

THE GILDER LEHRMAN  
INSTITUTE *of* AMERICAN HISTORY

Dear Colleague,

The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History cordially invites your high school students (grades 9–12) 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 sources from the Sid Lapidus '59 Collection on Liberty and the American Revolution at Princeton University, among other criteria. Winning essays will be well researched and 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 Lapidus '59 Collection features more than 150 important books, pamphlets, and prints focusing 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 to the number of essays a school may submit; however, you may wish to submit only the strongest essays (typically grades of 4 and 5 based on the scoring rubric below) from your classes.**

**Essays are due at the Gilder Lehrman Institute on Monday, April 3, 2017, 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 ([affiliate@gilderlehrman.org](mailto:affiliate@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, be based on at least two selected documents from the Sid Lapidus '59 Collection, and use supporting materials in a way that analyzes the topic of choice with demonstrable command. See the *Age of Revolution Contest Guidelines and Scoring Rubric* for more information.
- Secondary Sources: The best essays will 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: The best essays have an introduction, body, and conclusion.
- 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 3, 2017.
- 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 must 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.
- To help reduce administrative processing time, please name each file accordingly: School Name\_Student Name (e.g., “Central High School\_Jane Doe”).

### Prizes

- \$1,000 to the authors of the top ten student essays and \$500 to each winner’s school
- \$100 Gilder Lehrman History Shop gift card to each winner’s school

## Age of Revolution Contest Guidelines and Scoring Rubric

The Age of Revolution Essay Contest is designed to encourage students to engage with the primary sources in the Sid Lapidus '59 Collection on the topics of race, revolution, and freedom. The collection was bequeathed by Sid Lapidus to Princeton, and is fully digitized and available at <http://pudl.princeton.edu/collection.php?c=pudl0076>. Students are also advised to use relevant documents from the Gilder Lehrman Collection. This collection is available at <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/collections>.

Students must identify a topic, conduct research using at least two primary sources from the Sid Lapidus '59 Collection, and develop a thesis statement. The essay must be approximately 1,500 words. Students must 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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### Rubric

#### Score of 5:

- Incorporates relevant information from at least **two documents** in the Sid Lapidus '59 Collection. Additional primary sources and scholarly secondary sources are 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 and scholarly secondary sources are used to sufficiently support the central thesis.
- Develops all aspects of the task but may do so somewhat unevenly.
- Is equally 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 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 to spark research and 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 sources from the Gilder Lehrman Collection, videos, articles from *History Now*, online exhibitions, and print publications, may be found at <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-by-era>. 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
- The 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
- How slavery/the rights of free and enslaved blacks differed in Haiti and the British American colonies

## **Religion**

- How the colonial setting influenced religious practice