

## **History 120: United States History**

George Mason University, Spring 2005

Professor Zachary M. Schrag

Sample Midterm Exam [revised 3-4-2005]

*These are the instructions that will accompany the midterm exam in March. The exam itself will include three primary documents from the period 1770-1876*

Please write an interpretive essay of five paragraphs that places *one* of the following documents in its historical context.

Your first paragraph should explain the general argument of the document and present a thesis statement that places the document in broader context. Please underline your thesis statement.

Each of the following three paragraphs should compare and, especially, contrast the argument of the document to the arguments of one of the twenty-four people whose ideas you have studied in *Contending Voices*, so that you address the arguments of three of those people in total. Be as precise as possible when explaining the similarities and differences. Pay attention to both the problems and potential solutions identified by each author as well as the rhetoric he or she uses.

Please quote from the primary documents reproduced in *Contending Voices*. If you use a primary document not authored by one of the people featured in the chapter introduction, please explain how that document helps explain the ideas of someone who is featured. For example, if you use the excerpt by Richard Henry Dana on pages 196-197, you might explain that as a New England merchant, he could be expected to have views similar to those of Thomas Larkin, another entrepreneurial New Englander.

Your final paragraph should restate your thesis and explain its significance to one's broad understanding of American history in the period 1770-1876.

Americans we have studied: Jonathan Sewall, John Adams, Patrick Henry, James Madison, John Taylor, Alexander Hamilton, Tecumseh, William Henry Harrison, Benjamin Lundy, David Walker, Fanny Wright, Catharine Beecher, Sarah Bagley, Nathan Appleton, Thomas Larkin, Juan Bautista Alvarado, Hinton Rowan Helper, George Fitzhugh, Mary Ann Shadd, Henry Bibb, Clement Vallandigham, Benjamin Wade, Robert Smalls, Carl Schurz