

STAAR Spring 2025 Grade 8 Social Studies Rationales

Item Position	Rationale	
1	Option D is correct	Escaping religious persecution in Europe was one reason many colonists (from England and other countries) came to North America.
	Option A is incorrect	Obtaining unique spices inspired exploration in Asia. It did not motivate settlement in Maryland and Pennsylvania.
	Option B is incorrect	Though stocks were used in colonial America, people would not have migrated to Maryland and Pennsylvania specifically to secure the ownership of stocks.
	Option C is incorrect	Indentured servitude was a practice used to encourage people to come from England (and other European countries) to work and live in the English colonies. Escaping this practice was not a reason people chose to settle in Maryland and Pennsylvania.

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2	Option C is correct	The events on the list are all associated with the era of the American Revolution.
	Option A is incorrect	The War of 1812 occurred after the events included on the list.
	Option B is incorrect	The First Great Awakening occurred during the Era of Colonization, which was before the events included on the list. The Second Great Awakening occurred mostly during the early republic, which was after the events included on the list.
	Option D is incorrect	The French and Indian War occurred during the Era of Colonization, which was earlier than the Revolutionary Era events included on the list.

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3	Option A is correct	The riots occurred when citizens attempted to violate the constitutionally protected religious rights of others.
	Option B is incorrect	The Constitution does not allow individuals to limit the religious rights of people they oppose, and that is why the U.S. Army and Navy intervened to end the violence.
	Option C is incorrect	The constitutional protection of some religious rights over others did not lead to this conflict.
	Option D is incorrect	The Constitution does not provide funding for religious groups, and the funding of religious groups did not contribute to this riot.

Item Position	Rationale	
4	Option "Membership in the Council and . . . in the Assembly . . . was composed . . . of members elected by the people" is correct	The Virginia House of Burgesses was the first popularly elected colonial legislative body in the Americas, with selected positions chosen by the voting members of the community. The procedures and responsibilities within the Virginia House of Burgesses are less important than the concept of voters selecting their representatives for the first time in the colonies.
	Option "Each member had one vote" is incorrect	Democracy in the United States rests on the idea that citizens vote for people to represent them, who then vote on issues. Although each representative does have one vote per issue (i.e., bill), this procedural process is not the best example of how the Virginia House of Burgesses influenced American democracy.
	Option "the governor . . . having the power to veto any measure" is incorrect	Democracy in the United States is based on citizens electing representatives. Although the executive branch (e.g., governor) is important, this is not the best example of how the Virginia House of Burgesses influenced American democracy.
	Option "By an extension of usage the Company applied the term 'borough' to each area, whether town, hundred, or plantation. . . ." is incorrect	Democracy in the United States is based on citizens electing people to represent them. The use of the term "borough" does not reflect the development of representative democracy in Virginia.
	Option ". . . The two classes of members began to sit as separate chambers" is incorrect	Democracy in the United States begins with the idea of selecting representatives. Although there were two separate chambers (like the bicameral legislature we have today), this procedural process is not the best example of how the Virginia House of Burgesses influenced American democracy.

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5	Option C is correct	Rivers, such as the Mississippi, offered opportunities for trade. This enabled the population increase shown in the table.
	Option A is incorrect	Hydropower was not used for electricity until the 1880s and therefore did not contribute to the trend shown in the table.
	Option B is incorrect	Railroad construction was not hindered by rivers and therefore did not contribute to the trend shown in the table.
	Option D is incorrect	Rivers often support the growth of large industrial centers. Preventing such growth would not have contributed to the trend shown in the table.

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6	Option C is correct	The addition of this territory meant that the balance between free and slave states would be unbalanced. The Compromise of 1850 and the Wilmot Proviso would attempt to deal with this issue.
	Option A is incorrect	While individual farmers may have experimented with new farming and irrigation techniques, this was not an issue for the U.S. government to grapple with. The issue at hand was maintaining a balance between free and slave states.
	Option B is incorrect	The land gained by the United States as a result of the 1848 Mexican Cession disrupted the balance between free and slave states. This land was not associated with the issue of deciding on an official language for the new territory.
	Option D is incorrect	Limiting immigration into the new territory was not an issue during this time; maintaining a balance between free and slave states was.

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Item Position	Rationale	
7	Option A is correct	After President Lincoln's death, Grant was initially worried that Lincoln's successor, Andrew Johnson, would treat the Southern states harshly.
	Option B is incorrect	After President Lincoln's death, Grant was initially worried that the Southern states would not be treated equal to the states in the North. After the Civil War, Southern states were not able to affect Northerners' rights.
	Option C is incorrect	The excerpt from Grant's memoirs describes Andrew Johnson as previously speaking in a manner that offended Southerners instead of welcoming them.
	Option D is incorrect	Following President Lincoln's death, Grant was worried that Lincoln's successor, Andrew Johnson, would offend the Southern states and make them reluctant to reenter the Union. He was not afraid that Southern states would be favored over Northern states.

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Item Position	Rationale	
8	Part A: Option B is correct	The Thirteenth Amendment states that slavery or involuntary servitude can be used only as a punishment for crimes.
	Part A: Option A is incorrect	This was the intention of the Fourteenth Amendment.
	Part A: Option C is incorrect	This was the effect of the Fifteenth Amendment.
	Part A: Option D is incorrect	The Thirteenth Amendment does not provide the judicial branch with additional powers.
	Part B: Option B is correct	This quotation points out that people can be enslaved or forced to work as a punishment for crimes for which they have been convicted.
	Part B: Option A is incorrect	This quotation does not support the correct answer to Part A.
	Part B: Option C is incorrect	This quotation does not support the correct answer to Part A.
	Part B: Option D is incorrect	While this quotation asserts that Congress will be able to enforce the amendment, it does not support the correct answer to Part A.

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Item Position	Rationale	
9	Option C is correct	The Battle of Yorktown effectively ended the war and led to the Treaty of Paris in 1783.
	Option A is incorrect	The battles of Lexington and Concord were the first battles of the Revolutionary War, in April 1775. The next major battle occurred at Bunker Hill in June 1775.
	Option B is incorrect	The French began assisting the American forces after the Battle of Saratoga in 1777.
	Option D is incorrect	The Battle of Yorktown effectively ended the war rather than prolonging it.

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Item Position	Rationale	
10	Option C is correct	Unlike the southern colonies, which focused mainly on agriculture, the middle colonies had diverse economies based on agriculture, industry, and trade.
	Option A is incorrect	The large plantations in the southern colonies required more, not less, labor than businesses in the middle colonies.
	Option B is incorrect	More immigrants were attracted to employment opportunities in the middle colonies.
	Option D is incorrect	Because of their economic diversity, the middle colonies were more dependent on skilled labor than the southern colonies were.

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Item Position	Rationale
11	For SCR items, please refer to the scoring guide.

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Item Position	Rationale	
12	Option B is correct	By writing the Mayflower Compact, the colonists promised to willingly obey a representative form of self-government. This contributed to the growth of representative government in the United States.
	Option A is incorrect	The document makes no mention of government branches.
	Option C is incorrect	The document established self-rule for the settlers and did not define roles with the company that founded the colony.
	Option D is incorrect	The document did not contribute to the idea of keeping church and state separate.

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Item Position	Rationale	
13	Option D is correct	The English Bill of Rights included protections for those petitioning the king. This influenced the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.
	Option A is incorrect	The concept of federalism did not originate from the English Bill of Rights.
	Option B is incorrect	Political parties are not mentioned in the English Bill of Rights.
	Option C is incorrect	The creation of separate branches of government is not mentioned in the English Bill of Rights.

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Item Position	Rationale	
14	Option A is correct	The Freedmen's Bureau actively encouraged education and job training for people newly freed from slavery. These were opportunities previously denied them.
	Option C is correct	The Freedmen's Bureau attempted to support people newly freed from slavery in the South by providing food and supplies.
	Option B is incorrect	Trade relationships between the North and the South did have to be reestablished after the war; however, the Freedmen's Bureau was not tasked with this responsibility.
	Option D is incorrect	The terms of the Southern states' being admitted back into the union did not involve the Freedmen's Bureau.
	Option E is incorrect	The Freedmen's Bureau was not involved with forced migrations or relocations.

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Item Position	Rationale	
15	Option C is correct	William Lloyd Garrison was a leader of the abolitionist movement and was vocal in his opposition to slavery. He published the antislavery newspaper <i>The Liberator</i> until December 29, 1865.
	Option A is incorrect	Garrison was not known to be a member of the Know-Nothings, or the American Party, nor was he known to hold their anti-immigrant views.
	Option B is incorrect	Garrison valued education but did not promote the establishment of public schools.
	Option D is incorrect	Garrison called for the just treatment of all people but did not promote prison reforms.

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Item Position	Rationale	
16	Option D is correct	Transcendentalists in the 1800s sought to grasp personal insights and gain appreciation of the deeper reality of nature.
	Option A is incorrect	Industrialism focuses on factories and manufacturing and is essentially the opposite of transcendentalism, which focuses on nature and the individual.
	Option B is incorrect	While Emerson was influenced by Romanticism, he is associated with transcendentalism.
	Option C is incorrect	Reconstruction was a period after the Civil War and did not have a focus on nature or individualism.

Item Position	Rationale	
17	<p>“Frisked”: Option “The Fourth Amendment—prevents law enforcement from conducting an unreasonable search” is correct</p>	<p>Being frisked by police without probable cause is a violation of the Fourth Amendment, which protects people from unreasonable search and seizure.</p>
	<p>“Protesting”: Option “The First Amendment—protects the freedoms of speech, assembly, religion, and the press” is correct</p>	<p>Protesting the use of the death penalty is an example of a right guaranteed by the First Amendment, which includes the freedoms of speech and assembly.</p>
	<p>“Refuses to testify”: Option “The Fifth Amendment—provides legal protections to citizens accused of crimes” is correct</p>	<p>A defendant’s right to refuse to testify in court is protected by the Fifth Amendment, which gives a variety of legal protections to citizens accused of a crime.</p>
	<p>Option “The Seventh Amendment—preserves the right of the accused to a trial in federal civil cases” is incorrect</p>	<p>The Seventh Amendment, which allows for the right to a trial by jury in federal civil cases, would not apply to being frisked by the police without probable cause, protesting the use of the death penalty, or a defendant refusing to testify in court.</p>
	<p>Option “The Ninth Amendment—reserves rights not specifically listed in the Constitution to the people” is incorrect</p>	<p>The Ninth Amendment, which says that the U.S. Constitution does not list all the rights of citizens, would not apply to being frisked by the police without probable cause, protesting the use of the death penalty, or a defendant refusing to testify in court.</p>

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Item Position	Rationale	
18	Option B is correct	During the First Great Awakening, people began having more choice in church matters, rather than relying on the authority of clergy. As people learned about spiritual equality, they began expecting the same in other aspects of life.
	Option A is incorrect	Although more people were attending church, this did not lead them to focus less on politics. Instead, the growth of democratic practices in the church encouraged the integration of democracy into politics and other aspects of life.
	Option C is incorrect	The First Great Awakening is not associated with encouraging the growth of representative government by attempting to create a state ruled by religion.
	Option D is incorrect	This religious movement is not associated with teachings supporting the virtues of a monarchy system.

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Item Position	Rationale	
19	Option D is correct	The discovery of gold in California in the 1840s led many settlers to migrate west in the years and decades that followed. This gold rush drastically increased the population of California.
	Option A is incorrect	The Gadsden Purchase was finalized in 1854. It provided the land necessary for a southern transcontinental railroad: it did not establish states in the West.
	Option B is incorrect	Many northern cities became overpopulated during this time period, but farmers tended to already live in rural areas of the South and Midwest.
	Option C is incorrect	The Louisiana Purchase happened in 1803 and opened more of the Midwest, but not California, to settlement.

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Item Position	Rationale	
20	Option A is correct	Benjamin Franklin believed that freedom of speech was a crucial civil liberty in American democracy because it helped keep the people informed about their government and therefore helped prevent tyranny.
	Option B is incorrect	Franklin believed that free speech should be in place to monitor the government and to promote freedom, but there is no evidence that he believed that it promoted a more industrial society.
	Option C is incorrect	Freedom of speech does not necessarily lead to government unity, and Franklin did not suggest that it did.
	Option D is incorrect	Freedom of speech allows people to openly disagree without government inference, and this can cause divisions in society; furthermore, Franklin did not address the impact of free speech on people and their relationships with their neighbors.

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Item Position	Rationale	
21	Option C is correct	John Jay was influential in promoting the political system of the United States. As a Federalist, he believed that the nation needed a strong central government.
	Option A is incorrect	John Jay did not argue that sectionalism should be promoted.
	Option B is incorrect	As one of the authors of <i>The Federalist Papers</i> , he supported the idea that the U.S. Constitution had more power than the states.
	Option D is incorrect	Popular sovereignty offers more power to the people and to the states, as opposed to the central government. Jay, as a Federalist, believed in the need for a strong central government.

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Item Position	Rationale	
22	Option A is correct	The factory system used power-driven machines in a centralized location to produce large quantities of goods quickly and inexpensively. This contributed to the economic growth of the United States.
	Option E is correct	During the early 1800s, women were able to work in factories, which helped increase the incomes of American households and contributed to the economic growth of the United States.
	Option B is incorrect	The Industrial Revolution helped build a middle class, but it did not close the wealth gap between factory owners and employees. By the 1890s, a small percentage of the population had control of about a quarter of the wealth.
	Option C is incorrect	The organization of labor unions by workers was slow, and this process did not bring better working conditions to factory workers during the early 1800s.
	Option D is incorrect	Government regulations did not require company owners to invest part of their profits in communities.

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Item Position	Rationale	
23	Option D is correct	Legislation such as the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 addressed the issue of the spread of slavery by relying on the residents of western territories to decide whether their territory would permit slavery.
	Option A is incorrect	Citizenship was extended to formerly enslaved people after the Civil War through the ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment in 1868.
	Option B is incorrect	Slavery was able to spread into western territories via popular sovereignty. It was not abolished until the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865.
	Option C is incorrect	Voting rights were not extended to formerly enslaved men in the territories until the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment in 1870.

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Item Position	Rationale	
24	Option B is correct	Religious freedom was limited in Virginia and other colonies. This lack of religious freedom motivated Jefferson to write the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom.
	Option A is incorrect	Not all religious groups had the protection of religious freedom in every colony.
	Option C is incorrect	Not all colonies valued religious freedom for most people.
	Option D is incorrect	Religious freedom was seen as important in most colonies.

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Item Position	Rationale	
25	Option C is correct	John Paul Jones is a significant figure in U.S. history because he is considered the founding father of the U.S. Navy during the American Revolution.
	Option A is incorrect	John Paul Jones served during the Revolutionary War not the Civil War.
	Option B is incorrect	John Jay, not John Paul Jones, was not the first chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court.
	Option D is incorrect	Thomas Jefferson, not John Paul Jones, wrote the Declaration of Independence.

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Item Position	Rationale	
26	Option B is correct	One way the British would harass or intimidate colonists was by charging them with crimes and delivering unfair verdicts. The Sixth Amendment was added to protect the rights of the accused.
	Option A is incorrect	The Fourth Amendment protects against unreasonable search and seizure.
	Option C is incorrect	The Eighth Amendment was added to the Constitution to address issues of cruel and unusual punishment.
	Option D is incorrect	The Third Amendment prohibits the unlawful quartering of troops.

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Item Position	Rationale	
27	Option D is correct	The Virginia Plan included a two-house legislature with both houses based on population. Delegates from smaller states opposed this plan because it would favor the large states.
	Option A is incorrect	Concerns related to the Virginia Plan involved state population, not free states having too much power.
	Option B is incorrect	Delegates from smaller states wanted a strong federal government that protected them from the larger states' attempts to dominate the legislature.
	Option C is incorrect	The Virginia Plan created three branches of government with a separation of powers, so there was not a fear by smaller states that the legislature would control the judicial branch.

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Item Position	Rationale	
28	Option D is correct	The Whig Party was formed in opposition to President Andrew Jackson and the Jacksonian Democrats in 1834.
	Option A is incorrect	The Supreme Court's power was limited during Jackson's presidency. Jackson, for example, ignored the Supreme Court decision in <i>Worcester v. Georgia</i> .
	Option B is incorrect	The First National Bank was established prior to Jackson's presidency.
	Option C is incorrect	The Missouri Compromise was signed during James Monroe's presidency, in 1820.

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Item Position	Rationale	
29	Option B is correct	Between 1800 and 1850, increases in immigration contributed to urbanization in the United States. Immigrants provided a large supply of labor for factories in urban centers.
	Option A is incorrect	The nullification of federal labor laws did not contribute to urbanization in the United States between 1800 and 1850.
	Option C is incorrect	Although the electric generator was invented in the 1830s, this fact did not affect urbanization, which had begun to take place in the United States well before this invention.
	Option D is incorrect	The increased support for abolitionism in the United States did not contribute to urbanization between 1800 and 1850.

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Item Position	Rationale	
30	Part A: Option D is correct	The Fifteenth Amendment effectively allowed most men the right to vote, primarily including African American men who had previously been excluded.
	Part A: Option A is incorrect	The Fifteenth Amendment did not allow American Indians the right to vote. They were excluded from this right until 1924.
	Part A: Option B is incorrect	The Fifteenth Amendment did not extend the right to vote to all citizens.
	Part A: Option C is incorrect	The Fifteenth Amendment did not affect the electoral college voting system.
	Part B: Option B is correct	The Fifteenth Amendment extended the vote to most men, specifically those of African heritage. This excerpt describes how the vote can no longer be denied based on race, color, or servitude—the primary purpose of the Fifteenth Amendment.
	Part B: Option A is incorrect	The Fifteenth Amendment only extended the vote to most men, specifically those of African heritage. This excerpt would support an answer if that answer were discussing the government’s not being allowed to infringe on citizens’ right to vote.
	Part B: Option C is incorrect	The Fifteenth Amendment extended the vote to most men, specifically those of African heritage. This amendment does not focus on the power of Congress.
	Part B: Option D is incorrect	The Fifteenth Amendment extended the vote to most men, specifically those of African heritage. This excerpt does not describe the primary group (African Americans) that the law would be enforced for.

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Item Position	Rationale	
31	Option A is correct	The excerpt describes the Northwest Ordinance. The main purpose of the ordinance was to provide an orderly way to admit new states once the population reached 60,000 people.
	Option B is incorrect	The Northwest Ordinance prohibited slavery in the Northwest Territory.
	Option C is incorrect	The Northwest Ordinance protected civil liberties such as freedom of religion, the requirement of a jury trial, and the prohibition of cruel and unusual punishment.
	Option D is incorrect	The Northwest Ordinance encouraged the creation of public education within the Northwest Territory. Within each township, a section was devoted to public schools.

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Item Position	Rationale
32	For SCR items, please refer to the scoring guide.

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Item Position	Rationale	
33	Option D is correct	Enslaved labor and the continuation of the transatlantic slave trade were prominent in the southern colonies, where cash crops were an important part of the economy and were labor intensive.
	Option A is incorrect	Manufactured goods were always needed by the colonists, as the mercantile system kept the colonies from developing a manufacturing base. However, the transatlantic slave trade did not directly satisfy the need for manufactured goods.
	Option B is incorrect	Improvements in transportation were not a factor that contributed to the transatlantic slave trade.
	Option C is incorrect	The demand for building supplies did not contribute to the transatlantic slave trade.

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Item Position	Rationale	
34	Option B is correct	Missouri, Kentucky, Maryland, and Delaware were slave states that remained in the Union and did not secede.
	Option A is incorrect	Missouri, Kentucky, Maryland, and Delaware remained in the Union.
	Option C is incorrect	Whether to declare war on the Confederacy was not put up to a vote by the states. Congress also did not vote to declare war, because the United States did not recognize the Confederacy as a foreign power.
	Option D is incorrect	Lincoln did not win the presidential election in Missouri, Kentucky, Maryland, or Delaware.

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Item Position	Rationale	
35	Option B is correct	Competition generally protects consumers by ensuring the best price and the best quality of a product, good, or service.
	Option A is incorrect	There were few regulations in place on manufactured goods during the early 1800s.
	Option C is incorrect	Consumers and businesses make the choice to deposit money based on their needs and wants. They do not make this decision based on competition.
	Option D is incorrect	Competition does not cause exports of raw materials and manufactured goods to decrease. The exports of raw materials (such as cotton) increased during the early 1800s.

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Item Position	Rationale	
36	"Sought economic opportunities in the North": Option Europe is correct	Immigrants from Europe came primarily to the northern United States to pursue economic opportunities.
	"Looked for religious freedom mainly in the North and East": Option Europe is correct	European immigrants came to the United States to escape religious persecution. An example of this is the migration of the Pilgrims.
	"Forcibly brought to the South and West as enslaved labor": Option Africa is correct	Africans were forcibly brought to and enslaved in many parts of the early United States, but primarily the enslaved population lived in southern and western U.S. states and territories.
	"Sought economic opportunities in the West despite discrimination": Option Asia is correct	Immigrants from Asia moved primarily into western U.S. territories and states to pursue economic opportunities, such as mining for gold, despite the discrimination they faced.

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Item Position	Rationale	
37	Option B is correct	A core belief of Anti-Federalists, including Patrick Henry, was that individual rights should be secured before agreeing to ratify the U.S. Constitution.
	Option A is incorrect	Anti-Federalists opposed a strong central government and wanted to ensure that the states had power.
	Option C is incorrect	Anti-Federalists opposed ratification because it granted too much power to the federal government at the expense of the states.
	Option D is incorrect	Anti-Federalists argued for the separation of powers to limit the power of government and help protect individual rights.

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Item Position	Rationale	
38	Option C is correct	The Dred Scott ruling said that free blacks and enslaved people were not allowed to sue or bring a case in federal court, because they were not citizens.
	Option A is incorrect	The Dred Scott ruling denied citizenship to both free blacks and enslaved people.
	Option B is incorrect	The Dred Scott ruling said that free blacks and enslaved people were not citizens, and therefore they could not sue.
	Option D is incorrect	The Dred Scott ruling did not give free blacks or enslaved people their freedom.

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Item Position	Rationale	
39	Option A is correct	A warm climate and long growing seasons contributed to large plantations in the South.
	Option B is incorrect	The Northern region benefited greatly from the use of the railroad system to transport its goods. It also had more railroad tracks than the South had.
	Option C is incorrect	The South relied heavily on unpaid enslaved laborers, who had no choice but to live on the slave labor plantations where they worked. Many industrial workers in the Northern region were required to pay rent for their lodgings.
	Option D is incorrect	Mountainous areas can be found in regions of both the North and South. These geographic features did not cause the South to be more isolated than the North.

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Item Position	Rationale	
40	Option B is correct	Alexander Hamilton believed that the creation of a national bank would allow for the management of the massive debt that the United States had gained because of the American Revolution.
	Option D is correct	Alexander Hamilton believed that a national bank would ease the collection and distribution of tax revenue.
	Option A is incorrect	The purpose of the national bank was to stabilize the economy of the United States. Its purpose was not to encourage trade with Great Britain.
	Option C is incorrect	Thomas Jefferson feared that the national bank would favor wealthy industrialists over Southern planters. However, discouraging the creation of plantations was not the intended purpose of the first national bank.
	Option E is incorrect	State banks were still allowed to operate after the creation of the first national bank.