

THE GILDER LEHRMAN  
INSTITUTE *of* AMERICAN HISTORY

Dear Colleague,

The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History and the Sid Lapidus '59 Collection at Princeton University on Liberty and the American Revolution are pleased to announce our first annual Age of Revolutions Essay Contest for high school (grades 9–12) students. The contest, which recognizes excellence in primary source research and writing, is designed to enhance students' knowledge of the Age of Revolutions through use of documents from the Sid Lapidus Collection. Essays will be judged on originality and clarity of thesis, quality of writing, and use of primary documents from the collection, among other criteria. Top essays are not only well researched, but also well written. Therefore, we strongly encourage collaboration between language arts and social studies departments to assist students with all aspects of the writing process. Additionally, the collection includes many documents written in French, which may encourage additional collaboration with advanced French classes.

The Sid Lapidus '59 Collection on Liberty and the American Revolution features more than 150 gifted important books, pamphlets and prints representing the major themes of Lapidus' collecting: the intellectual origins of the American Revolution, the Revolution itself, the early years of the republic, the resulting spread of democratic ideas in the Atlantic world, and the effort to abolish the slave trade in both Great Britain and the United States. The Sid Lapidus Collection can be found here: <http://pudl.princeton.edu/collections/pudl0076>.

**Participation is limited to Gilder Lehrman Affiliate Schools. There is no limit on the number of essays that a school may submit; however, we do encourage you to submit only the strongest essays from your classes.** An essay should only be submitted if you believe it is worthy of a 4 or 5 per the scoring rubric. If your school is not yet a Gilder Lehrman Affiliate School, and you are interested in participating in the contest, please talk to your principal about registering in the Affiliate School Program.

**Essays are due at the Gilder Lehrman Institute by Friday, April 14, 2015, by 5:00 p.m. ET.** As a research paper of this scale requires significant time for research, writing, and editing, you will need to set your own internal deadlines. Please see the supporting documentation for more information on submission guidelines, potential topics, and a scoring rubric. Winners will be selected in the early spring and will be notified by e-mail.

Please feel free to call us (646-366-9666 ext. 27 or 13) or email us ([affiliates@gilderlehrman.org](mailto:affiliates@gilderlehrman.org)) with any questions.

Best regards,  
The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History

## Rules, Regulations, and Prize Information

### Essay Requirements/Judges' Tips

- Word count: a minimum of 1,500 words.
- Primary sources: Top essays will build a solid thesis around selected documents and will demonstrate a command of the selected topic and supporting materials. See the 2014–2015 Guidelines and Scoring Rubric for more information.
- Supporting primary sources: Top essays will use additional primary sources to support the thesis.
- Secondary sources: Top essays will use quality secondary sources from reputable sources, support the thesis.
- Internet sources: Caution your students to evaluate the validity of web content and to cite all sources, including primary documents, completely and carefully.
- Organization: Top essays have an introduction, body, and conclusion. Arguments are clearly made and well supported.
- Citations: The best essays have clear, consistent citations. If footnotes are sufficiently detailed, a bibliography may not be necessary, but use caution.

### Submission Requirements/Deadlines

- Essays are due at the Gilder Lehrman Institute by 5 p.m. ET on Tuesday, April 14, 2015.
- Essays **must** be submitted electronically. Word or RTF documents are preferred; scanned documents sent as PDFs will also be accepted. Essays **must not** have any grade markings or corrections visible. If submitting an essay that was used in class, please submit a clean copy without any grades or teacher's comments.
- Essays may be submitted to our website by using the online form and attaching each essay as a PDF or Word document. The online form is available on the Gilder Lehrman website at <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/programs-exhibitions/civil-war-essay-contest-entry-form>
- Hard copies of essays are not accepted and will not be reviewed.
- If you are emailing essays, please send all essays in one email. Clearly identify your school name (with city and state—we have a number of schools with the same name) and include the names of all students submitting so we can confirm that all essays have been received.
- A signed cover sheet must accompany each essay. Cover sheets can be scanned and emailed to the Institute.
- To help cut down on processing time, please name each file accordingly: school name.student last name.student first name. Ex. GeorgeWashingtonHighSchool.Smith.John

### Prizes

- \$1,000 to each of the top ten students and \$500 to each winner's school
- One *Slavery and Abolition* History in a Box to each winner's school

## Sid Lapidus Age of Revolutions Contest Guidelines and Scoring Rubric

The Age of Revolutions Essay Contest, sponsored by the Sid Lapidus '59 Collection at Princeton University, is designed for students to engage with the primary documents within the collection on the topics of race, revolution, and freedom. The collection was bequeathed by Sid Lapidus to Princeton, and is fully digitized and available [online](#). Students must identify a topic, conduct research using at least one primary document from the collection, document their sources in one of three formats (MLA, APA, or Chicago (Turabian) citation) in footnotes *and* a bibliography, develop a thesis statement, and write a clear, cogent essay of no less than 1,500 words. Essays will be read by a panel of judges using the rubric below.

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### Score of 5:

- Incorporates relevant information from at least one document in the Sid Lapidus '59 Collection. Additional primary sources (from the collection or other reputable sources) can be used to support the central thesis, and are properly attributed.
- Demonstrates a mastery of the topic and an exemplary writing style.
- Thoroughly develops all aspects of the task evenly and in depth.
- Is more analytical than descriptive (analyzes, evaluates, and/or creates information).
- Richly supports the topic with many relevant facts, examples, and details.
- Demonstrates a logical and clear plan of organization; includes an introduction and a conclusion that are beyond a restatement of the theme.

### Score of 4:

- Incorporates relevant information from at least one document in the Sid Lapidus '59 Collection. Additional primary sources (from the collection or other reputable sources) can be used to support the central thesis, and are properly attributed.
- Develops all aspects of the task but may do so somewhat unevenly.
- Is both descriptive and analytical (applies, analyzes, evaluates, and/or creates information).
- Supports the topic with relevant facts, examples, and details.
- Demonstrates a logical and clear plan of organization; includes an introduction and a conclusion that are beyond a restatement of the theme.

### Score of 3:

- Incorporates relevant information from at least one document in the Sid Lapidus '59 Collection. Additional primary sources (from the collection or other reputable sources) can be used to support the central thesis.
- Develops all aspects of the topic with less depth or develops most aspects of the topic in some depth.
- Is more descriptive than analytical (applies, may analyze, and/or evaluate information).
- Includes some relevant facts, examples, and details; may include some minor inaccuracies.
- Demonstrates a satisfactory plan of organization; includes an introduction and a conclusion that may be a restatement of the theme.

**Score of 2:**

- Incorporates relevant information from at least one document in the Sid Lapidus '59 Collection. Additional primary sources (from the collection or other reputable sources) can be used to support the central thesis.
- Minimally develops all aspects of the topic or develops some aspects of the topic in some depth.
- Is primarily descriptive; may include faulty, weak, or isolated application or analysis.
- Includes few relevant facts, examples, and details; may include some inaccuracies.
- Demonstrates a general plan of organization; may lack focus; may contain digressions; may not clearly identify which aspect of the topic is being addressed; may lack an introduction and/or a conclusion.

**Score of 1:**

- Does not fundamentally understand document being analyzed.
- Minimally develops some aspects of the task.
- Is descriptive; lacks understanding, application, or analysis.
- Includes few relevant facts, examples, or details; includes inaccuracies.
- Demonstrates a weakness in organization; lacks focus; contains digressions; does not clearly identify which aspect of the topic is being addressed; lacks an introduction and/or a conclusion.

## Age of Revolutions Essay Contest Suggested Topics

These topics and questions are meant as a guide to spark research and eventually help students hone a thesis statement. **Students are not limited to these topics and questions**, and advisors are cautioned not to submit all student essays on a single theme. Supporting materials from the Gilder Lehrman Institute, including primary source documents, videos, articles from *History Now*, online exhibitions, and print publications, may be found at <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-now/2012-01/revolutionary-age>. Please note that a login is required.

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### Economics

- Changing roles/relations between colonies and the empire/mother country
- Relations between colonies and neighboring countries and their impact on colonial self-sufficiency; on revolutionary thought
- Slave trade and its impact on the empire; on the colony; on colonial self-sufficiency

### Politics

- Events in local government and their impact on national events
- Ideas of citizenship in a colony vs. ideas of citizenship in the empire
- How communication between colonies and the empire affected colonial government, ideas of self-sufficiency, and revolutionary thought
- How the founders differed in their definitions of the role of government

### Science/Philosophy/Theology

- Scientific advances and their impact on revolutionary thought
- New ways of thinking in philosophy and/or theology and their impact on revolutionary thought

### Slavery and Abolition

- - How abolitionist ideas spread between regions
- - How ideas of slave rebellion spread among slave communities
- - How the movement to abolish the slave trade impacted other rebellions/revolutions/abolitionist movements
- - Compare slavery/the rights of blacks in Haiti and the American colonies

### Religion

- - How the colonial setting influenced religious practice

# COVER SHEET

## Gilder Lehrman/Sid Lapidus Collection Age of Revolution Essay Contest

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Contestant's name and grade

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Essay title

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School name

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School phone number

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Teacher's name (first and last)

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Contestant's home address (number, street, apartment)

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Contestant's home address (city, state, zip)

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Contestant's home phone number

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Parent/Guardian name

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Parent/Guardian email and phone number

I certify that this is an original research project of which I am the sole author. By signing below, I also grant the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History permission to reproduce my essay for non-commercial use on the Internet and/or in print publications.

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Contestant's signature

Date

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Parent/Guardian's signature

Date