

QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY AT KINGSTON
ECONOMICS 332—Economic History of North America Since 1865
Fall 2011/2012
Midterm Test Sample Questions

The staples model is a tool used to characterize the commodity and factor flows that result from a shock leading to the exploitation of a new resource source. Explain the staples model as a theory of adjustment to a disequilibrium in commodity and factor markets, and outline the sources of economic growth predicted by the model.

The staples model has been characterized in terms of the dynamic effect of staple linkages in contrast to a model of transition from equilibrium to equilibrium. Discuss these linkages and provide examples. Explain how incorporating linkages broadens the staples model's scope. In particular, how does Keay provide a test of the linkages in examining long-run resource exploitation in Canada.

Buffalo herds existed in North America until their sudden virtual extinction in the 1870s. Outline the explanation for the depletion of the buffalo herds of North America. Your explanation should account for both the long run stability of the herd and then its sudden demise. Link the explanation to the staples model, and using the staples model indicate who benefited from the buffalo hunt.

Chambers and Gordon use the staples model to test the impact of the Canadian Wheat Boom. Explain their test fully. Relate it to the staples model. Discuss the modification to their estimate in Lewis.

Outline the various explanations for the lag between the completion of the CPR from Ontario to British Columbia and the surge in Prairie settlement. Provide detail on the focus of each explanation.

Construction of railways through unsettled lands has been termed 'Building Ahead of Demand'. Explain the Canadian government's solution to the problem of inducing construction of rail lines across the Canadian Prairies. Comment on the efficiency of this policy.

A common theme in Canadian economic and business history is the hypothesized problem of manufacturing inefficiency in Canada. Both Wylie and Keay test this thesis using the theory of induced innovation. Explain fully the meaning of induced innovation, and explain how Wylie and Keay use this theory to test whether Canadian manufacturing was inefficient.

The use of electricity was harnessed in the late 19th century, but it took another 30-40 years for it to be the most common source of power for manufacturing. Provide details on the process of its diffusion, and explain why productivity gains from its use were slow to be realized.

The adoption of tractors in agriculture was one of two transforming developments that characterize modern agriculture. But despite their obvious advantages, tractors diffused slowly in agriculture in North America over a period of about forty years. Provide a detailed explanation for this delay.