other ideas and technologies along with the religion of Islam.
- **Silk Road** This 4,000-mile trade route stretched from western China to the Mediterranean. For centuries, from the A.D. 100s onward, goods, ideas, and technology flowed along this route from East to West and back again.
- **Crusades** From the late 1000s through the late 1200s, Christian and Muslim armies battled for control of Palestine. A great deal of cultural diffusion occurred during and after the Crusades, as Europe increased its interest in goods and ideas from the Middle East.
- **Modern Communication** In today's world, computers, the Internet, and satellite communications allow ideas to be passed in moments over great distances.

Other examples of movement of peoples, goods, and ideas include the spread of belief systems (such as Buddhism and Confucianism to Japan), the Muslim influence on Europe, and patterns of global migration.

## SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Science and technology means the tools and methods used by people to get what they need and want.

- **Neolithic Revolution** When people developed the knowledge and technology for farming and domesticating animals, permanent settlements grew.
- **Invention of the Printing Press** The printing press was a crucial breakthrough in technology, allowing ideas to spread.
- **Computer Revolution** Since the 1950s, our society has become increasingly dependent on computers and on digitized information.
- **Space Explorations** Humans have populated Earth and moved into the solar system. In recent years, space exploration has been a shared venture among major world powers.

Other examples of breakthroughs in science and technology are the improved standard of living that occurred in the 1800s, the Green Revolution, and advances in genetics.

## CONFLICT

Conflict has occurred throughout history, and its costs have sometimes been very high. The causes of conflict may be political, social, or economic.

- **Religious Conflicts** Conflicts between peoples of differing belief systems began in ancient times and still exist today in places as widespread as Northern Ireland, India, and the Middle East.
- **Political Revolutions** Violent revolutions occurred within nations from the late 1700s through the 1800s as groups sought democratic reform, national independence, or both.
- **World War I** Sparked by several complex causes, World War I was the first modern, fully industrialized war and the first truly global conflict.
- **The Cold War** After 1945, the United States and its allies were engaged in a global competition with the Soviet Union and its allies. Surrogate conflicts occurred as the two superpowers—the United States and the Soviet Union—exerted their influence throughout the world.

Other examples of conflict include the Crusades, World War II, the Russian Revolution, ethnic disputes in the Balkans and Africa, and Arab-Israeli conflict in the Middle East.

## MODERN GLOBAL CONNECTIONS AND INTERACTIONS

Today's world is a web of connections and interactions. On every level, the people of the world meet, connect, interact, and sometimes collide. These interactions involve politics, economics, culture, or the environment.

- **Global Environmental Cooperation** Nations are becoming increasingly interdependent in their decisions about environmental issues, acknowledging that various peoples share one world.
- **Global Migrations** The last half of the 1900s was a time of great migration, especially from Africa, Asia, and Latin America to Europe and North America. Many people migrated to improve their economic conditions.
- **International Terrorism** Modern technology and transportation systems have allowed violent groups to express their frustration and anger globally through random acts of violence.
- **The United Nations** Created after World War II, the United Nations remains an organization through which nations can come together to seek peaceful solutions to global problems and conflicts.

Other examples of modern global connections and interactions include economic interdependence, nuclear proliferation, and the sharing of technology and ideas through the Internet.