Strategies for Success
with Multiple-Choice Questions

A. Understanding Types of Multiple-Choice Questions

1. If you take the time to review released exams, you'll see that the AP Human Geography exam often uses different types of multiple-choice questions.

2. The following are some broad categories and examples of AP Human Geography multiple-choice questions similar to those seen on released exams:

(A) *Questions that directly test your knowledge of a key concept.*

For example:

Subsistence agriculture

(A) only includes the herding of animals

(B) is aimed at producing surplus crops for sale in the market

(C) is becoming increasingly dominant in the world

(D) is characterized by production of food for consumption by the farmers and their families

(E) is most practiced in South America

The correct answer is (D) since subsistence agriculture is most often practiced in under-developed regions where people can only farm enough food to feed themselves and their families.

This sample question tests knowledge of the key concept of subsistence agriculture. Chapters in this book

will help you acquire knowledge of key concepts needed to answer questions like this.

(B) *Questions that ask you to apply your knowledge of a key concept.*

For example:

Which of the following is the best example of a non-basic employment sector function?

    (A) An assembly-line worker in a car factory

    (B) A video game software engineer

    (C) An international public relations agent

    (D) A university medical researcher

    (E) A police officer

The correct answer is (E), since non-basic sector jobs cause a shift in money within a city, whereas the other jobs create an exchange of money between the city and another place.

If you notice, this question asks you to apply your knowledge of this key concept to examples and choose the best match between non-basic functions and the examples provided. Sometimes, these types of questions will ask you to use a map, table, graph, or image to answer the question.

(C) *Questions that test your knowledge of a specific geographic issue or example.*

For example:

By 2050, which country is projected to have the highest population in the world?

    (A) China

    (B) Indonesia

    (C) Russia

    (D) India

    (E) United States

The correct answer is (D), since India's population growth rate is exceeding China's.

Notice that this type of question is probing your knowledge of this specific demographic trend. While many of these questions seem highly specific, your knowledge of key concepts can often guide you to eliminate options and select from the remaining choices.

B. Ten Strategies for Success on the Multiple-Choice Questions

1. *Underline key words in the question.* Underline all the key terms, concepts, or places. This will help you focus on the key issues in the question.

   For example, if the question asks you,

   "Which place has the highest percentage of urban residents?"

   Mark it up as follows:

   "Which place has the <u>highest percentage</u> of <u>urban residents</u>?"

2. *Circle key command words* in a question, such as EXCEPT, ALL, NOT, or BEST. Students often miss questions that use negative logic, such as "All of the following EXCEPT," because they get confused. Be sure you focus your mind on the logic of the question.

3. *Use the process of elimination.* Success is as much about finding the correct answer as it is about getting rid of the wrong answers!

   One of the most powerful strategies is to cross out as many of the wrong answer choices as possible. Many students greatly improve their scores by using this strategy and then selecting their "best educated guess" after ruling out one or two choices that are clearly wrong.

4. *Answer every multiple-choice question.* There is no longer a "guessing penalty," on AP exams, so it is to your advantage to answer *every* multiple-choice question.

5. *Multiple-choice questions are equally weighted.* Since every multiple-choice question is equally weighted, no question counts for more points than another. Therefore, if you are stumped on a question, do not waste too much time on it—but be sure to answer it. Guess—remember there's no guessing penalty!

6. *Fill in your answer sheet as you go.* Remember, you only have 60 minutes to answer 75 questions, which means you have less than one minute to answer a question. It is best to fill in your bubble sheet for each question as you go. Do NOT wait until the end to go back and fill-in the bubbles for all of the questions. If you run out of time and haven't completed filling in your answers on the bubble sheet, you could ruin your score.

7. *Pay attention to your bubble sheet.* Make sure that you have entered your answers correctly on the bubble sheet. As you fill in the bubble sheet, be sure you're filling in the bubble for question 4 when you're working on question 4. If you lose your place and put the answer for question 4 in the bubble for question 5, it will throw off your entire answer sheet and thus your score! Some teachers recommend that, as you work through the multiple-choice section, you write your answers next to the multiple-choice question so that you can transfer your answers accurately from the multiple-choice booklet onto the bubble form and check your bubble sheet easily for a match. If you choose to do this, that's fine, but <u>be aware of your time</u>. You don't want to run out of time while transferring your answers.

8. *Look carefully* at any image, graph, chart, or map provided with a multiple-choice question. Feel free to annotate or draw on these items to help you focus and make sense of them.

9. *Read the question and think of your answer* before you read the answer choices given. This can help your brain select the best choice, rather than falling into distracting traps presented by the wrong answer choices.

10. *Half equals three.* Remember that, based on previous exam scores, you'll need to answer about half of the multiple-

choice questions correctly in order to earn a 3! This, of course, also depends on your FRQ performance . . . so let's move on to strategies for the FRQs. . . .