

World History Mock Topics 2012-2014 (all inclusive)
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1. **Bible Stories: A Foundation for the study of Literature.** Nearly all canonical literature assumes the reader knows the essential stories from the Bible; references to the garden, Samson, the prodigal son, etc. are common, yet so many modern readers aren't equipped to understand the references and thus the literature. You should inform your audience of at least four of the following stories: Garden of Eden, Cain and Abel, The Tower of Babel, The Plagues (Exodus 7), Battle of Jericho, Jonah and the Whale, Jesus Turns Water into Wine, Jesus Walks on Water, Lazarus Rises from Dead, Jesus is Crucified.
2. **Art Since the Renaissance:** For a few centuries in Renaissance Italy, art influenced social change, politics, religion, and reform. And although art may have vanished from the historical narrative shortly thereafter, artists continued to practice art. Has art really been a-political since the 16th century? Pick up where the story left off and bring us up to speed on artistic periods, famous artists, and famous works. Along the way, keep an eye on how art has and has not reflected or impacted culture in the Western world. You might want to take a look at the value of Post-Renaissance art and how some artists have become more valued than others.
3. **Our Daily Bread:** or dough, if you prefer—were talking about cash, and that's as good as money. In the Renaissance we got the check; today we get to swipe. But how did people pay for things before the check? How was this all regulated? And how did we pay for things after the inventions of capitalism, joint-stock companies, and Western Union? Explore money in all its forms (including lending practice) and explain how the need for money interacted with politics and culture through the ages. You might also look at specie versus electronic monies.
4. **Heresy before Luther:** Arianism, Donatists, Anabaptists, Manichaeism, Gnosticism, and certainly Wycliff and Hus. How were the heretics/heretical religions dealt with by the Catholic church?
5. **Cotton Kills:** Molten metal and fiery furnaces make better icons for industrialism than sheep and sewing machines, but turning out textiles led to Luddism and labor laws well before steel shrouded London with soot. Explaining the role of textile production in initiating the industrial revolution is important, but don't forget to furnish the finer points of production and the ways in which wool wrought new realities for working women, men and children. Cheap comparisons to today's sweatshops allowed.
6. **The Columbian Exchange:** What was exchanged and how did it change the lives of people throughout the world? Some items to cover include the exchange of humans (slaves and others), disease, and language, along with the global trading of new and exotic goods.
7. **When for Art Thou: Shakespeare and History:** Most of Shakespeare's plays unfold in a historical setting, accurate or not. Plays you should discuss include Renaissance Italy in *Romeo and Juliet*, the 100 Years War in *Henry V*, and Rome in *Julius Caesar*. As the bard himself wrote, time and place make the man; would Shakespeare have come close to his current reputation if he were born in Germany at the same time? England 200 years later?

8. **What do we burn other than witches? More Witches!:** In addition to the history of witches and witchcraft, include their persecution, as well as the role of the Counter Reformation and Inquisition in that persecution. Are witches gender-specific? What other ways are witches burned?
9. **Henry VIII and his VIII Wives:** It may be the world's first reality TV show, so give us all the juicy drama, intrigue, and interpersonal conflict you can dig up! Of course, the events surrounding Henry's quest for a male heir had a huge impact on history—explain that too.
10. **Columbus' 4 Voyages:** Yep, there was more than one and the others mattered, perhaps even more than the first. Include the legal issues Columbus encountered as a result of the trips.
11. **Chains:** Slavery and Civil Rights in America represent the bulk of our exposure to a practice that has been ubiquitous across time and space. But America only represented a fraction of the Atlantic Slave Trade, and the Atlantic Slave trade, brutal as it was, was a distinct form of slavery. Your task is to explore slavery in its broadest context—historically, who enslaved who, how, and for what?
12. **The Occult:** Any powerful or seemingly powerful act outside of rational explanation can be called the occult. From witches to meditation, people have described and believed in the occult since the earliest recorded history. What has the occult meant from 1200 or so in Europe, and how is it manifested today?
13. **A (Napoleon) Complex Corsican:** The short guy who became an artillery captain. The Corsican who became a Frenchman. The revolutionary that became a dictator. The libertarian who became an authoritarian. Complex indeed. Don't give this important historical figure short treatment.
14. **Pink Freud:** Fifty years ago the father of psychoanalysis was a famous genius. Today, he's often considered a freak and his theories have been marginalized as psychology seeks to shroud itself in science. Yet he remains a central figure in our intellectual history. Put Freud's reputation on the couch and explain his effect on modern thinking, for good or ill.
15. **The White Horse: Pestilence through the Ages:** The Black Death, smallpox, the Spanish Flu, Cholera, TB (consumption), and others. This is not a Science Channel documentary; it's a History Channel presentation – focus on the impact of disease on history, not just the gruesomeness of buboes and blisters (although you can talk about that as well). How did horrific plague and flu outbreaks marginalize religion? What contemporary outbreak fears are tied to some of the pestilent diseases of the past?
16. **Monster Energy: Frankenstein's Monster Transformed:** Originally a cautionary tale about industrial ills written by an eighteen year old, Frankenstein has become a film industry and holiday standard. Explore the different incarnations of the story and its creature from its inception to today. What Frankenstein-ish science/medicine advances are currently being explored?
17. **Argh! Piracy from Barbary to Somalia:** By the time you read this, *Pirates of the Caribbean* sequels will have exceeded those of the *Rocky* franchise—a grand tale of grand mythmaking. Your task is to untangle the myth, reveal the real pirates and their pursuers, and place them in their proper historical context. Make sure you cover President Jefferson's role in freeing America from the Barbary pirates, and include current Somali and Thai pirates.

18. **Curriculum Vitae:** Roughly one-hundred years ago, less than 10% of children in the western world attended school. What did those who went to school learn? Do we learn different stuff now? Why? What social, political, intellectual changes in society led to changes in what is taught? Capitalize on the political nature of the debates surrounding education, including issues of class. Where is public education headed?
19. **Don't Mess With Texas:** State-sanctioned murder is as old as the state itself, but certainly has been undertaken and justified in a variety of ways and with varying levels of zeal. Look at the history of executions worldwide, but examine much, much more than just technique—we can learn much about culture and society from their choices in dealing with its internal threats. How has this issue been viewed over time and place.
20. **Off With Their Heads: The English Revolution:** Charles I's beheading kicked off the Interregnum (Between monarchs) in England, a bloody civil war that lasted from 1642-1660. Even though Catholics and all "enemies of the state" suffered, Oliver Cromwell invited Jews to return to England – after being banished from 1290-1650. How did the Revolution start, and what were the major lasting impacts? What happened to the Puritans after they gave control back to the monarchy?
21. **Robinson Crusoe:** According to most Brits, an Englishman can be dropped anywhere in the world, and he will have a colony up and running, complete with slave labor and a good to export. Why are the Brits so sure that this is the true? What evidence do they have that the English are natural colonizers? Have any other countries been in a similar position? You might want to look at economic colonizing – drop an American bank in any country, and the country will be working for that bank in no time.
22. **The Ottoman Empire:** One of the greatest in history, yet most Westerners know little of its history and many of the modern nations that once made up the empire are considered western. Fill us in.
23. **Pump Up The Jam:** Music is widely considered to be the last of the arts in the western world to experience "renaissance." Explore music, both elite and popular, from the 1500s (early if you'd like) to about 1900, explaining how music reflected and influenced culture and society.
24. **Rest in Peace: Burial Rituals Across Time and Place:** The Greeks famously put two coins on the eyes for the boatman and then burned their dead on great pyres. The Christian tradition moved burials underground, giving us great mausoleums and twisting catacombs. Some ancient societies interned their dead in vertical shafts, others send the dead to sea. Explore the history of paying our respects and explain how doing so has reflected the values and ideas of the various societies whose practices you illuminate.
25. **Hired Guns:** Before Blackwater Americans fought the Hessians; before nations and nationalism many armies employed mercenary forces. Explore the history of professional warriors and their role in conquest and occupations, as well as issues raised by these "soldiers of fortune."
26. **We Who Are About to Die Salute You: Violent Sport Across the Ages:** The Gladiators are the most infamous example of blood in the arena, but throughout history and across cultures, violent sports have, and current do, draw large audiences.

- Explore the history of this and attempt to explain the persistence of such games in the face of so much opposition.
27. **Obamacare, the Prequel:** Long before conservatives warned that socialized medicine would suck the life out of the federal budget, medieval doctors were using leeches to suck the life of their patients. And that was after a Greek named Hippocrates had created an oath stating doctors should do no harm. Explore the history of the medical field. Certainly your presentation will include the scientific nature of the change, but focus on the cultural, social, and economic components—this is a literature and history course after all.
 28. **Utopia:** Perhaps since the beginning of time, humans have sought to create for the perfect world, real or imaginary. Explore the forms this “perfect” world has taken and the ideas and philosophies behind it. Are we delusional in our quest? What obstacles stand in the way of Utopia?
 29. **The Afterlife:** Pyramids and catacombs, an eight-fold path, and twelve stations, cremated, entombed, or mummified – much of what humans do in this life is based on what they expect in the next. Explore the history of thought about the afterlife from pre-history to the present, focusing not on burial rituals (that’s a different mock topic), but on what the next life was believed to look like. How the various cultures created their laws, traditions, and behaviors in order to influence their next life?
 30. **You Are What You Eat:** The story of food production is as long and twisted as a small intestine. We live in the midst of a new and increasingly energetic debate about where our food comes from—GMOs, organic, free range, and local. Let’s put that discussion in historical context. What did the diet of stone-aged man look like? How did farming change this, and how did industrial agriculture change daily consumption after centuries of simple farming? Certainly address nutrition and economics, but focus equally on government and society, tradition and law. Untangle this history.
 31. **‘Livin’ The Dream:** Thousands of years before a house in the ‘burbs, 2 cars, and 2.4 kids, Western culture had aspirations for the good life. But what have “the folks” expected and hoped for in their lives, in different times. Your exploration could address family, marriage, leisure time, retirement, paper millionaires, nuclear families and extended families, luxury, climbing the social ladder (or not), hierarchy, social roles, gender, and more. You will need to develop a theme or thesis to focus your discussion on this very broad topic.
 32. **Shaken, not Stirred:** Your generation has Wiki-leaks and Edward Snowden, algorithms and drones. Our generation had the Cold War and Bond, James Bond. But spying is as old as humanity, and the governments of ancient civilizations employed spies as much as we do. Explore the history of spying in all its forms and address the critical questions: How effective is spying? What are the pitfalls? Did groups other than governments use spies? How has spying changed over time? What sources other than technology have changed spying? Nations spy, but what about

- corporations? Political groups? Do they use the same means? Has spying become easier? Too easy?
33. **Black Gold:** No product has dominated 20th century politics, economics, and warfare like oil. Explore the policy and politics of oil from the development of the internal combustion engine to today, paying special attention to its interconnectedness with international conflict and cooperation.
 34. **Eastern (af)front:** If Korea is the forgotten war, the Eastern Front during WWII is the forgotten front—yet most of the Second World War’s casualties occurred there. Explore the Eastern Front and explain why it was qso deadly and explore its remembrance, or lack thereof.
 35. **Global Terrorism:** 9/11 may be burned into the memories of most Americans, and we may, indeed, never forget, but terrorism didn’t start or end at Ground Zero. Al Qaeda has hit many non-US targets, including London and Madrid, and other places outside of Europe. Explore terrorism in this global context. Avoid covering U.S. targets at home and abroad, although you may mention them as part of your story.
 36. **Modernism:** This time period saw intense changes in literature, art, and the way we look at life. Who and what were the major influences in this time period between the two world wars? The rallying cry for the time period was “Make it new!” – how did that work? What was so new? What technological advances helped facilitate change in thought and action?
 37. **Growing Pains:** Today’s headlines don’t lack for pontifications, demonizations, and human interest stories related to clashes between tradition and change, between the old and the new, between the past and present. But in many ways the growing pains of globalization is an old story. Explore the Meiji Restoration in early 20th Century Japan and discern what we can learn from one history’s great culture clashes.
 38. **Luddism:** Ever since followers of the mythical “Ned Ludd” began busting machines in rural England, the terrorists of technology have fought, seemingly in vain, to purge society of the evils of labor saving devices. Document, or rather Mockument, this continued resistance to the new. Attempt to explain why such resistance exists and continues to exist, as well as if these cautions have been, should have been, or ever will be taken seriously.
 39. **The British in India:** The greatest story of empire with an ending greater than the best fiction: few historical events have captured the popular mind more.
 40. **Balfour Declaration:** This letter was far more than a clarifying document that created a homeland for Jews after World War I. To discuss it properly, you would have to include commentary about French, British, and Russian control of Arab territories. You would have to discuss much more than that too, including the initial Arab acceptance of the plan, what happened directly after the war, and what kind of political issues still exist today because of it.

41. **Apartheid:** The easy definition here is that Apartheid is institutionalized racism and segregation of Black Africans to White Africans in South Africa, starting after World War II. But is there more to it? Does it pattern any other country's institutionalized racism, caste system, class-warfare, etc? Was Apartheid responsible for any positive current aspects of a non-Apartheid South Africa?
42. **The Great White Hunter:** Europe, Africa, and the Safari. Is this Eco-Tourism, Eco-Consumerism, or Eco-Destruction? All of these? What is the allure of the safari, and what does it mean economically to the geographic hosts? What does it mean to the "Great White Hunters"? What don't we know about safaris? Be sure to address the historical component of this—the connection between colonization and Safaris.
43. **The Yellow Man's Burden?:** To most, the word "imperialism" calls for images of white masters manipulating indigenous people in South America, Africa, and Southeast Asia. Yet for this latter group, Japanese Imperialism in the early 20th Century has a far greater impact than did the white man with his burden. Explore the nature of the Japanese Empire from its inception as part of the Meiji Restoration to its demise with Hiroshima and Nagasaki.
44. **Continent of Revolutions:** Latin America from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century and beyond.
45. **World Religions:** Buddhism, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam. Are these defined by most Christians merely as non-Christian religions? Do these religions understand each other? Do they try? What is the history behind them? What similarities do they have? What issues have caused strife between them, and what does the future hold for them?
46. **Fascism:** The Cold War left many Americans with a somewhat complex understanding of Communism, but our obsession with defeating the "Evil Empire" also meant that concern over, and knowledge about, Fascism died in a bunker in Berlin. Take us back and help us understand the ideology of Fascism as something other than just rule by an insane megalomaniac dictator. Your treatment would of course involve comparisons to other ideological systems.
47. **The Sandbox in Spring:** After 10 years of war, at least some Americans have begun asking how the Middle-East became "such a mess." To the extent that this is true, the "mess" seems to have something to do with lines drawn in the sand by various European powers in the early 20th century. Disentangle, at least intellectually, the Middle-East map and explain how and why it came to look like it does today.
48. **Urban Legends:** Since the beginning of time, man has explained mysterious sightings or occurrences by inventing fantastical explanations like mythical, supernatural, or extraterrestrial beings. Different from conspiracy theories, which rely on human institutions concealing the truth from the people, Urban Legends (also known as Contemporary Legends or Modern Myth) seem to satisfy some need the people have. Choose a handful of these legends as case studies to explain your theory about why people want to believe. Some possible urban legends include: Majorca,

Madonna sightings, UFO sightings (not alien autopsies—conspiracy theory), Bermuda Triangle, Atlantis, Bigfoot, Loch Ness, Yeti, Sea Monsters, Dragons, El Dorado, The Fountain of Youth, Noah's Ark, the Ark of the Covenant, The Holy Grail, Crying Icons, and the Chupacabra, among others.

49. **The Apocalypse:** Every year, it seems, yields yet another claim about when and why the world will end, sometimes known as millennialism (ironically). Interestingly, the replacement of superstition with science seems to have done little to reduce our propensity for end of the world theorizing; Indeed, apocalyptic doom-saying seems to be on the rise. Explore some of these recipes for apocalypse, with an emphasis on explaining what each says about the culture and times in which it originated. From the Mayan apocalypse of 2012 (yes, that didn't happen) to Y2K, and Noah's Flood or the Four Horsemen, you have many choices.
50. **Not So Stereotypical:** From the attacks against African Americans during the Great Depression, to modern preconceptions regarding Asians, our society seems all too eager to confine, categorize, and classify groups, instead burdening them with labels and a forced sense of identity. Explore the history behind modern stereotypes and delve into how society, religion, science, and more play a role in how we view each other today. Focus on cause and effect chains! How have our conceptions evolved over time? Are these stereotypes healthy or harmful? What defines us? Is race important?
51. **If you have an idea of topic, you may work with us to develop it, but this MUST be approved by us before you begin.**