1. **Best Piece of Work**

One of my best pieces of work for APUSH class was the Point of No Return project, where I argued that the Mexican-American War was the real point of no return for the Civil War because I greatly enjoyed being able to make a rather uncommon argument. Finding obscure yet useful primary sources and attempting to spin them in favor of our argument was probably the part of this project at which I excelled most due to past experiences in debate tournaments, but also because of how much I had learned about writing in history class up to that point. After having written three-sentence theses for a few months, I was finally prepared to make the fairly-nuanced argument (that unresolved issues regarding slavery in the newly-acquired land first breached the North and South, even though it didn’t actually produce large amounts of tensions at the time) necessary for the point. I believe that I also performed fairly well in the class debate on the point of no return, as I was able to spin a lot of the evidence thrown at me that would ostensibly point towards a different point of no return than the Mexican-American War.

Another piece of work at which I believe I performed equally well was the final paper, which I wrote about the Marshall Plan and how it ostensibly was a humanitarian, diplomatic program but in reality aimed to secure American dominance over Western Europe’s economy while isolating the Soviet Union. Because it was not timed, I had the opportunity to flesh out my analysis of the topic, find the perfect evidence for each claim (ranging from quotes from influential speeches of presidents to figures in little-known, yet ultimately profoundly significant government documents), and craft an essay that I was proud of because of how interesting I found its ideas.

1. **Favorite Moment**

My favorite moment of class was by far the debate over the Tariff of Abominations because I had the opportunity to argue for a perspective that I didn’t initially hold personally (that, aside from their usage of slavery, Southern secession for economic reasons should have been legal) and as a result actually adopted it. My reasoning was that many citizens of Southern states at that point were not even involved in the ratification of the Constitution establishing the federal government, so they should not necessarily be held to it because of their lack of consent. The part that I found most fascinating was discussing with the rest of the class the modern day implications of such views (e.g. that smaller groups should be able to secede from larger groups by popular vote). Moments like this are the ones which I enjoy most in history because I love to debate with others and discuss interesting and/or unexpected ideas that can make a seemingly boring and obscure event seem relevant to contemporary society.

1. **Strengths**

In APUSH, my strength has generally been being able to construct logical arguments. This is demonstrated by the examples above as well as in class discussions. The most recent one that comes to mind is when we discussed the Second New Deal and whether those who earn the most or least over their lifetime should receive more social security. My success in this portion of APUSH is most likely a result of my interest in debate, as I have learned how to ask critical questions of evidence presented before me and as a result figure out how to successfully spin the evidence in my favor.

In addition to being my greatest strength in APUSH, I believe that this is the skill upon which I have improved the most, as I have learned how to better structure my essays in order to present my ideas in a clearer and less convoluted way. In my first test, for example, I almost contradicted myself in one of the counter argument paragraphs, as I failed to make obvious to the reader how exactly I disagreed with the counter-argument, and it appeared that I actually agreed with it in some places. Over the course of this year, I have learned how to be more explicit in my analysis and as a result ensure that my ideas are well-understood by others.

1. **Use of material outside of class**

At the Model UN conference in Boston, one of the topics for my committee was personal protection and gun control. Although we represented many different nations (I was South Korea), a number of delegates referenced the second amendment and the American right to self-defense for individual citizens as an idea envisioned by the founding fathers that should serve as an example for the world. While I made a number of arguments against this line of thought, an especially effective and piercing one was that the founding fathers did not actually view the right to arms as a collective right, especially in light of Shays’ rebellion, which transpired months before the constitutional convention. This bit of knowledge that I learned in APUSH allowed me in part to successfully push through my resolution at that conference.

1. **Accomplishment in class that represents growth**

The class discussed in question two was probably the one of which I am most proud, but another in which I feel that I grew most was the class in which we took up roles of average Americans in the late 19th century and debated a variety of subjects such as whether to ratify the Constitution or the merits of Hamilton’s economic plan. As a result of this exercise, I empathisized more with demographics of the time (such as farmers or textile workers) that I had not previously understood well. As a result, I learned to think carefully about the consequences of historical actions on groups that aren’t discussed a lot. While this ability might not have had a significant direct impact on my historical analysis skills, I suspect it nudged me to think about minority groups more that I otherwise would have while crafting in-class essays. More importantly, though, it made history more interesting for me, as I had previously thought of it as rather cut-and-dry because of its supposed objectivity rather than full of conflicting ideas and morally-uncertain decisions. As a result of this initial activity, my increased interest in the subject allowed me to spend hours outside of class that I otherwise might not have used to work on history, so in the long-run it probably had a significant impact on my performance in this class as well as in future history classes.