



*Dear incoming APUSHers,*

*First and foremost, welcome to the family! As a former APUSHer, I can tell you that the journey you're about to embark on is scary, but the payoff is completely worth it. In this little (actually fairly large, sorry) compilation, I'm going to explain why that is, and I'm also going to give you some advice that I either did take and appreciated, didn't take and wish I had, or didn't even receive. APUSH is a lot of work, and I'm going to try and cover just about everything under the big, orange APUSH sun. I'm going to start with assignments, then study tips, and conclude with some general stuff (warnings, clarifications, and so forth).*

## *ASSIGNMENTS*

**Garraty Worksheets.** This is your first real APUSH assignment. These bad boys are gonna be with you 'til the very end. There's a lot, and they only get more challenging. But let me be clear . . . Garraty worksheets are not hard. They are time consuming. Use them to help you get through Garraty, because you must read Garraty cover to cover. It's the official brand of an APUSH survivor. Do not skim for answers. Garraty and Tubbs are very tricky, and if you're not paying attention closely, you'll end up with a lot of wrong answers. There's nothing worse than getting less than 100% on an open-book assignment. **READ GARRATY. UNDERSTAND GARRATY. LOVE GARRATY.**

A lot of the way that you do this depends on the way you comprehend text. For me personally, I would get so absorbed in the history that I would forget to answer the worksheet questions and I'd have to go back and answer them later. I felt like I got the most history out of this method. I'd recommend reading Garraty like it's a novel. Get into it. Relate to the "characters." Once you finish a chapter, go back and answer the questions that you remember. Skim for the answers you missed. Check answers with a fellow APUSHer prior to turning your worksheet in. If you and your partner have different answers, go back and see if you can find the correct ones verbatim. If not, go with your original answer. It's important to trust yourself; I always got answers wrong when I changed them to what other people had.

Don't skip the extra features! The biographies, arguments, maps, movies, and book connections are interesting and can be useful on the National Exam for any number of reasons. Just don't skip anything. Rule of thumb: GARRATY = GOLD.

Side note: feel free to have a little notebook where you jot down mind-blowing stats or interesting facts that you pick up from Garraty or any other number of sources. This keeps history interesting and if you commit these things to memory, they can make you stand out just a little extra on the National Exam.

**What's My Lines.** I'm sure you've heard rumors of bleeding hands due to the notorious What's My Line items. I'll tell you my hands never bled, but I do know a few people. I have a love/hate relationship with these guys. Looking back, I've never been prouder of an assignment. They're an excellent study resource. You can think of them as cumulative flashcards, but better. Do a nice job with your WMLs. You'll be happy you did at the end of the year. If you can't find a WML in Garraty or Brinkley, it's okay to use online resources, but don't do this for every single one. Yes, there are Quizlets with thousands of WMLs, and yes, a lot of APUSHERs have resorted to using them going on their 46th hour without sleep. But just, don't, okay? Most of the definitions you find on Quizlet are wrong anyway, and Tubbs knows when it's not your work. If you absolutely have to, you can use Quizlet as a starting point. Kind of like what you're supposed to do with Wikipedia. The thing about WMLs though, is that you'll get the same one 4 or 5 times, but each time there's a different significance to it, and Quizlet can't adapt to that.

If you keep your wits about you and are keeping abreast of your reading, WMLs shouldn't be difficult to do. At first, WMLs are really hard. I remember having a really rough time with them, but after your first 10 or so, you get the hang of it. Doing 5-10 WMLs a night is totally manageable, and your sanity will thank you when it's April and everyone is scrambling to finish 4 units of WMLs in 3 days and you're already a unit ahead. Just, stay on top of them. It's so easy to procrastinate these, but you'll thank me (and yourself) if you don't.

**Primo Outlines.** You won't be introduced to these for a while, and Tubbs covers them pretty well. My best advice would be to take your time. I would recommend setting aside at least five days to get a P-O done, especially your first one. I typically spent between 15 and 30 hours on one Primo, depending on how long the "unit" was and how well I already knew it (side note: do a primo outline on a unit you don't know well). Put down what's helpful and be organized. These are the most time consuming and difficult labs, but they are without a doubt the most helpful. My best Primo was on the Age of Big Business and I still have all of that knowledge right at the front of my brain. P-Os are the best. Tubbs typically shows examples, but if you have questions, any former APUSHER will be happy to give you a bit of direction. I would recommend using Brinkley to help organize your Primo and then fill it in with content from Garraty. I found Brinkley to be more organized while Garraty was more comprehensive. Putting the two together forces you to synthesize information and helps you understand it better.

**Chapter Notes.** As a fledgling APUSHer, I thought I was going to be able to handle taking chapter notes on every single Garraty chapter. Wrong. Wrong, wrong, WRONG! You simply will not have time. This is what Garraty worksheets are for. However, if you're gone for the majority of a lecture, or if you just aren't really grasping a concept, I would strongly recommend doing chapter notes out of either Garraty or Brinkley for the time period you missed, even if you don't get gradebook points for them. In terms of comprehension, this did me almost as well as a P-O. If you miss a quiz and have to do chapter notes as a makeup, I would recommend doing notes out of Brinkley because again, his organization is a bit better for note-taking.

**Documents.** These guys are so underrated. Everyone is guilty of procrastinating documents because they're quick and dirty. Don't do this. When Tubbs gives you a document, it's an important document. It could very well show up on a quiz, test, or even on the National Exam. If nothing else, knowing all of the documents that Tubbs gives you will help you keep a WML item or two straight. The steps to completing a document that I found to be most effective go as follow:

1. Read the document and highlight strong, interesting, relevant, sentences/clauses.
2. Use your resources. A lot of the documents that you'll get are pre-1900s and are a little difficult to interpret sometimes. Google is a fantastic tool for helping you understand. If you don't understand a document, look up "[Title of Document] Analysis" on Google and see why it's significant and what historians have pulled from it.
3. Look at and internalize the questions at the end of the document, if there are any.
4. Go back through the document to find textual evidence to answer the questions. Put direct quotes in your answers. It'll help you better understand what you're reading.

This seems like a lot, and you're probably not going to be able to do these steps so meticulously every time you receive a document, but truly, if you internalize documents and get to know them and their significance, your score on the National Exam will thank you.

**Exams.** Certainly for your first exam, don't be concerned about your score. At all. Your first score is nothing but a starting place, and you've probably never been faced with such a difficult exam. If you got a really terrible, awful score, think of it as giving you more room to improve. In the long run it isn't going to affect your grade. Use your score to improve your study habits (some of which I'll recommend later). This doesn't mean you shouldn't try, because if you don't you'll fall behind really quick. Just know that your scores will gradually improve as you learn how to take an exam of that magnitude. It's all part of the APUSH experience!

**Quizzes.** Quizzes are a fraction of the rigor that exams are. They're still more difficult than a vocab test though, and require more energy than simple memorization. If you study your lecture notes, worksheets, and WMLs before your quizzes, you'll be golden.

# STUDY TIPS

Studying history is hard. It's fun, but it can be very difficult. I love history more than any other subject, but there were times that I couldn't get through a Garraty chapter if my life depended on it. Especially in the Age of Technology, it's hard to focus on a 15-page segment about the growth of textile mills in the South. I'm not going to lie, I never solved this dilemma. My best advice would be to find out how you focus best. Determine the environment that you can study in, and get really comfortable with it. If you can't focus when you're studying with a group, resist the urge. If you need complete silence to focus, make it happen. If you need the room to be really cold so you don't fall asleep, the bar to the right of the front door at Dunn Bros gets bombarded with bone-chilling air every winter day. Figure out what works for you before things get too crazy. Trust me, things only get crazier and crazier more.

**Lecture Notes.** Your primary study tool should be your lecture notes. Prior to taking APUSH, I'd never had a class in which the majority of time was spent taking notes while the instructor lectured. This was totally foreign to me and I didn't know how to take effective notes. If you already have a good way to take notes, use it, stick with it, don't change it. If you don't have a good way to take notes, find a history lecture on YouTube and experiment with different ways of taking notes. Looking back, I wish I would have had an organized, consistent plan. When it comes time to study for the National Exam, developing a system is crucial.

Tubbs provides you with lecture guides for every "unit" that he lectures on. I'm a huge proponent of printing double-sided, but for this, I'd recommend printing single-sided. Take notes on the blank side of your lecture guide and refer back to the lecture guide when necessary. Just write everything down. Your goal should be to get as much quality content down on paper as possible. I find unlined paper to be most effective for note-taking because you can draw arrows, boxes, change your font, text size, etc. and the lines won't run through it. Take your lecture notes with a pen. Over time pencil will fade away and it becomes very difficult to read your notes. So, after lecture you'll have a blank lecture guide and a whole bunch of notes on the backside.

Go home that same night and fill in all the blanks on your lecture guide. Highlight the ones you can't find. Look in Garraty, look in Brinkley, ask other APUSHers, and if all else fails, ask Tubbs. This will solidify that lecture in your brain and make the information more accessible when it comes time to take the quiz, test, and National Exam. Most quiz answers, keep in mind, come straight from Garraty or the lecture guide. Have a binder that you keep all your stapled lecture guides in and at the end of the year you'll have a fabulous study tool.

I would not recommend having a lecture notebook. If this works for you, do it. But if you miss a lecture, it's a pain in the rear end to guess how many pages you'll need for the notes you missed and then your notes get all mixed up and out of order and it's frustrating to say the least. If you take your notes loose-leaf, you can get lecture notes whenever and rearrange them as needed. It's liberating.

If you want, ask Tubbs if you can record lectures. I recorded a few somewhat sporadically. If I would've had more storage and/or better technology to do it consistently it would've been an extremely beneficial review mechanism.

If you don't want to record Tubbs's lectures but you're an aural learner, there are hundreds of great U.S. history lectures online. There's one done by a professor which follows the precise outline of Brinkley, in fact. I used these as quiz review, and when I missed lectures I made up for them with YouTube lectures. Unlike Tubbs, YouTube has a pause button. This makes your note-taking experience less hurried and you can more effectively make up for the time you missed in class.

Don't take this as me saying "lectures aren't really that important; you can just get everything online." That is most definitely not what I'm saying. Lectures are very important. YouTube lectures should only be used to fortify what you already know or to fill in the gaps of lectures that you missed. If the majority of your prep for the National Exam is done online, you're not going to get what you should out of the class. Do whatever you can to listen to Tubbs's lecture every day!

**Review Sessions.** Go to these. First of all, they're fun. Second of all, you're better informed about what's going on because often times Tubbs will mention something in review that he forgets in class. Third of all, you just need review. The amount of content that you have to cover in eight months is too much to learn once and be done. If you want to be successful on the National Exam, go to review sessions. Period. Take notes in review the same way you take notes for lecture, but be sure to label which notes are from review and which notes are from lecture.

Everyone has different study methods that work for them. If you can apply one that you know well to APUSH, do it. However, you'll find that studying history is a lot more comprehensive than studying Spanish vocabulary or English literary terms and devices. History isn't really a flashcard subject. Don't get me wrong, flashcards can certainly apply. You could do all sorts of fun things with flashcards to help you remember things for the National Exam. I didn't use flashcards once, but if flashcards are your thing, it certainly won't hurt.

The best thing you can do to study history is review your lecture notes, read about history, talk to your fellow APUSHers about history, teach other people about history, and connect what you're learning in APUSH to the events happening around you. If you dive into this class looking at it as an opportunity to make yourself smarter and better-versed at interpreting the world around you, you'll absorb the content faster, easier, and less painfully.

**National Exam.** And last, but certainly not least . . . the National Exam. The only thing I did to prepare for the National Exam (other than take the course itself) was review my WMLs and force my dad to listen to me name all of the Presidents in order along with the highlights of their administrations. At this point in the year, you should be brushing up on your knowledge of history, not learning it for the first time. This was effective for me and if I could go back and do it differently, I probably wouldn't.

Another key point that I think should be emphasized is that the National Exam isn't testing how well you're able to regurgitate history, per se. It's testing your ability to synthesize information and construct an argument with said information. It's necessary to have a deeper understanding of history to do this. This is one thing that Brinkley is specifically geared to prepare you for, which is why I advise taking advantage of the extra features. Even if you don't actually write an essay in response to every potential topic in the book (who has time for that?), try to think of possible responses as you're reading along.

# GENERAL STUPH

1. Be nice to Tubbs. Respect Tubbs. You'll learn this on your own if you haven't already, but you'll be hard-pressed to find another teacher who cares more about your education than Tubbs.
2. Use your fellow APUSHers. This is one thing that I think my class lacked for a while. You're all going through this mess together, so use each other for support. Get to know everyone in your class. The experience will be happier.
3. When it comes time for the excursion, really dive into the history. The experience, even without the history, is so much fun, but the history makes it so much more so.
4. Use the extra features in Brinkley to your advantage when prepping for the National Exam. Brinkley is specifically geared toward helping you be successful on the Exam because it's an AP course textbook. Use it!
5. Garraty is more fun to read, but Brinkley is more logically organized. Utilize both to your advantage. You retain more history when you're enjoying what you're reading, but review is more effective when your notes are organized nicely.
6. The journey is long, and you won't see the light at the end of the tunnel for a long time, but when you leave you'll have gained skills that apply everywhere in life—time management, work ethic, critical thinking, effective note-taking—the list goes on. I guarantee that there's more to learn in APUSH than just history.
7. Ultimately, the way that you handle this course should be dependent on the way you learn, and if you care about the subject matter, you're going to get what you need out of the class.

*I'm certain that I missed more than a few things that I would've liked to address, but this letter is already six pages long. If you have any questions, you have Tubbs and a whole lot of former APUSHers who will be happy to help you. Happy APUSHing! I wish you the best of luck.*

*Sincerely,*

*Keaghan Duffy*