

**RESEARCH  
PAPER****RESEARCH PAPER TOPICS****AP UNITED STATES  
HISTORY**

Below is a list of possible research paper topics for AP United States History. Please note that this is only a *partial* list of possible topics. If you have other ideas, simply get them approved by your AP United States History teacher. Remember, however, that the topic you choose must deal with a *United States History* topic—topics dealing with a general history of the world will *not* be approved.

- 1. Did St. Brendan discover America?**
  - “Did St. Brendan Discover America?” *More Unsolved Mysteries of American History*, pp. 3-9
- 2. Did Leif Ericsson discover America?**
  - “Did Leif Ericsson Discover America?” *Unsolved Mysteries of American History*, pp. 9-14
  - “Who Discovered North America?” *How Did It Really Happen?* pp. 128-131
- 3. Why did Cahokia fall?**
  - “Why Did Cahokia Fall?” *More Unsolved Mysteries of American History*, pp. 10-16
- 4. What happened to the “Lost Colony” of Roanoke?**
  - “What Happened to the ‘Lost Colony’ of Roanoke?” *Unsolved Mysteries of American History*, pp. 37-44
  - “What Happened to North America’s ‘Lost Colony?’” *Mysteries of History*, pp. 102-109
  - “Lost Colony of Roanoke,” *The Truth About History*, pp. 88-91
  - “The Lost Colony,” *Great Mysteries of the Past*, pp. 51-55
  - “The Lost Colony of Roanoke,” *Lost Histories*, pp. 179-189
- 5. Did Pocahontas save John Smith?**
  - “Did Pocahontas Save John Smith?” *Unsolved Mysteries of American History*, pp. 45-51
- 6. What caused the “Starving Time”?**
  - “What Caused the ‘Starving Time’?” *More Unsolved Mysteries of American History*, pp. 17-23
  - “What Happened at Jamestown?” *How Did It Really Happen?* pp. 140-141
- 7. What caused the Salem witch trials?**
  - “What Caused the Salem Witch Trials?” *Unsolved Mysteries of American History*, pp. 52-58
  - “The Witches of Salem,” *The Truth About History*, pp. 98-102
  - “Witch Hunt,” *Constitution* (Spring-Summer 1992), pp. 58-65
  - “The Salem Witch Trials,” *How Did It Really Happen?* pp. 146-147
- 8. Who was to blame for the Boston Massacre?**
  - “Who Was to Blame for the Boston Massacre?” *More Unsolved Mysteries of American History*, pp. 24-31
- 9. Was Daniel Boone a traitor?**
  - “Was Daniel Boone a Traitor?” *Unsolved Mysteries of American History*, pp. 59-64
- 10. Why did Benedict Arnold become a traitor?**
  - “Why Did Benedict Arnold Turn Traitor?” *Unsolved Mysteries of American History*, pp. 65-70
  - “The Hero Turned Traitor,” *Great Mysteries of the Past*, pp. 190-194

**11. Was Aaron Burr a traitor?**

- “Was Aaron Burr a Traitor?” *More Unsolved Mysteries of American History*, pp. 32-39
- “The Trial of Aaron Burr,” *Constitution* (Fall 1994, pp. 12-19)

**12. Was Sally Hemings the mistress of Thomas Jefferson?**

- “Was Sally Hemings the Mistress of Thomas Jefferson?” *Unsolved Mysteries of American History*, pp. 71-78

**13. Was Meriwether Lewis murdered?**

- “Was Meriwether Lewis Murdered?” *Unsolved Mysteries of American History*, pp. 79-84
- “Suicide or Murder,” *Great Mysteries of the Past*, pp. 144-145

**14. Was there a “Corrupt Bargain”?**

- “Was There a ‘Corrupt Bargain’?” *More Unsolved Mysteries of American History*, pp. 40-46

**15. Was Rachel Jackson a bigamist?**

- “Was Rachel Jackson a Bigamist?” *Unsolved Mysteries of American History*, pp. 85-91

**16. How did Davy Crockett die?**

- “How Did Davy Crockett Die?” *Unsolved Mysteries of American History*, pp. 92-98
- “The Siege of the Alamo,” *How Did It Really Happen?* pp. 174-175

**17. What were Joseph Smith’s Golden Plates?**

- “What Were Joseph Smith’s Golden Plates?” *More Unsolved Mysteries of American History*, pp. 47-55

**18. Did Lincoln provoke the attack on Fort Sumter?**

- “Did Lincoln Provoke the Attack on Fort Sumter?” *More Unsolved Mysteries of American History*, pp. 56-63

**19. Who lost (and/or who found) the lost order?**

- “Who Lost (and Who Found) the Lost Order?” *More Unsolved Mysteries of American History*, pp. 72-80

**20. Why did Lee order Pickett’s Charge?**

- “Why Did Lee Order Pickett’s Charge,” *Unsolved Mysteries of American History*, pp. 99-106
- “Robert E. Lee and the Battle of Gettysburg,” *How Did It Really Happen?* pp. 186-187

**21. Did Jefferson Davis plot Lincoln’s assassination?**

- “Did Jefferson Davis Plot Lincoln’s Assassination?” *More Unsolved Mysteries of American History*, pp. 88-96

**22. Who was to blame for Wounded Knee?**

- “Who Was to Blame for Wounded Knee,” *Unsolved Mysteries of American History*, pp. 107-114

**23. Why did Custer attack?**

- “Why Did Custer Attack?” *More Unsolved Mysteries of American History*, pp. 97-105
- “What Is the Truth Behind Custer’s ‘Last Stand?’” *Mysteries of History*, pp. 148-157
- “Taking the Stand,” *The Truth About History*, pp. 224-229
- “Custer’s Last Stand,” *Great Mysteries of the Past*, pp. 405-409
- “Custer’s Last Stand,” *How Did It Really Happen?* pp. 176-179

**24. Was Sitting Bull murdered?**

- “Was Sitting Bull Murdered?” *More Unsolved Mysteries of American History*, pp. 105-111

**25. What destroyed the Maine?**

- “What Destroyed the Maine?” *Unsolved Mysteries of American History*, pp. 115-121

**26. What sank the *Lusitania*?**

- “What Sank the *Lusitania*?” *More Unsolved Mysteries of American History*, pp. 113-120
- “An Act of War,” *The Truth About History*, pp. 121-127
- “Target Hit—Sunk!” *Great Mysteries of the Past*, pp. 383-387
- “The Attack on the *Lusitania*” *How Did It Really Happen?* pp. 214-215

**27. Did Lizzie Borden murder her parents?**

- “The Case of Lizzie Borden,” *How Did It Really Happen?* pp. 182-183
- “Lizzie Borden,” *The Cases That Haunt Us*, pp. 93-148

**28. Did Shoeless Joe throw the World Series?**

- “Did Shoeless Joe Throw the Series?” *More Unsolved Mysteries of American History*, pp. 121-127

**29. Did Babe Ruth call his shot?**

- “Did Babe Ruth Call His Shot?” *Unsolved Mysteries of American History*, pp. 137-141

**30. Were Sacco and Vanzetti guilty?**

- “Were Sacco and Vanzetti Guilty?” *Unsolved Mysteries of American History*, pp. 122-129
- “Equal Justice for All,” *Great Mysteries of the Past*, pp. 261-264

**31. Who kidnapped the Lindbergh baby?**

- “Who Kidnapped the Lindbergh Baby?” *Unsolved Mysteries of American History*, pp. 130-136
- “A Hero’s Agonizing Ordeal,” *Great Mysteries of the Past*, pp. 270-274
- “The Lindbergh Kidnapping,” *How Did It Really Happen?* pp. 230-235
- “The Lindbergh Kidnapping,” *The Cases That Haunt Us*, pp. 149-247

**32. Was Amelia Earhart a spy?**

- “Was Amelia Earhart a Spy?” *Unsolved Mysteries of American History*, pp. 142-149
- “What Happened to Amelia Earhart?” *How Did It Really Happen?* pp. 244-245
- “Amelia Earhart’s Last Flight,” *Lost Histories*, pp. 189-196

**33. Who was to blame for Pearl Harbor?**

- “Who Was to Blame for Pearl Harbor?” *Unsolved Mysteries of American History*, pp. 150-156
- “Was the Attack on Pearl Harbor Really a Surprise?” *Mysteries of History*, pp. 166-175
- “Surprised at Dawn,” *Great Mysteries of History*, pp. 341-346

**34. What happened to Glenn Miller?**

- “Miller’s Crossing,” *The Truth About History*, pp. 158-162
- “One-Way Flight to France,” *Great Mysteries of the Past*, pp. 57-61

**35. Why did Truman decide to drop the bomb?**

- “Why Did Truman Decide to Drop the Bomb?” *Unsolved Mysteries of American History*, pp. 157-163

**36. Was Alger Hiss a spy?**

- “Was Alger Hiss a Spy?” *More Unsolved Mysteries of American History*, pp. 136-141

**37. Were the Rosenbergs guilty?**

- “Were the Rosenbergs Guilty?” *Unsolved Mysteries of American History*, pp. 164-170
- “Death for the Atom Spies,” *Great Mysteries of the Past*, pp. 252-255
- “Were the Rosenbergs Atomic Spies?” *How Did It Really Happen?* pp. 250-251

**38. Who was to blame for the Bay of Pigs?**

- “Who Was to Blame for the Bay of Pigs,” *More Unsolved Mysteries of American History*, pp. 150-156

**39. Who killed John F. Kennedy?**

- “Who Killed JFK?” *Unsolved Mysteries of American History*, pp. 171-179
- “Did Lee Harvey Oswald Shoot President Kennedy?” *Mysteries of History*, pp. 176-183
- “Lone Assassin—or Conspiracy?” *Great Mysteries of the Past*, pp. 102-108
- “The Assassination of John F. Kennedy,” *How Did It Really Happen?* pp. 266-271

**40. Who killed Robert F. Kennedy?**

- “The Murder of Bobby Kennedy,” *How Did It Happen?* pp. 165-171

**41. Who killed Martin Luther King, Jr.?**

- “Who Killed Martin Luther King, Jr.?” *More Unsolved Mysteries of American History*, pp. 165-171
- “The Assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.” *How Did It Really Happen?* pp. 278-281

**42. Who killed Malcolm X?**

- “Who Killed Malcolm X?” *Unsolved Mysteries of American History*, pp. 187-194

**43. What happened at the Gulf of Tonkin?**

- “What Happened at Gulf of Tonkin?” *Unsolved Mysteries of American History*, pp. 180-186

**44. Who won the Tet Offensive?**

- “Who Won the Tet Offensive?” *More Unsolved Mysteries of American History*, pp. 157-164
- “The Tet Offensive,” *How Did It Really Happen?* pp. 282-283

**45. Were POWs left behind in Vietnam?**

- “Were POWs Left Behind in Vietnam?” *More Unsolved Mysteries of American History*, pp.184-191

**46. Who was to blame for Altamont?**

- “Who Was to Blame for Altamont?” *More Unsolved Mysteries of American History*, pp. 172-177

**47. Who was to blame for the Kent State killings?**

- “Who Was to Blame for the Kent State Killings?” *Unsolved Mysteries of American History*, pp. 195-200

**48. What did Nixon know about Watergate?**

- “What Did Nixon Know About Watergate?” *Unsolved Mysteries of American History*, pp. 201-208

**49. Who killed Jimmy Hoffa?**

- “Who Killed Jimmy Hoffa?” *More Unsolved Mysteries of American History*, pp. 192-198
- “What Happened to Jimmy Hoffa?” *How Did It Really Happen?* pp. 284-285

**50. Did Reagan plan an “October Surprise”?**

- “Did Reagan Plan an ‘October Surprise’?” *More Unsolved Mysteries of American History*, pp. 206-211

**51. What did Reagan know about Iran-Contra?**

- “What Did Reagan Know About Iran-Contra?” *Unsolved Mysteries of American History*, pp. 209-217

**52. What caused the Gulf War Syndrome?**

- “What Caused the Gulf War Syndrome?” *More Unsolved Mysteries of American History*, pp. 212-217

**For a brief review of the controversy involved in each of the topics see the following sources:**

- Aron, Paul. *Unsolved Mysteries of American History*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1997.
- Aron, Paul. *More Unsolved Mysteries of American History*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2004.
- Beason, Suzanne, ed. *The Truth About History*. Pleasantville, NY: Reader's Digest Association, 2004.
- Douglas, John, and Mark Olshaker. *The Cases That Haunt Us*. New York: Pocket Books, 2000.
- Gardiner, Joseph, ed. *Great Mysteries of the Past*. Pleasantville, NY: Reader's Digest Association, 1990.
- Green, Adam, et al. *How Did It Really Happen?* Pleasantville, NY: Reader's Digest Association, 2000.
- Levy, Joel. *Lost Histories*. London: Vision Paperbacks, 2006.
- Stewart, Robert. *Mysteries of History*. Washington, D.C.: National Geographic, 2003.

