

## **TECHNIQUES FOR STUDYING FOR EXAMS AND GENERAL SUCCESS IN HISTORY CLASS**

Generally, there are **two kinds of assessments most commonly given in this class: benchmark assessments and unit assessments**. **Benchmark assessments** are given periodically throughout the year to assess students on their progress regarding the California 11<sup>th</sup> Grade US History Content Standards; the same questions are given at points throughout the year in all 11<sup>th</sup>-grade history classes to ensure that students are learning the same content regardless of which Pioneer teacher leads their US History class. Please see "Info About State Standards and CST" for more information. Since this class is organized around the standards being tested, following the advice for unit assessments listed below is the best way to study for benchmark tests. The main difference is that, since benchmark tests are not open-binder, students will need to spend more time on number 3 on the list in memorizing items from content lists.

**Unit assessments** (essays, projects, and other things) are those that are unique to Mr. Glasser's US History class. They are not meant to surprise or fool you! In fact, at the beginning of each unit, students will receive a unit outline that includes, among lots of useful information, the exam question for that unit's essay test. All unit assessments are entirely open binder: my goal is not for you to use your time memorizing information; it is rather to master the information and use it to excel in all three levels of critical thinking (see "Bloom's Taxonomy" and the "US History Green Sheet" for more information). Succeeding on this kind of critical thinking and the writing that goes with it takes strategy. Here is my advice for succeeding on unit assessments, including exam essays. Use your unit outline—it is your best friend! **Being able to do the following things takes being dedicated to daily homework assignments and a commitment to keeping an organized binder (see "US History Green Sheet" for binder instructions). Having all of your sources from throughout the unit organized in your binder and all of your daily homework readings completed are necessary for success on exam essays and projects.**

**Advice for success:**

1. Use the essential questions in the unit outline: answer each essential question and make notes about answers using the sources that are listed under each question. Students should also use notes from lecture and class discussions in their answers to these essential questions.
2. Use the list of sources in the unit outline: students should highlight packets and make notes about the major ideas from each of the different readings from class. Students should be able to relate these main ideas to essential questions on the unit outline.
3. Use the content lists in the unit outlines as study lists: these lists show the most important historical material that we've learned. They are the low-level critical thinking items that students should be able to know and use. In other words, students should not only be able to know what these things are but also be able to relate them to essential questions from class.
4. Re-organize and re-copy notes from lectures and class discussions so that the notes are organized by theme (big idea) instead of being lists of information that are randomly organized. You want notes that are organized by theme, not thing—organize your notes by upper- and/or mid-level critical thinking rather than by low-level. Using diagrams, wheels, charts, and graphs are good ways to accomplish organizing information. I'll repeat it 1,000 times this year, but here's my advice: spending 10-15 minutes a day re-organizing your notes from that day in class is more effective than studying for 1,000 hours in the days before a test!