

THE GILDER LEHRMAN  
INSTITUTE *of* AMERICAN HISTORY

Dear Colleague,

The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History and the “Sid Lapidus ’59 Collection on Liberty and the American Revolution” cordially invites your high school (grades 9–12) students to participate in its annual **Age of Revolution Essay Contest**. This contest, which recognizes excellence in primary source research and writing, is designed to enhance students’ knowledge of the Age of Revolution.

Essays will be judged on originality and clarity of thesis, quality of writing, and use of primary documents from the Sid Lapidus 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 Lapidus ’59 Collection includes a few documents written in French, which may encourage additional collaboration with the World Languages department.

The “Sid Lapidus ’59 Collection on Liberty and the American Revolution” features more than 150 important books, pamphlets, and prints, representing the major themes of the Sid Lapidus Collection, which focuses on 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 readily accessed from its website. Please refer below for access information.

**Participation is limited to Gilder Lehrman Institute Affiliate Schools.** If your school is not yet a Gilder Lehrman Institute Affiliate School, and you are interested in participating in the contest, please talk to your principal about registering in the Affiliate School Program.

**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 (typically grades of 4 and 5 based on the scoring rubric) from your classes.**

**Essays are due at the Gilder Lehrman Institute on Monday, April 11, 2016, by 5 p.m. ET.**

As a research paper of this scale requires considerable 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 email.

Please feel free to call us (646-366-9666 ext. 27) 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 and Guidelines

- Word Count: Essays should be approximately 1,500 words of text
- Font and Page Style: Papers should be written and submitted in *Times New Roman – Font Size 12* with margins of approximately one inch at the top, bottom, and sides.
- Primary Sources: Top essays will present a well-phrased and well-developed thesis, based on at least two selected documents and demonstrate a command of the selected topics with supporting materials. See the *Age of Revolution Contest Guidelines and Scoring Rubric* for more information.
- Secondary Sources: Top essays will also include scholarly secondary sources that support the thesis.
- Internet Sources: Please caution your students to evaluate the validity of web content and cite their sources completely and carefully.
- Organization: Top essays have an introduction, body, and conclusion, and a clearly stated, well-developed thesis statement.
- Essay Topics: As a general guide, please refer to *The Age of Revolution Essay Contest Suggested Topics and Questions* as suggestions to guide the selection of an essay topic.
- Citations: The best essays have clear, complete, and consistent citations. Students must document their sources and evidence using any one of the following three formats: MLA, APA, or University of Chicago/Turabian. Regarding Internet sources, please make sure that students provide information beyond URLs in their citations, such as the author and title of the source.
- Bibliography: Each essay paper is required to include a Bibliography, listing all sources and divided into two categories. Primary Sources and Secondary Sources.

### Submission Requirements/Deadlines

- Essays are due at the Gilder Lehrman Institute by 5 p.m. ET on Monday, April 11, 2016.
- 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 visible grading marks, comments, or corrections.
- Essays may be submitted on our website using the online form and attaching each essay as a PDF or Word document. The online form is available on the Gilder Lehrman Institute website. Hard copies of essays will not be accepted or 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 essays 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 reduce administrative processing time, please name each file with the school name; student last name; student first name.

**Prizes**

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

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

*The Age of Revolution Essay Contest*, sponsored by the Sid Lapidus '59 Collection at Princeton University, is designed to encourage 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 two primary documents from the collection, develop a thesis statement, and write a clear, cogent essay of approximately 1,500 words, and provide citations for their sources and a bibliography, using any one of the following three formats (MLA, APA, or University of Chicago/Turabian). Essays will be read by a panel of judges and evaluated using the rubric printed below.

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### Score of 5:

- Incorporates relevant information from at least **two documents** in the Sid Lapidus '59 Collection. Additional primary sources from the collection and scholarly secondary sources can be used to strongly support the central thesis.
- Demonstrates a mastery of the topic and a very proficient writing style.
- Thoroughly develops all aspects of the task evenly and in depth.
- Is more analytical than descriptive (analyzes and assesses 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 mere restatement of the thesis.

### Score of 4:

- Incorporates relevant information from at least **two documents** in the Sid Lapidus '59 Collection. Additional primary sources from the collection and scholarly secondary sources can be used to sufficiently support the central thesis.
- Develops all aspects of the task but may do so somewhat unevenly.
- Is both descriptive and analytical (analyzes and assesses information).
- Sufficiently 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 mere restatement of the thesis.

### Score of 3:

- Incorporates relevant information from at least **one document** in the Sid Lapidus '59 Collection. Additional primary sources from the collection and scholarly secondary sources can be used to minimally 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 (minimally analyzes and assesses information).
- Minimally includes relevant facts, examples, and details.
- Demonstrates a satisfactory plan of organization; includes an introduction and a conclusion that are merely a restatement of the thesis.

**Score of 2:**

- Incorporates relevant information from at least **one document** in the Sid Lapidus '59 Collection but does not include any additional primary sources and secondary sources.
- Does not develop satisfactorily important aspects of the topic.
- Is primarily descriptive and does not provide satisfactory analysis of the topic.
- Includes very few relevant facts, examples, and details.
- Demonstrates a general plan of organization but lacks focus, contains digressions, and fails to provide a satisfactory introduction and/or a conclusion of the essay thesis.

There is no score of 1.

## Age of Revolution Essay Contest Suggested Topics and Questions

These topics and questions are meant as a guide to spark research and eventually help students develop 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: In order to access this site, you will have to use your Affiliate School log-in information.

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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 did the founders differ 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 did abolitionist ideas spread between regions?

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

## **Religion**

- How did the colonial setting influence religious practice?

# COVER SHEET

## Gilder Lehrman Institute /Sid Lapidus Collection Age of Revolutions 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