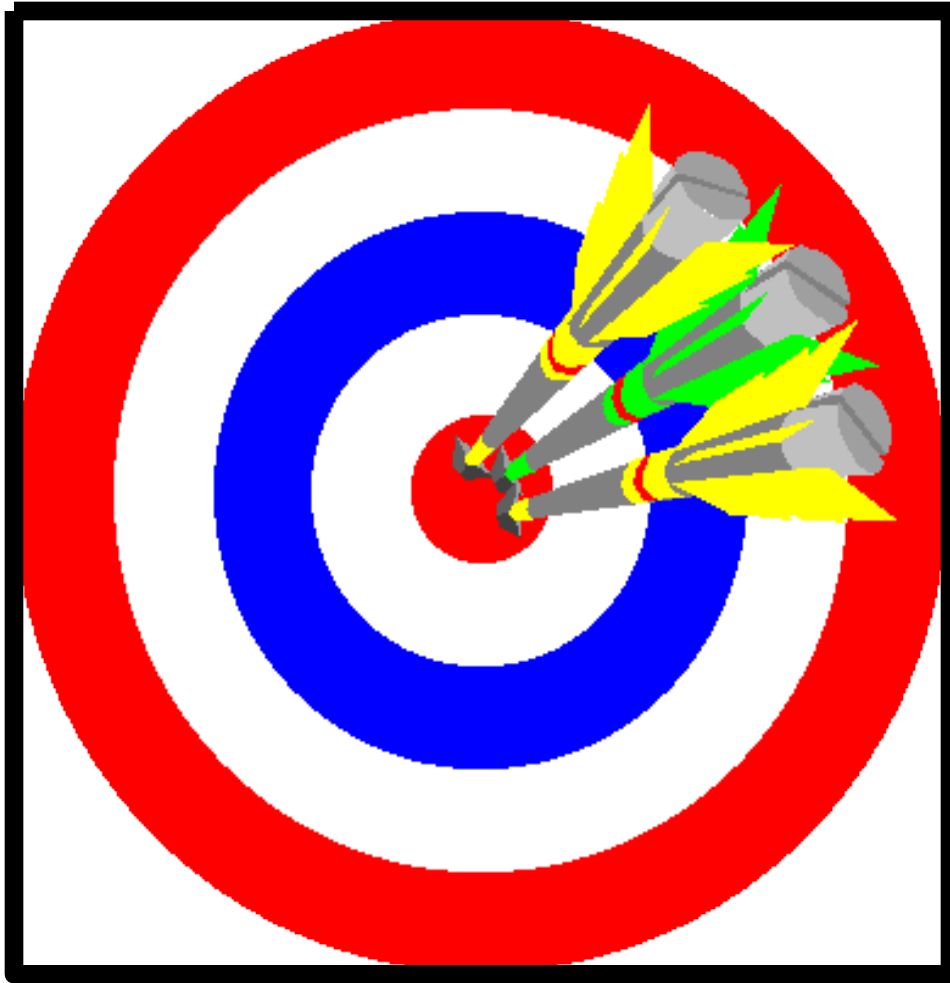


Writing the LEQ





I CAN!

Write a well-written,
coherent historical
long essay for
APUSH.



A panda walks into a café. He orders a sandwich, eats it, then draws a gun and proceeds to fire it in the air.

'Why?' asks the confused waiter, as the panda makes towards the exit.

The panda produces a badly punctuated wildlife manual and tosses it over his shoulder. *"Well, I'm a panda,"* he says, at the door. *Look it up.*₃



The waiter turns to the relevant entry in the manual and, sure enough, finds an explanation. “*Panda. Large black-and-white bear-like mammal, native to China. Eats, shoots, and leaves.*”

Punctuation directs you how to read, in the way musical notation directs a musician how to play. The consequences of poor punctuation are shown in the following example:

“A woman, without her man, is nothing.”

“A woman: without her, man is nothing.”

Five Professor Pet Peeves on Writing

Pioneer Press, 11/05/2005

- ☐ **Papers that read like greeting cards.** Leave cuteness and humor to late night TV. Show your scholarship, not your wittiness.
- ☐ **Papers that aren't proofread.** These are laced with common spelling errors.
- ☐ **Informal writing.** Do not use slang or the first person.
- ☐ **No clear thesis.** The thesis must be clear and interesting and argue something.
- ☐ **No fluff.** A professor is not fooled by students padding essays with bigger fonts and margins.

READING REVIEWS

300 POINTS POSSIBLE

You have been assigned three reading reviews, due at the beginning of the class on the date assigned above. Each review must be typewritten and approximately 2-3 pages long. In your review you should:

- (1) Identify and summarize the main idea(s) addressed in the reading. *If you choose to quote any portion of the reading, remember to cite your source.*
- (2) Assess whether the economist expressed his ideas clearly and unambiguously. If you decide your economist did **not** express his ideas clearly and unambiguously, given one example. *If you choose to quote any portion of the reading, remember to cite your source.*
- (3) An example of how the ideas expressed in the reading are used by today's economists or politicians.

Each review will be worth 100 points. Late reviews will be penalized 50 points. Reviews that have not been adequately proofread (i.e., an excess of three typographical and/or spelling errors) will receive zero points.

Note the penalty for lateness and typos in my son's Economic class at the University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire in 2003.

Penmanship, the newest worry

Newsweek, 3/14/2005

- Students taking the required writing tests for college admission must now be concerned about what would happen if no one could read their essay.
- A dozen studies show that an evaluator is more likely to grade an essay down if the writing looks sloppy.
- High school classes are now beginning to offer lessons in handwriting.

Resume Goof Can Be Costly

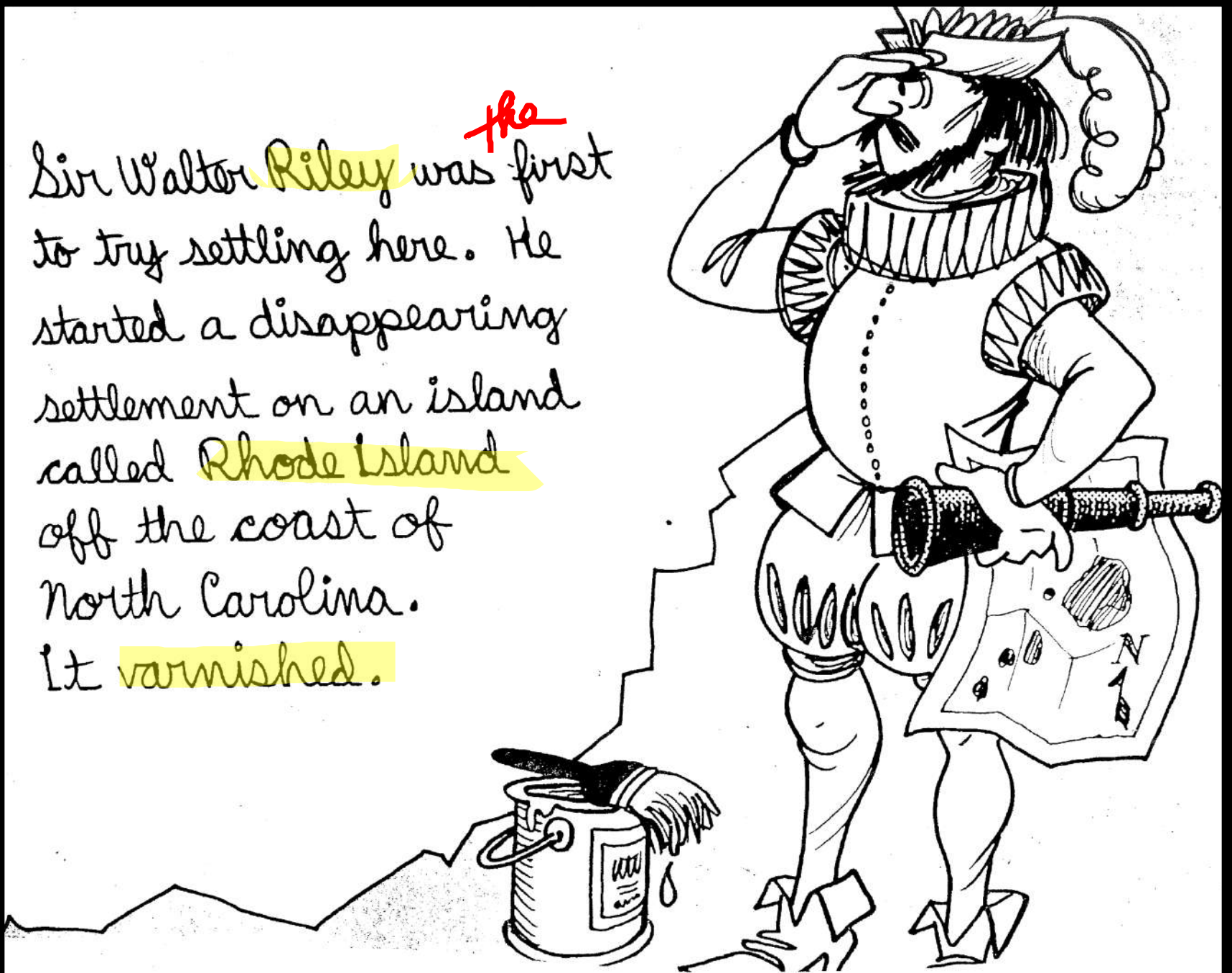
Pioneer Press, 9/1/2009

- Dear Sir or Madman. Oops, I meant to write, dear sir or madame – as opposed to the madam who manages a brothel.
- Or consider someone who mistakenly wrote “Graphic designer seeking no-profit career”.
- In interviews with 150 senior executives from the nation’s 1,000 largest companies, 40 percent said that just one typo on a resume would disqualify a candidate for consideration. Thirty-six percent said it would take two mistakes before the resume would be discarded.

Tips for writing a good resume (or APUSH essay):

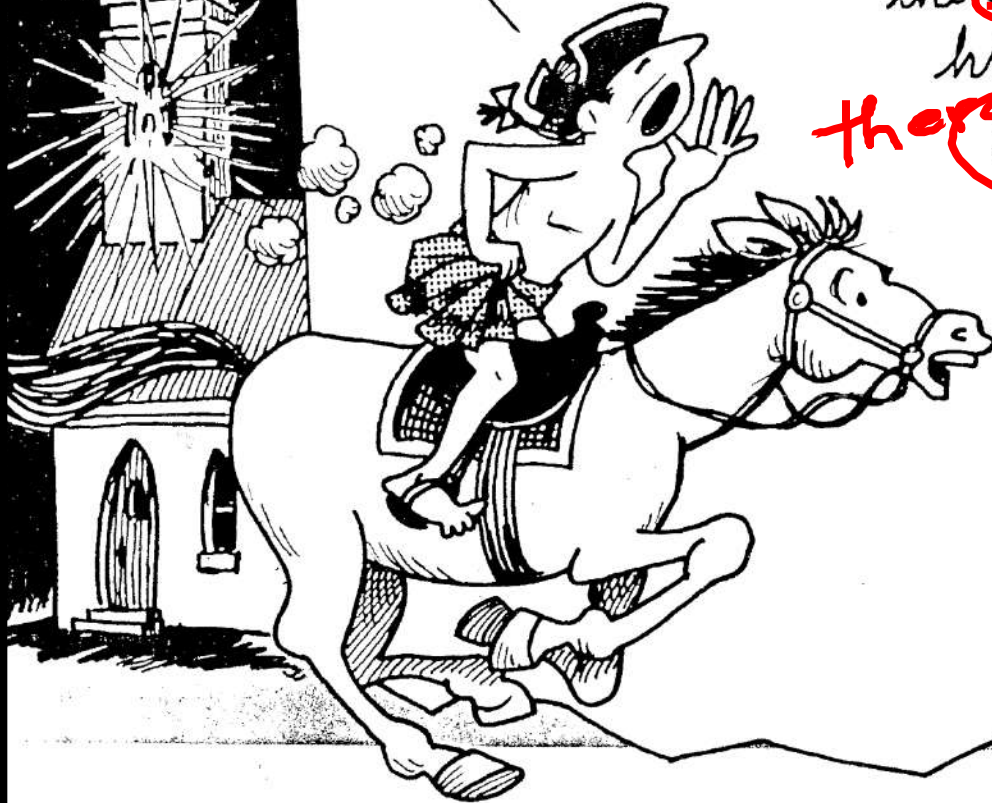
- Get someone to proofread your resume.
- Put the resume down and come back to it later with your own fresh eyes. Reread it when you are less harried.
- Print a copy. It's so easy to overlook errors after staring at a computer monitor for a long time.
- Read your resume (essay) aloud.

Sir Walter ~~the~~ Riley was first
to try settling here. He
started a disappearing
settlement on an island
called Rhode Island
off the coast of
North Carolina.
It varnished.



Paul Revere started his famous ride in Lexington,
which is in ~~Philadelphia~~ Boston. an paddled a canoe to
Boston. He was waiting on the other
side of town for his massage when
he saw the lights come on in
the lighthouse. He jumped on
his horse - the fastest horse
~~there~~ they was back then - and
rode all through the
streets yelling,
"Too warm! Too
warm! The Red
Colts is coming!"

"TOO WARM!
TOO WARM!"



Writing the Long Essay

- ☐ The AP U.S. History Exam is 3 hours and 15 minutes long and includes both a 100-minute multiple-choice/short-answer section (Part I) and a 95-minute free-response section (Part II).
- ☐ Each section is divided into two parts, as shown in the table on the next slide.
- ☐ Student performance on these four parts will be compiled and weighted to determine an AP Exam score. AP Scores are 5 – 1.

| Section | Question Type | Number of Questions | Timing | Percentage of Total Exam Score |
|---------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------|--------------------------------|
| I | Part A: Multiple-choice questions | 55 questions | 55 minutes | 40% |
| | Part B: Short-answer questions | 4 questions | 45 minutes | 20% |
| | BREAK | | | |
| II | Part A: Document-based question | 1 question | 60 minutes | 25% |
| | Part B: Long essay question | 1 question (chosen from a pair) | 35 minutes | 15% |

The Long Essay

- ☐ The AP American history exam requires students to write a long essay within thirty-five minutes.
- ☐ They will have a choice between two questions that focus on the same historical thinking skill (HTS) but may apply to different time periods and thematic learning objectives.

Each essay will be evaluated on the following criteria:

1. **Argumentation.** Develops a thesis or relevant argument that addresses all parts of the question.
2. **Use of evidence.** Supports the thesis using specific evidence, clearly linked to the thesis.

3. **Targeted historical thinking skill.** Each question will assess an additional thinking skill, such as causation, comparison, continuity and change over time, or periodization.
4. **Synthesis.** Written answers need to extend the argument of the essay, connect it to a different time historical context, or connect it to a different category of analysis.

Step 1: Analyze the Question

- ☐ Take the time to consider what the question really asks. Identify the targeted HTS in the question: causation, comparison, continuity and change over time, or periodization.
- ☐ Circle the main tasks required and organize your answers according to them. They might be verbs such as analyze, explain, support, modify, or refute.
- ☐ Underline the time period in the question.

- ❑ Be sure to identify all the parts of the question that need to be addressed. Two, three, or more aspects of a question may be embedded in one sentence.
- ❑ Consider the following question: *Evaluate the relative importance of domestic and foreign affairs in shaping American politics in the 1790s.* Students must deal with both foreign and domestic affairs.

- ❑ All questions require the use of HTS and analysis of the evidence. A long-essay answer will not receive full credit by simply reporting information.
- ❑ Therefore, be on your guard for questions that start out with the verbs “identify” or “describe”. Such a question is usually followed by “analyze” or some other more demanding thinking skill.

- ❑ For example, examine this AP essay question:
Consider two of the following and analyze the ways in which each of the two has affected the identity of women in American society since 1940: changing economic conditions, rebirth of an organized women's movement, or traditional definitions of women's roles.
- ❑ For this essay, it is not enough to simply describe changing economic conditions, women's organizations and so on.

- ❑ You must analyze the effects that two factors had on the identity of women.
- ❑ A reliable guide for any AP question is that if you think you can write an essay without making some judgment that results in a thesis statement, you have not understood the question.

Step 2: Develop the Evidence

- ☐ Many students start writing their answers to an essay question without first thinking through what they know. It would not be very productive to select an essay or take a position that you cannot support.
- ☐ Directions for the APUSH exam advise students to spend some time planning before starting to write an essay.

Question: Evaluate the relative importance of domestic and foreign affairs in shaping American politics in the 1790s.

| Domestic Affairs | Foreign Affairs | Politics |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Hamilton's financial plan: national debt, tariff, excise tax, Bank of the U.S.</p> <p>Constitution: loose vs. strict interpretation</p> <p>Whiskey Rebellion</p> <p>Alien and Sedition Acts</p> | <p>French Revolution</p> <p>British vs. French</p> <p>Proc. of Neutrality</p> <p>Citizen Genêt</p> <p>Jay Treaty</p> <p>Pinckney Treaty</p> <p>Washington's Farewell Address</p> <p>XYZ Affair</p> <p>Convention of 1800</p> | <p>President Washington</p> <p>Jefferson vs. Hamilton</p> <p>Two-party system</p> <p>Election of 1796</p> <p>Revolution of 1800</p> |

First, organize your information by making a brief outline of what you know. You can write your outline in the test booklet. A sample outline table from AMSCO is provided above.

Step 3: Develop the Thesis

- ☐ A strong thesis is an essential part of every AP History essay answer.
- ☐ Often, students have difficulty taking a position or are afraid of making a mistake. But AP readers are looking not for the one “right answer” but rather for a writer’s ability to interpret the evidence and develop historical support for that interpretation.

- ❑ A thesis must be more than a restatement of the question. It requires taking a position on the question and a focus on the appropriate HTS.
- ❑ The following thesis is from an essay written in response to the 1790s question: *During the 1790s, foreign affairs contributed more to shaping American politics than did domestic issue.* This statement is straightforward and simple, and it takes a position on the question and the issue of causation.

- ❑ The long-essay question may give clear directions on the formation of the thesis, such as “**support, modify, or refute**” an interpretation.
- ❑ A sample essay is provided on page 7 that illustrates how you might answer a “SMR” question.

Sample SMR Long Essay College Board

Prompt: *Some historians have argued that the American Revolution was not revolutionary in nature. Support, modify, or refute this interpretation, providing specific evidence to justify your answer.*

A good response to this question will support, modify, or refute the interpretation that the American Revolution was not revolutionary in nature.

Supporting the Interpretation

- ❑ An essay **supporting** this interpretation would craft an argument using specific evidence that shows the American Revolution did not foster revolutionary change but instead maintained continuity.
- ❑ Although not required to do so, a good response might also acknowledge that the situation is nuanced and to some degree ambiguous. The essay might therefore contend that for the most part, the historical evidence supports the claim made in the question stem, while pointing out that some contrary evidence exists as well.

- ❑ In supporting the interpretation, a good essay might cite historical facts from any of a number of appropriate areas.
- ❑ It might note, for example, that the outcome of the American Revolution saw no broad change in the composition of those who dominated the social, political, and economic structure of the former colonies.

- ❑ Those individuals who were wealthy, powerful, and influential before the event continued to possess wealth, power, and influence later. George Washington, John Adams, and Thomas Jefferson could serve as examples.
- ❑ This approach would argue that the Revolution was basically a revolt by colonial elites against the elites in England.

- ❑ Another analysis supporting the assertion made in the exam question might draw upon the work of historian Charles Beard, who famously argued that the creation of the Constitution in the late 1780s was a counterrevolution.
- ❑ Beard contended that the Constitution was created to maintain commercial and landowning elites' power, influence, and standing in the face of events such as Shays's Rebellion and other attempts at revolutionary change.
- ❑ Note that since the question does not confine the response to a particular time period, it would be appropriate to cite events and other evidence from the 1780s in the essay.

- ❑ Other good responses might analyze the absence of revolutionary change for groups such as women, slaves, and Native Americans following the Revolution.
- ❑ In the case of women, the revolutionary rhetoric about natural rights did not result in their obtaining political or economic independence.

- ❑ Neither did the Revolution significantly change the plight of most slaves. While Northern states began to outlaw slavery, the vast majority of slaves lived in Southern states where their conditions were largely unchanged.
- ❑ Native Americans actually lost liberty.

Refuting the Interpretation

- ❑ Conversely, a good response might take the opposite approach and **refute** the assertion cited in the exam question, using persuasive evidence to contend that the Revolution was revolutionary in nature and that significant change did occur.
- ❑ This argument could point to a significant change in government, in that the Revolution did away with royal power and authority and instead substituted written state constitutions guaranteeing a republican form of government.

- ❑ In a similar vein, a good response might note that the Revolution did away with certain aristocratic practices such as primogeniture (which limited inheritance of land to the eldest son).
- ❑ This led to the possibility of a greater dispersion of the ownership of land.

- ❑ Other appropriate arguments refuting the interpretation might assert that the Revolutionary period resulted in the spread of American democratic culture.
- ❑ The rise of pamphleteering prior to the Revolution indicated democratization in politics, as did the growing enfranchisement of citizens.

- ❑ A good response might point out that voter participation grew immediately before and following the Revolution, setting the stage for even greater democratization in the early 19th century.
- ❑ Natural rights rhetoric about liberty and equality, furthermore, gave women and African Americans a basis for combating legal inequalities that limited their roles in society.

Modifying the Interpretation

- ❑ Finally, a good response might instead choose to **modify** the interpretation presented in the question. In all likelihood, this approach would emphasize that the totality of evidence is not clear-cut: that the American Revolution was in some ways revolutionary but in other ways was not.
- ❑ To make this argument, a good response would probably select facts supporting each of the two possibilities listed above, presenting proof that the Revolution was ambiguous

In all of the above cases, a strong response will demonstrate knowledge of relevant chronology and incorporate a detailed understanding of historical events, arguments, and circumstances.

Step 4: Write the Introductory Paragraph

- ☐ Your introduction **is the most important paragraph of your essay**. It demonstrates to the reader that you understand the question, have developed a thesis (an answer) to the question, and have outlined the main points of your arguments.
- ☐ Many students can improve their essay by using basic organizing principles for writing an introductory paragraph. The main parts of the introduction include the background, thesis, and the roadmap (**BTR**).

Suppose the question for an essay is: "*What impact did the Thirteenth Amendment have on the lives of most African Americans in the late nineteenth century?*"

1. Background Statement.

- ✓ You should include a brief explanation or broad general statement about the key theme, topic, or idea of the essay that provides the historical context for the essay.
- ✓ In this essay, you would briefly define or explain the 13th Amendment, which abolished slavery in the US.

2. Thesis.

- ✓ A thesis is an argument or a hypothesis; it is the point of your essay. It is a clear, precise topic sentence that lets the reader know your answer to the essay's question.
- ✓ You must include your thesis in the introductory paragraph.
- ✓ Don't be too broad, including ideas that the essay will not address, or too narrow, omitting ideas or limiting the eventual scope of the essay.

Compare the following theses:

☐ **Weak thesis statement:**

- ✓ *"This paper is about the status of blacks after the Civil War."*
- ✓ It is weak because it does not make an argument or answer the question.

❑ Strong thesis statement:

- ✓ *"After the Civil War, many freed black slaves believed that their children would have substantially better lives and greater opportunities than they had as slaves. However, their hopes for their children were not fulfilled; **in the late 1800s the lives of most blacks were not much better than those of their parents.**"*
- ✓ This thesis is stronger because it makes an argument with which readers can agree or disagree.

3. Roadmap.

- ✓ This sentence(s) provides a list of the main arguments used in your essay.
- ✓ These "controlling ideas", a kind of "roadmap" to the reader, are used to prove your thesis and provide the structure to the essay.
- ✓ They might be based on the following concepts: key personalities, key events, main ideas, and overall categories of evidence.

- ❑ For example, if your thesis was "*In the late 1800s the lives of most blacks were not much better than those of their parents*", your roadmap (controlling ideas) might be written as follows: "*Many of the descendants of former slaves experienced **political hypocrisy in the form of voting restrictions, social segregation created by the expansion of Jim Crow laws, and economic dependency based on a system of sharecropping.***"
- ❑ These concepts may be used to explain why the lives of freed blacks were not better than that of their parents.

- ☐ In the question above on the 1790s, the student might have continued the thesis statement, “*During the 1790s, foreign affairs contributed more to shaping American politics than did domestic issue*” with the following roadmap: “***While the young nation struggled with questions about powers in the new Constitution, ideological conflicts over the French Revolution, foreign policy divisions created by the Napoleonic Wars, and our relations with Great Britain did more to divide Americans and promote the formation of two political parties during the 1790s.***”
- ☐ This organization statement guided the development of the essay.

- ❑ Some students use the acronym "**PERSIA FM**" as a way to organize their essay (Politics, Economics, Religion, Social, Intellectual, Art, Foreign, and Military).
- ❑ Another acronym which incorporates the major themes of the APUSH exam is "**BAGPIPE**". This stands for Belief Systems, America in the World, Geography and the Environment, Peopling, Identity, Politics and Power, and Economy. These will be explained in a separate activity.

By the end of the first paragraph, the reader should not only know the thesis but also have a clear idea of the main arguments that will be developed in the body of the essay in support of the thesis.

Level of Specificity in a Roadmap

- ☐ How much specificity to include in the roadmap should be a balancing act.
- ☐ On the one hand, you don't want to be too general (Level One Roadmap), but on the other hand you don't want to be too specific (Level Two Roadmap). Let them know where you are going, but don't give away all your information. We want the reader to keep reading!
- ☐ We will call the right amount of specificity the Level Three Roadmap.

Consider the following prompt: *Evaluate the extent to which the Articles of Confederation were effective in solving the problems that confronted the new nation.*

❑ Level One Roadmap (not enough specificity):

The Articles of Confederation was successful as a first attempt at building a government. However, the Articles of Confederation did not provide an effective answer to the problems facing the new nation. The Articles of Confederation was weak politically, socially, and economically.

❑ **Level Two Roadmap (too much specificity):**

Under the Articles of Confederation, the Land Ordinance of 1785 and Northwest Ordinance of 1787 created a well-organized system for dealing with newly acquired territories and a plausible means to increase government revenue in a time in which the country was facing massive debt.

However, the Articles of Confederation proved unable to handle the problems faced by the country after the American Revolution. It established a decentralized government with limited sovereignty, creating a league of friendship, with limited effectiveness; it was unable to foster any sense of nationalism; it contained a lack of leadership and a lack of independent judiciary; it lacked provisions for raising revenues and collecting taxes from the states, as well as failing to handle the abuses of paper money, with no control over interstate commerce; and could not protect the country from rebellions like Shays' Rebellion.

❑ **Level Three Thesis (just right):**

The Articles of Confederation created a well organized system for dealing with newly acquired territories and providing a financial means to increase needed revenue. However, the Articles of Confederation was not effective in solving many of the problems faced by the newly formed United States. It established a loose confederation of states that lacked a sense of national unity, it created internal gridlock that failed to establish a system of checks and balances, and it created a government that did not have the powers to conduct basic governmental business.

Suppose the question is as follows:

The debate over the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798 revealed bitter controversies on a number of issues. Discuss the issues involved and explain why these controversies developed.

An appropriate opening paragraph might be:

*In 1797 John Adams became the second president of the United States. **(Background)** Unfortunately for the new nation, without Washington's steady hand the ugly disagreements between the Federalists and the Democratic Republicans during his administration soon dominated Adams. **(Thesis)** In the debates over the politically motivated Alien and Sedition Acts, the issue of strict interpretation and loose interpretation of the Constitution once again emerged. Previous arguments in regards to the assumption of state's debts, the formation of a national bank, an excise tax on Whiskey and a protective tariff provided the foundation for this division. **(Roadmap)***

Step 5: Write the Supporting Body Paragraphs

A well-organized and structured essay has three main parts: an introduction, a body (usually but not always three to five paragraphs), and a conclusion.

- ❑ **Number of body paragraphs.** Do not conclude from the model that an essay should always consist of five paragraphs. The number and length of the supporting paragraphs forming the body of the essay should vary depending on the thesis, the main points of your argument, and the amount of historical evidence.

❑ **Focusing on the HTS.** Each essay will have a targeted HTS, which should shape the arguments and choice of evidence. You must explain how specific historical evidence is linked to the thesis.

❑ **Causation.**

- ✓ Describe causes AND/OR effects of a historical development and analyze specific examples that illustrate causes AND/OR effects of a historical development.
- ✓ What were the major causes and consequences (effects) of an event? What were the most important causes and effects of an event?



Historical Causation

**WHY did stuff happen?
What was the impact? Think long and short
term.**

❑ **Comparison.**

- ✓ Describe similarities AND differences among historical developments, providing specific examples AND analyze the reasons for their similarities AND/OR differences OR, DEPENDING ON THE PROMPT, evaluate the relative significance of the historical developments.
- ✓ What were the major similarities and differences between the two events? Are there more similarities or differences and why?



Comparison

Identify similarities and differences within a society or between societies—could be chronological, ideological, demographic, geographic, political, economic, social

❑ Continuity and change over time.

- ✓ Describe historical continuity AND change over time, and analyze specific examples that illustrate historical continuity AND change over time.
- ✓ What were the major patterns of continuity and change? Was there more continuity or change over the time period?



Continuity and Change Over Time

What stayed the same?

What changed?

Why did it change and how much did it change?

❑ Periodization.

- ✓ Analyzes the extent to which the historical development specified in the prompt was different from AND similar to developments that preceded and/or followed, providing specific examples to illustrate the analysis.
- ✓ Evaluate whether an event was a turning point or major marking period in history.
- ✓ Note what it was like before and after that development.

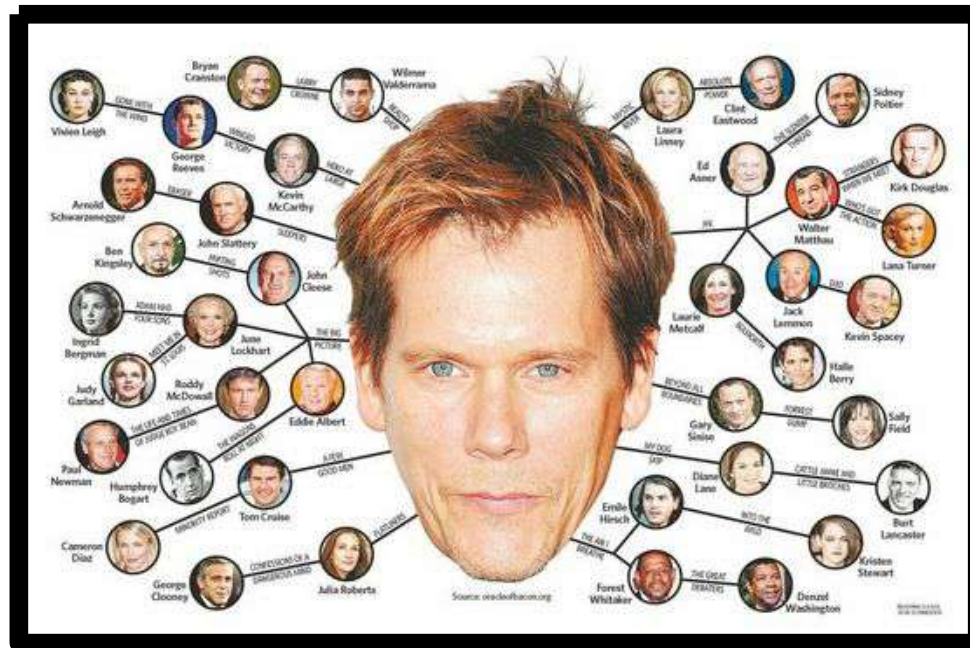


Periodization

Why do historians start and end time periods when they do?
Turning points!

❑ Focusing on synthesis.

- ✓ Besides a target HTS, each long essay will also evaluate the skill of synthesis, which involves organizing relevant historical evidence in a coherent and persuasive argument.
- ✓ There are several ways of getting the synthesis point in the long essay. It can be added in the body paragraphs by 1) extending or modifying the thesis by developing a counter-argument, 2) connecting the topic to another historical period (including the present), geographical area, context, or circumstance, or 3) adding an additional category of analysis beyond that called for in the question.



Synthesis

Creating a persuasive understanding of the past and its relevance to the present by thinking across time periods and connecting disparate, relevant ideas, people and events

What do these have in common, and what can one learn from them?

- ✓ For example, in the question on the 1790s, the context of the French Revolution is essential to analyzing the foreign policy debate.
- ✓ In the question on slavery, consider the counter-argument, "*The argument that slavery would have died naturally west of the 100th meridian is a hypothesis that assumes slavery was primarily tied to the cotton culture. It was instead a racial institution.*" This shows that the reader understood, considered, and dismissed the argument because they had a better explanation.

- ✓ If the thesis was that there was little change (in a CCOT essay) in the role of women in American society from the American Revolution to the Civil War, then the student might draft a paragraph in which they note some changes that did happen.

The following are guidelines for writing the 3 to 5 supporting paragraphs that make up the main body of your essay.

1. Follow the roadmap.

- ✓ The rest of the essay should follow the "roadmap" you constructed in the introduction.
- ✓ The number, order and nature of these paragraphs will be determined by the organizational list in the introduction.

2. Each paragraph should have a point that is well developed and that addresses the main issue or problem.

- ✓ All of your evidence throughout the essay must support your thesis.
- ✓ Be sure the information that you are providing is really necessary to prove your point. Avoid including extraneous information. Just because something is interesting does not mean that it fits into your "roadmap".

3. Develop well-organized and well-written paragraphs.

- ✓ In each paragraph, start with a topic sentence, which contains a combination of your thesis plus a controlling idea.
- ✓ The topic sentence of the first paragraph in the body might be written something like this: "*The political hypocrisy of the late 1800s made the lives of many blacks no better than the lives of antebellum (pre-Civil War) blacks.*"

4. Provide evidence to support your thesis.

- ✓ Be sure to cite people, laws, literature, ideas, and other details that are applicable to the essay. But don't just tell a story with a list of unrelated “laundry list” of facts.
- ✓ You must **analyze** and **interpret** the evidence you have gathered and use it to prove your thesis.
- ✓ Generally, an “A” paper will contain at least six strong pieces of evidence, each of which usually takes at least two to three sentences to explain.

Step 6: Write the Conclusion

- ☐ A conclusion sums up what the reader has learned. Students should restate the thesis in a fresh and interesting manner.
- ☐ They should then restate each of your topic sentences and provide an example from their essay to support each topic sentence.
- ☐ Do not introduce new evidence or summarize your entire essay.

- ☐ Don't confess that the essay probably is not worth reading.
- ☐ Don't end an essay with a smiley face, "The End", or a dramatic signature.
- ☐ These give the impression the student is trying to get by on personality instead of knowledge.

General Guidelines for Writing Historical Essays

1. Stick to the question.

- ✓ Make sure you are answering what is being asked and are sticking to the time scope of the question.

2. Don't use slang terms. A good historical essay does not use slang. Avoid “things”, “stuff”, and “a lot”.

3. Avoid abstracts. Be careful of abstract words such as democracy, progress, success, and individualism. Certain abstract words carry a wide range of definitions and connotations. Take the time to define an abstract word; it helps you focus on that aspect of the word the essay question intends.

4. Write concisely.

- ✓ Make conceptual arguments in your essay, provide factual support, and move on.
- ✓ Avoid the temptation to write everything you know or to tell a pleasant story.
- ✓ Remember, you are not writing a history of the period; you are answering a specific question about this period in US history.
- ✓ Some students pound a single point, incorrectly believing that constant restating adds to an essay.

- ✓ Avoid lengthy discussion of minor or peripheral material. A good essay is not filled with superfluous (unnecessary) detail.
- ✓ Ask about every sentence: Will this help me communicate my point to the reader? If the answer is no, leave the sentence out.
- ✓ A concise essay in which every word has a purpose is better than an essay bloated with fillers and flowery language in an attempt to impress the reader. Don't write about a subject; write to persuade.

5. Use adjectives and adverbs.

- ✓ Use effective adjectives and adverbs to enhance the descriptive power of your essay. These expand and enhance the essay's thesis.
- ✓ For example: "Smith's letter strongly portrayed Jackson's belligerent attitude toward the Bank of the US".

- ✓ Use adjectives to convey the amount of generality or specificity needed for a particular sentence.
- ✓ "The US has a democratic government." Is it a parliamentary democracy, representative democracy, or direct democracy? Do you mean political, economic, social, or religious democracy? Do you mean democratic in results or in opportunity?
- ✓ However, sometimes a single adjective sufficiently describes a noun, e.g., "fascist leaders", or "marginal farmers".

6. **Make a mental and/or written outline.** Organization is the key to a good essay. Delay writing your essay until you have had time to organize your thoughts and outlined your answer. Jot down all the concepts and facts pertaining to the answer. Organize these facts into major sections or paragraphs. Then write your essay.
7. **Do not use absolutes.** Do not use absolute words - never, all, only, none, every, etc. Rarely in history is the evidence so absolutely conclusive that you can prove that there were no exceptions. At least one point will be deducted on your essays for the use of these words.

8. Proofread.

- ✓ When you are finished, briefly read your essay. Check for grammatical errors and misspellings.
- ✓ The omission of one word, particularly the word "not", may change the meaning of your essay.

- ✓ A student occasionally begins an essay with one argument, realizes he has better support for the opposite viewpoint, and changes the remainder of the essay without changing the introduction.
- ✓ For example, an essay states that slavery was the sole cause of the Civil War by agreeing with the statement in the introduction, but then contradicts that thesis in the body of the essay by discussing multiple causes.
- ✓ Go back and change the introduction.

9. Assume your reader is uninformed.

- ✓ Spell things out. Don't take it for granted that he or she knows what you mean or what you are talking about. You have never met the person who is going to read and grade your essays.
- ✓ Explain your key points clearly; don't assume that people know what you know. When you mention someone in the essay for the first time, include both the first and last name.

10. Define or explain all key terms. If the question deals with terms, such as “liberal”, “conservative”, “sectionalism”, or “manifest destiny”, an essential part of your analysis should be an explanation of these terms.

11. Use transition words. A judicious use of transitional words and phrases such as: “therefore”, “however”, “thus”, “despite”, “because”, “instead”, “although”, “rather”, “furthermore”, “nevertheless”, and “finally” carries the reader smoothly from one sentence or paragraph to the next.

10. Write in the third person. Do not use "I", "me", "we", or other personal pronouns in order to avoid personal feelings and impressions. You must use historical facts and logical reasoning to support the thesis. At least one point will be subtracted on your essay if you use personal pronouns.

10. Avoid progress reports. For example, "It is now time to conclude"; "Enough of this"; or "Let's get into it".

14. Use key words and phrases that indicate judgment and analysis.

- ✓ These might include: controversial, turning point, inevitable, more importantly, ironic, key, significant, primary, secondary, deliberate, dramatic, predominant, imperative, any indicator of degrees of causation, etc.
- ✓ A student who uses judgment/ analysis indicates a higher degree of sophistication than a straight narrative composition that only recites facts.

- ✓ Prioritize your organizational points and indicate primary vs. secondary causation or some aspect of varying degrees of importance for your list.
- ✓ It is rare that anything ever happened or didn't happen due to factors that shared the exact degrees of relevance.
- ✓ Distinguish between the significant and the less important.

15. Use "wonderful" verbs.

- ✓ The verbs used are a critical element in presenting a more sophisticated and descriptive essay. Your choice of verb reveals your judgment and analysis of the facts.
- ✓ Use a variety of "wonderful verbs", such as revealed, illustrated, implied, demonstrated, portrayed, exemplified, indicated, symbolized, depicted, etc.
- ✓ Compare, for example: "The assassination caused the war..." vs. "The assassination provoked the outbreak of war..." or "The diary showed the prejudice..." vs. "The diary usually illustrated the deep prejudices".

**Be sure to read the
handout, “*100 Ways to Say,
He said*”**

Smith demonstrates...
as cited in his article...

Smith’s answer...

Smith suggests...

The author uses...

To illustrate this point...

Smith emphasizes...

Given Smiths sound
premise...

He exhibits...

- ✓ Reduce your use of all forms of the verb "to be" (am, is are, was, were, have been, being, etc.) Change them to more active verbs. Avoid vague verbs such as “felt” and “says”.
- ✓ Remember! **Affect** is most commonly used as a verb and refers to the action of influencing something else. **Effect** is most commonly used as a noun and refers to something that happens because of some action or event.

16. Use the active voice. Use the active voice rather than the passive voice because it states cause and effect more strongly. “Edison created” is in the active voice; “was created by Edison” is in the passive voice.

17. Show your awareness of the complexity of history. There are a multiplicity of events, emotions, ideas, etc. that impact human history. Avoid simplistic comments, e.g., something is “bad”, “good”, “great”, “fantastic”, etc. Stay away from the idea of single causation.

18. Write using the PAST TENSE. The events occurreded.

19. Do not use abbreviations. George Washington was not "GW"; Andrew Jackson was not "AJ". However, actual nicknames such as JFK or LBJ are acceptable.

20. Never write conversationally. Don't talk to the reader. Never state what you are going to tell the reader. Do not use rhetorical questions.

21. Spelling and capitalization. Spelling and capitalization; spelling and capitalization!!!!

22. Do not use metaphors that have no bearing on the issue. Avoid comments like, “That's why we have the country we do today.” Or “If the Pilgrims had never landed here, we could not have become the great, freedom-loving nation that we are today.”

23. Watch out for repetitions. Avoid repetitive tendencies in word or phrase usage and sentence structure.

24. Justify your arguments. Express facts and demonstrate why the reader should believe your conclusions.

25. Use personal pronouns sparingly. Avoid vague references, such as “them” and “others”. It’s pretty easy to confuse the reader if he or she has to struggle to figure out who “them” is/are/or could be.

26. Avoid “lumping”. Be cautious about placing too much unity into the thoughts and actions of the many, i.e. “The colonists felt...the Indians hated...the Europeans wanted”. Could there be subsets within the groups? Which groups felt, hated or wanted? It’s like saying “all teenagers are...”

25. Don't inject yourself into history.

- ✓ Don't use "we" when you really mean, "Americans who have been dead for a long time".
- ✓ "We" didn't evict the Cherokee from Georgia, win World War I, give women the right to vote, build railroads, land on the moon, etc. The US citizens of the past did.

The End