

The CUNY CPE Task II Handout

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Overview

The materials in this handout are meant to be a supplement to tutoring and workshop sessions, not a substitute for them. When preparing a CPE Task II response, you should be as brief and to-the-point as possible. A well organized, to-the-point response will be best for achieving a high score on the exam. Task II is all about finding and analyzing claims made in a passage and comparing them to data presented in two figures.

The Approach

Read over the figures:

First, you need to read over the two figures that are presented in your question package carefully and thoroughly. When looking over the figures, pay careful attention to the titles of the figures and to any of the descriptions found around the figures' edges. The words that you find in the titles and on the edges of the figures form the first set of key words that you will use to identify claims in the passage, so you should read them carefully.

Identify the Claims

Second, you need to read through the passage carefully and identify any claims that you find as you read. Once you locate a claim, underline it so that you can find it easily later. In order to locate a claim, pay careful attention to the following criteria; all claims meet the first two, and most claims meet the third.

A statement is a claim if:

1. It can be supported by numerical information.
2. It relates to one of the two figures.
3. It contains any words that tell the reader about the quantities or changes in quantities of data. These words include half, double, times, percent, increasing, decreasing, less, more, or other similar words.

To make it easier to find claims, remember that the paragraph structure in the passage always follows the same basic format:

Paragraph 1 - Introduction with no claims

Paragraph 2 - Body paragraph with claims related to Figure 1

Paragraph 3 - Body paragraph with claims related to Figure 2

Assess the Claim and Write a Response

Third, you need to assess the claim by determining which of the figures the claim is related to and whether the claim is supported or contradicted. When you are looking at the information make sure to be as precise as possible. If the claim and the figure disagree in even the

slightest way, be sure to indicate that they contradict. If the claim is supported, place a plus mark next to the figure number in the margin of your passage, and if the figure is contradicted, place a minus sign in the margin. Finally, you must write a response on the lined paper in order to get credit for the claim.

Write Up Format

1. The author claims that “[*insert claim word for word from the passage*].” This claim is supported or contradicted by Figure 1 or 2. The Figure shows that [*insert the data that support or contradict the claim and anything else needed to explain the claim*]. (You may give a final sentence to justify any part of the claim that you found tricky or confusing, but this sentence is not usually necessary)

For Example:

1. The author claims that “from 1985 to 2000, the total value of the US stock market increased steadily, to a high of almost \$12 trillion in 2000.” This claim is supported by figure 1. The figure shows that in 1985, the stock market was worth \$2.5 trillion and it increased every year to \$11.8 trillion in 2000, which is nearly \$12 trillion.

Response Order

In order to maximize your score on the day of the exam, you will also want to order your responses properly. Since you earn the most points when you respond to claims that relate to both figures, you want to write your responses in the following order:

The easiest claim that is related to Figure 1.

The easiest claim that is related to Figure 2.

The second easiest claim that is related to Figure 1.

The second easiest claim that is related to Figure 2.

STOP! After the fourth claim, go back and double check the first four before continuing. Then continue with any other claims that you may have found.

Task 2 Sample Student Responses

The response on the following pages, printed with permission, was written by Robert Greco. The examination question is reprinted here from the current CPE Information Booklet.

Saving for the Future

This article appeared in a personal finance magazine in 2004

Most people would agree that saving for the future is a wise thing to do, no matter where in the world they call their home. With the financial highs and lows of the global economy during the past couple of decades, some people wonder how American savings habits compare to the rest of the world. By some measures, Americans are saving a great deal of money. By other measures, however, they are not.

Americans have a great deal of money invested in the U.S. stock market, a financial trading system in which people can buy partial ownership in publicly-owned companies. From 1985 to 2000, the total value of the U.S. stock market increased steadily, to a high of almost \$12 trillion in 2000. From 1994 to 1997, when the U.S. economy was booming, the stock market enjoyed its largest three-year increase in value. But when the economy weakened between 2000 and 2003 (especially after the stock market turmoil of 2001), the value of the stock market declined by over \$2 trillion, leaving many people worried about the security of the money they thought they had been investing for the future. In fact, the total value of U.S. stocks dropped by more than 10 percent in the three years between 2000 and 2003.

So has the recent instability of the stock market caused Americans to store their money in bank savings accounts, which are usually more secure and stable? This doesn't appear to be the case. In 2003, the percentage of household income that Americans saved fell to under two percent for only the second time in eight years. The percentage of household income saved in 2003 was less than half the rate Americans were saving at only four years earlier, in 1999, when they saved four percent of their income. Unfortunately, this trend shows no signs of improving—the percentage of household income that Americans saved went down more from 2002 to 2003 than it had in any year since 1995. Furthermore, the U.S. seems to be falling behind the world's other remaining super-power, China, in terms of household savings: the gap between the percentage of household income saved by American citizens and the percentage of household income saved by Chinese citizens doubled between 1998 and 2003, with America lagging far behind China in percentage of income saved.

FIGURE 1

The following appeared in a business newspaper.

Total Value of the U.S. Stock Market, 1985–2003

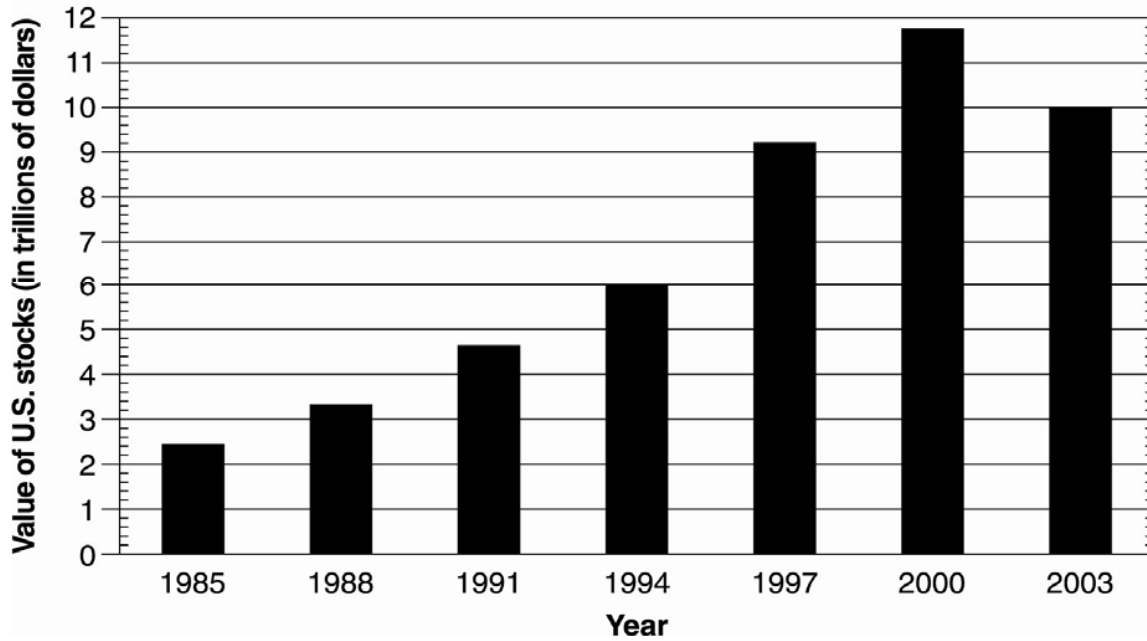
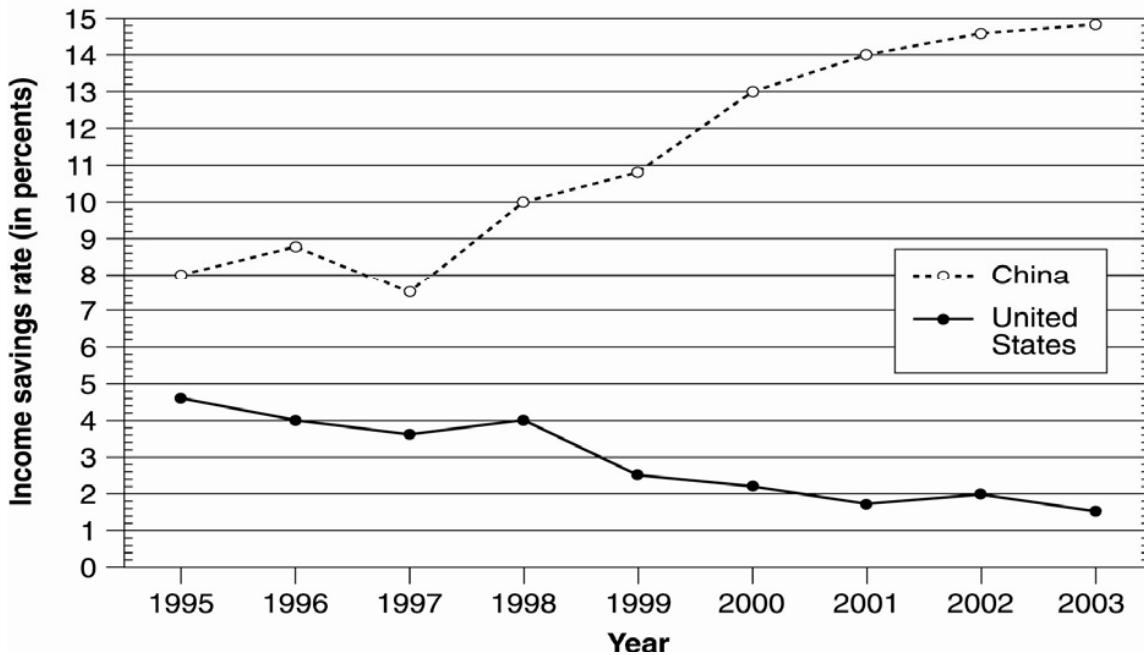


FIGURE 2

The following appeared in a United States Census Bureau report.

Percentage of Household Income Saved in the United States and China, 1995–2003



“Saving for the Future” Responses

1. The author claims that from 1985 to 2000, the total value of the US stock market increased steadily, to a high of almost \$12 trillion in 2000. This claim is supported by figure 1. The figure shows that in 1985, the stock market was worth \$2.5 trillion and it increased every year to \$11.8 trillion in 2000, which is nearly \$12 trillion.
2. The author claims that the percentage of household income saved in 2003 was less than half of the rate Americans were saving at only four years earlier, in 1999, when they saved four percent of their income. This claim is contradicted by figure 2. The figure shows that in 1999, Americans saved only 2.5% of their income, not 4%.
3. The author claims that between 2000 and 2003, the value of the stock market declined by over \$2 trillion. This claim is contradicted by figure 1. The figure shows that from 2000 to 2003, the market fell by only \$1.8 trillion.
4. The author claims that in 2003, the percentage of household income that Americans saved fell to under two percent for only the second time in eight years. This claim is supported by figure 2. The figure shows that in 2003, the percentage of income saved by Americans fell to 1.5% in 2003, and 2001 was the only other time that the percentage fell below 2% in eight years.
5. The author claims that from 1994 to 1997, the stock market enjoyed its largest three-year increase in value. This claim is supported by figure 1. The figure shows that from 1994 to 1997, the market increased by \$3.2 trillion, which was more than any other year.
6. The author claims the percentage of household income that Americans saved went down more from 2002 to 2003 than it had in any year since 1995. This claim is refuted by figure 2. The figure shows that from 2002 to 2003 the percentage saved by Americans fell by .5%, but from 1998 to 1999, it fell by an entire 1.5%
7. The author claims that the total value of U.S. stocks dropped by more than 10 percent in the three years between 2000 and 2003. This claim is supported by figure 1. The figure shows that the total value of the market fell by \$1.8 trillion, which is more than 10% of \$11.8 trillion.
8. The author claims that the gap between the percentage of household income saved by American citizens and the percentage of household income saved by Chinese citizens doubled between 1998 and 2003. This claim is contradicted by figure 2. The figure shows that in 1998 the gap in savings between Chinese and American citizens was 6% and this increased to 13.3% in 2003, which is not double; it is more than double.