American History Essay Topics

1. The Port Chicago Mutiny – Disloyal action or a principled stand?
2. Hollywood goes to War – Do Hollywood movies ultimately pay history a service or a disservice?
3. The Rosenbergs – Traitors or heroes?
4. Hiroshima and Nagasaki – Was the decision to use the bomb on these two cities an action to save American lives or a decision that had other motives behind it?
5. Executive Order 9066 – An outrageous form of discrimination or a sensible military strategy?
6. “The problem with Nuremberg was that it repeated the age-old principle of the victors trying the vanquished.” Should the Allies have also been on trial at Nuremberg for considered neglect of Jewish lives?
7. Argue for or against the contention that Joseph McCarthy, alone, should assume full responsibility for House Un-American Activities Committee’s (HUAC’s) excesses.
8. Assess the American decision to become involved in Vietnam. Was this a genuine attempt to preserve freedom in South Vietnam or a war of self-interest using Vietnam as a backdrop?
9. Assess a Presidency from Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) to Bill Clinton. Determine how this presidency will be judged by historians.
10. “The 1960s: A turning point where history that failed to turn.” Choose an organization e.g., the Black Panthers, the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), the Weathermen, the YIPPIES (Youth International Party members), etc. and assess this group’s success in effecting change in the United States.
11. Examine the accuracy of a filmmaker in interpreting a modern historical issue.
12. “Americans require an external villain to move them beyond their isolationist tendencies.” Assess the accuracy of this statement by examining the role of the demon/bogeyman in American history. Use one of the following world figures, could be used as a basis of your investigation: Noriega, Gadafi, Khomeini, Hussein, Castro, Allende, Ortega, Aidid, Milosevic.
13. Choose an American industry and examine and evaluate how this business has impacted American culture and American history.
14. “America’s addiction to obsolescence will be responsible for its environmental demise.” Determine whether this statement accurately reflects the United States of the post-war period.
15. Examine the two approaches to Civil Rights embodied by Malcolm X and Martin Luther King and evaluate which approach seems to have had a greater impact in the short and the long term.
16. Assess the impact that satirists and comedians have had on the American consciousness.
17. “Music and sports were the most important catalysts in breaking down the colour barrier in the United States.” Support or refute this statement.
18. Support or refute the contention of the Warren Commission that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone in the assassination of John Fitzgerald Kennedy.
19. Construct an argument regarding an issue or event that has significantly altered or impacted the course of American women’s history since World War II.
20. “The CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) is in danger of destroying the very democracy it has been mandated to protect.” Support or refute this statement by examining CIA activities in the last fifty years.
21. “American cynicism regarding politics has its roots in the Watergate Scandal.” Support or refute this statement.
22. Historically analyse the American prison population with this question in mind: Does American justice serve the “American Dream”?
23. Choose an American author or artist and evaluate their contribution to American society.
24. Evaluate American policy in regards to communist China. Is this policy more of an example of pragmatism or a policy that is hypocritical and inconsistent with its goal of the destruction of communism abroad?
25. A topic of your choice. You require the permission of the teacher.