

The AP US History Writing Guide:

How to rock a writing response (and keep your sanity, too!)

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DBQ, SAQ, and LEQ: What's the difference?

ESSAY SECTIONS: 65% of Exam

	SAQ (section I)	DBQ (section II)	LEQ (section II)
TIME	45 minutes (take 5 minutes to plan)	60 minutes (take 15 minutes to plan)	35 minutes (take 5 minutes to plan)
HOW MANY	4	1	1
PERCENTAGE OF TEST	20%	25%	15%
DOCUMENTS & NEEDED INFO.	Some documents and background knowledge (no thesis)	7 Included, plus student background information	Dependent solely on background knowledge (MUST have thesis)

Remember:

1. 45 minutes for SAQ (part of section I); 95 minutes for section II essay portions on the new AP Exam.
2. At the start there is a 15 minute mandatory reading period for the documents and questions before one can begin to write. Use this time to read through the questions, web out ideas, and plan your essays.

SAQ: Short answer question
DBQ: Document-based question
LEQ: Long essay question

Commonly used task words/verbs in writing prompts and how to approach them

Analyze	<p>Explain <i>how</i> AND <i>why</i> something occurred by examining the component parts (social, political, economic) and their relationship with one another.</p> <p>Any question that uses “how” and/or “why” is an analysis question even if the word “analyze” is not in the prompt.</p>	<p>“Analyze the major technological changes that took place in America from 1870 to 1900 and describe what significant social ramifications they had.”</p>
Assess the validity	<p>How true is the statement? Pay attention to positive, negative, and disputable aspects, citing the judgment of known authorities and your own.</p> <p>You must take a stance here – how true is the statement and why?</p>	<p>“Assess the validity of the following statement: ‘Thomas Jefferson’s political philosophy can best be described as revolutionary.’”</p>
Evaluate	<p>Which factor was most important? You usually need to rank several events or factors and specify which is most and which is least significant.</p>	
To what extent	<p>This prompt frequently requires you to specify a cause and effect relationship and then state which causes were more important. Or, indicate the criteria on which you base your judgment and cite specific instance of how it applies in this case.</p>	<p>(See prompt below)</p>
Discuss or Consider	<p>These are frequently used in free response prompts. They should be written as analysis essays. Examine key points and possible interpretations, giving reasons for and against the case. Draw a final conclusion.</p>	<p>“Discuss the extent to which nineteenth-century Transcendentalism was or was not a conservative cultural and intellectual movement.”</p>
Compare/Contrast	<p>Identify the characteristics or qualities of two or more things, comparing what they have in common (compare) and differences (contrast).</p>	<p>“Compare the religious revival of the First Great Awakening to that of the Second.”</p> <p>“Contrast the Federalist and Antifederalist arguments for or against the ratification of the new Federal Constitution.”</p>
Explain	<p>Tell how things work or how they came to be, including descriptions or analysis. This must have DETAIL to give it meaning.</p>	<p>“Explain how economic, political, and religious factors promoted European explorations from 1450 to 1525.”</p>

After you are clear as to your task (analyze, evaluate, etc.) sketch out a quick, informal outline of how you are going to proceed. This is very important to guaranteeing that you cover the whole prompt.

Some quick notes on writing GOOD historical essays

In no circumstance should your history essay have fluff in it, this is not an English class (I apologize to all the English teachers). They have different requirements and different expectation for their essays. In History class you are expected to write a history essay, in English class you are expected to write an English essay—they are two different tasks, skills, and assignments. Learn what each is asking of you and be like Nike –“just do it.”

Do not use contractions. This detracts from the sophistication of the analysis.

Do not use rhetorical questions. Your job here is to answer questions, not pose them.

Avoid general statements at the beginning of sentences; for example: this, they, them, he, they. **Identify** what or who you are discussing, as it makes your essay more clear and sophisticated. Consider as well if you can combine two sentences to make it a more analytical statement.

In reference to the United States: **do not** say, “our country” or “we” (in talking about Americans). Say instead, “The United States,” “America,” or “Americans” where appropriate. **Do not use pronouns.**

Make sure you address **the entire scope** of the question. Many students just address half of the question.

- MUY IMPORTANTE: If the question has a chronological aspect to it (most do), address the essay somewhat chronologically (for example, an essay about 1763-1781 should follow approximately in that order). The essay becomes *very confusing* if the writer jumps around from event to event and they are not in a logical order.

Use documents to support **your ideas**, not as an idea in itself. The documents should be used as **evidence** to support your reasoning/thesis.

Writing the Short Answer Questions (SAQs)

Remember that the SAQs are not essays and therefore do not require a thesis statement. All questions, however, will require you to use historical thinking skills, with or without a “stimulus” or source to use in your explanation. You must analyze (explain) examples of historical evidence relevant to the source of the question to earn full points.

Format type

	SAQ
How many essays?	4 – no choice
Point value	0-3 points each
Are there documents?	There may be brief statements, images, or other “stimulus” information – or not.
Prompt type	Will ask you to complete task (see list) using a historical thinking skill as its main focus.
Elements you must include (also see rubric)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Respond directly to the prompt, following the task question• Focus analysis using specific support from a provided document and/or outside historical knowledge• You may want to use document analysis techniques• Use historical thinking skills to form a complete response of no longer than 9 sentences total

SAQs will be presented chronologically – that is, they will flow in a pattern from early American history to the present. The DBQ and LEQs do not do this. Each question will focus on a specific historical skill – be sure you know how to recognize what skill the graders are looking for so that you can answer appropriately.

Tips and tricks to a 3:

- You **MUST** use complete sentences and employ historical evidence relevant to the source/question – no bullet points are accepted and will be ignored in grading
- LABEL YOUR RESPONSES a) b) and c)
- **ONLY** use the space provided to you – answers written outside of the box will not be scored
- You should read the directions and prompt closely to make sure you get all of the points.
- **DO NOT** quote from the source(s).
- Think about counter-arguments, as sometimes these are part of question part c).
- Be specific and to the point – generalizations and vague descriptions will not earn you points!

Examples and Scoring the SAQ

Non-document based SAQ:

Using your knowledge of United States history, answer parts (a), (b), and (c).

- Explain ONE important cause of the American Revolution.
- Explain a SECOND important cause of the American Revolution.
- Explain ONE important effect of the American Revolution.

Image-based SAQ

Use the images at right to answer parts (a), (b), and (c).

- Briefly explain the differences in point of view expressed about the Spanish between the two images.
- Explain ONE piece of specific historical evidence, from 1500 to 1700, which could be used to support the point of view in image #1.
- Explain ONE piece of specific historical evidence, from 1500 to 1700, which could be used to support the point of view in image #2.



#1: Engraving from a book published in the early 17th century.



#2: Engraving from a book published in the late 16th early 17th century.

At this time, the College Board does not have a specific rubric for SAQs; simply answering the question with specific evidence is enough to get you one point for each part (for a total of 3 points). Remember, you MUST explain how or why in order to receive points for prompts that ask you to explain or analyze.

Writing the Document-Based Question (DBQ) and Long Essay Question (LEQ)

Remember that the DBQ and LEQ are **analysis** essays, not a textbook-like report. Do not just “tell” about the topic – examine it, relate the information to a thesis, and use your information to support your sub-theses.

An analysis is **not** accomplished by copying quotes from a document. You need to use the *main idea* that the document is trying to make. The intended recipient of the document is not necessarily important. If it is, then identify the significance – do not just use a name that might not mean anything.

Format types

	DBQ	LEQ
How many essays?	1 – no choice	1 – you choose between 2
Are there documents?	Yes, you must use most	No
Point value	0-7 points	0-6 points
Prompt type	Will ask you to complete task (see list) using a historical thinking skill as its main focus.	Will ask you to complete task (see list) using a historical thinking skill May ask you to support, modify, or refute a statement.
Elements you must include (also see rubric)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant thesis statement that addresses all parts of the question • Support of thesis with most, if not all, documents • Analysis of most, or all, documents in argument • Focus analysis using POV skills (see analyzing docs) • Support with outside historical knowledge/examples • Connect historical argument to larger events or processes • Synthesize these elements into a persuasive essay 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant thesis statement that addresses all parts of the question • Support of thesis with specific evidence/examples from your background knowledge • Apply historical thinking skills as directed by the question • Synthesize these elements into a persuasive essay that either connects it to a different historical context, another category of analysis, or addresses the other side of the argument (“extends”)

Appropriately extends or modifies the stated thesis or argument. 1 point	OR	Recognizes and effectively accounts for disparate, sometimes contradictory evidence from primary sources and/or secondary works in crafting a coherent argument 1 point	OR	Appropriately connects the topic of the question to <u>other</u> historical periods, geographical areas, contexts, or circumstances. 1 point
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LEQ rubric

Maximum Possible Points: 6

A. Thesis: 0-1 point

Skills assessed: Argumentation + targeted skill

States a thesis statement that directly addresses all parts of the question. The thesis must do more than restate the question. 1 point

B. Support of argument: 0-2 points

Skills assessed: Use of evidence, argumentation

Supports the stated thesis (or makes a relevant argument) using specific evidence 1 point	OR	Supports the stated thesis (or makes a relevant argument) using specific evidence, clearly and consistently stating how the evidence supports the thesis or argument, and establishing clear linkages between the evidence and the thesis or argument 2 points
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C. Application of targeted historical skills: 0-2 points

Skills assessed: Targeted skills

For questions assessing CONTINUITY AND CHANGE OVER TIME		
Describes historical continuity AND change over time 1 point	OR	Describes historical continuity AND change over time, and analyzes specific examples that illustrate historical continuity and change over time 2 points

For questions assessing COMPARISON		
Describes similarities AND differences among historical developments 1 point	OR	Describes similarities AND differences among historical developments, providing specific examples AND analyzes the reasons for their similarities and/or differences OR (depending on the prompt) evaluates relative significance of the historical developments 2 points

For questions assessing CAUSATION		
Describes causes AND/OR effects of a historical development 1 point	OR	Describes historical continuity AND change over time, and analyzes specific examples that illustrate causes AND/OR effects of a historical development 2 points

For questions assessing PERIODIZATION		
Describes the ways in which the historical development specified in the prompt was different from OR similar to developments that preceded and/or followed 1 point	OR	Describes the ways in 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 2 points

D. Synthesis: 0-1 point

Skills assessed: Synthesis

Response synthesizes (brings together) the argument, evidence, analysis of documents, and context into a coherent and persuasive essay by accomplishing one or more of the following as relevant to the question:				
Appropriately extends or modifies the stated thesis or argument. 1 point	OR	Explicitly employs and additional appropriate category of analysis (i.e., political, social, economic, cultural, geographical, race/ethnicity/gender) beyond that called for in the prompt 1 point	OR	The argument appropriately connects the topic of the question to <u>other</u> historical periods, geographical areas, contexts, or circumstances. 1 point

Writing an excellent thesis statement (it takes practice!)

The College Board requires two thesis-based essays in the new form of the AP US History Exam (starting 2014-2015). Each thesis-based response is related to a prompt that requires students to take a stand on an issue and then present enough factual information in the context of their essay that proves their thesis.

The reader spends **2 MINUTES** per paper – get to the point clearly, concisely, and with focus to earn the maximum points.

The thesis statement: what is it?

A thesis is simply an **argument** or a **stand** you take on a particular topic. It should not resemble a sentence from a textbook, but rather explain your point of view and why it matters.

The thesis formula: X. However, A, B, and C. Therefore, Y.

X=the strongest point against your argument (this could be part of your intro or context and not your thesis)

OR

X=the strongest point of your argument that you will then clarify with A, B, and C to prove Y.

A, B, C=the three strongest points of your argument that you will explain in your essay

Y=the position you will be taking throughout the essay (this could be the effect of X)

Sample prompt: Assess the validity of the following statement: “Teaching is the most important profession in the world and everyone should consider it as a possible career choice.”

PROS (specific points of evidence)	CONS (specific points of evidence)
Often emotionally satisfying	Usually physically demanding
Make a difference in the world	Low pay and long work hours
Work during the summer for more pay	Have to do additional work; coach, sponsor...without additional pay
There’s usually job positions available	Not much respect from society
Requires education to be effective	Requires certification and constant development

Sample thesis statement: Teaching is an emotionally satisfying profession. However, teachers rank consistently at the bottom of the pay scale, often work at home without just compensation, and receive a lack of respect in society. Therefore, teaching is not the most important profession and would be an unwise career choice.

The main focus of a thesis statement is to address the prompt with a strong and clearly relevant argumentative statement. A simple formula can help students write a complex thesis if they can recall these four interrelated steps:

1. Determine the **stem** of the prompt – what is the topic of the prompt?
2. Determine the **time frame** of the question
3. Determine the **operational functions** the student needs to perform in the essay (DBQ) OR determine the **stance** the student will take on in the essay (LEQ)
4. Determine what **historical thinking skill(s)** must be used to answer the question

Below is a sample DBQ prompt from the 2014 Trial APUSH Exam:

Analyze major changes and continuities in the social and economic experiences of African Americans who migrated from the rural South to urban areas in the North in the period 1910-1930.

1. What is the topic of the prompt?
Social and economic experiences of African Americans migrating from the South to the North
Relevant info: *Why they migrated; what caused these experiences*
2. What is the time frame?
1910-1930
Relevant info: *The "Great Migration", Harlem Renaissance, WWI industrial needs*
3. What is the operational function (VERB)?
Analyze
Relevant info: *HOW and WHY did changes and continuities occur?*
4. What is (are) the historical skill(s) needed?
Continuity and change over time
Relevant info: *Determine changes and similarities*

EXERCISE: Underline and label the four steps in the thesis below (there can be overlap)

Between 1910 and 1930, African Americans migration from the rural south to urban northern cities significantly increased due to greater job opportunities and emerging cultural changes. However, African Americans still faced racial discrimination and segregation in both regions.

Sample LEQ prompt from the 2014 Trial APUSH Exam:

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.

Potential thesis topic/support: American Revolution did not foster revolutionary change, but instead maintained continuity.

Potential thesis topic/modification: Emphasis on vague nature of the evidence – present proof that the Revolution had ambiguous outcomes for different groups.

Potential thesis topic/refutation: Revolution was revolutionary, based on significant changes in governmental structure, abolishing "aristocratic practices" such as primogeniture, and spread of democratic culture.

Addressing and Understanding the Prompt

Much of your writing will be prompted by an assignment, essay or exam question. Students often do worse than they should in examinations or when writing assignments, not because their writing skills are weak or because their knowledge of the subject matter is insufficient, but because they have not fully understood what they have been asked to do. To score high marks in an examination or an assignment, it is important to fully understand what a question or brief means and how it should be answered.

Key words tell you the approach you should take when answering an essay question. There are three types of key words:

Task words: Tell you what you have to do; the action you need to perform

Content words: Tell you what the topic area is and what you should write about

Limiting words: Limit and focus the essay, making it workable

Example essay question: *Computers have had a significant impact on education in the 20th century. Discuss the changes they have made.*

Task word: DISCUSS

Content word: education, computers

Limiting word: changes, significant impact, 20th century

Implied or complex questions

Some assignment questions are more complex than that above. They might have a number of parts or may not include a clear task word, which can make them appear confusing. Some tasks are implied rather than explicitly stated. In order to understand what you must do, you need to work out your task by looking at the entire question. Look for clues in the limiting and content words and in the relationships between words, phrases, and parts of the question.

Other questions may include guidelines as to the **scope** of the essay, specifying a time period, location, or framework for discussion. Finally, you may have a number of **related questions** which may have a number of task words or specific questions. Be sure to answer *each part* of these questions or you will not earn full credit.

“Discuss the changing ideals of American womanhood between the American Revolution (1770s) and the outbreak of the Civil War.”

“Analyze the causes of growing opposition to slavery in the United States from 1776 to 1852. In your response, consider both underlying forces and specific events that contributed to the growing opposition.”

“Analyze the ways in which the Vietnam War heightened social, political, and economic tensions in the United States. Focus your answer on the period 1964 to 1975.”

About using Documents for the DBQ:

The most unsophisticated way to reference a document in a DBQ essay is to do the following, “According to “Document A □ blah, blah, blah.” This is supposed to be a historical paper.

- **DO NOT laundry list the documents in your paper, “Document A says this, document B says this . . . etc.”**
 - Instead, show that you understand how the document relates to your thesis by taking the **main idea** of the document relative to this question.
 - **Never** start the sentence with any form of “Document A says...”, as the *idea* of the document should be the subject of the sentence, not the document itself.
- **DO NOT quote documents**, the readers know the documents, quoting may be appropriate for an English paper, but is not appropriate for a history paper.
 - Suppose you have an excerpt from the Clayton Antitrust Act, you could make the following assertion, “The Clayton Antitrust Act was implemented during the Wilson administration to help support the antitrust legislation of the earlier and somewhat inefficient Sherman Antitrust Act.” There you go, you just used the document (and gave context clues, too!)

You should refer to all of the documents in your essay, because the College Board expects you to use all or all but one of the documents. Do not merely paraphrase the documents or only use a few documents.

Attempt to figure out why each document is included. Sometimes this can help you trigger the memory of outside information and draw significant connections between ideas and people of the period. This is often the key to a great score and an even better essay.

Many documents can be used to support both sides of a question – carefully analyze to determine how it can support your thesis and clearly related it back to your thesis with interpretive commentary.

The Basics

DO	DO NOT
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Read and interpret all parts of the essay question, looking for keys such as change over time• Read and analyze each of the documents (see tips below) and group them• Determine significant keys within the document or its description: names, dates, bias• Refer frequently to the prompt and terms• Integrate documents into your response using analysis• Use most, if not all, documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use the documents in a “laundry list” fashion – this assures a low score• Simply explain or summarize documents – group them together before you work• Forget to analyze the documents when using them in your essay• Fail to answer the question in an effort to simply use all of the documents• Forget to analyze biases and views in the documents as part of your analysis and answer

Analyzing documents: your (reluctant) best friend

Consider the following prompt: “Analyze the ways in which the Vietnam War heightened social, political, and economic tensions in the United States. Focus your answer on the period 1964 –1975.”

The first thing to do in order to fully answer the question is to brainstorm outside and background information that you know about the topic. The categories are already given to you in this prompt, so label them and start writing down whatever you can about the topic. A quick t-chart may be helpful!

Some prompts may not give you the categories (SOCIAL, POLITICAL, ECONOMIC). If that is the case you can always rely on a mnemonic for document analysis (see below) to help you organize the information. After you have gotten as much information as possible, go to the documents (if it is a DBQ) and see what else you can come up with. After you have grouped the information, you will need to develop a good statement about what all of them have in common that can serve as your thesis.

Practice outlines and worksheets are available in the back of this packet and will be used throughout the course to help you prepare!

Level 3	Social	Political	Economic
Level 2	Growing unrest and disenchantment over why the war was being fought	Who should run the war and how it should be waged	How much should we spend to win the war
Level 1	Black Panthers Great Society War on Poverty Hippies Woodstock Bob Dylan Tet Offensive Walter Cronkite Kent State Pentagon Papers	Selective Service 26 th Amendment Silent Majority Peace with Honor Vietnamization Hawks v. Doves Eugene McCarthy War Powers Act Gulf of Tonkin Resolution	Recession Stagflation New Nationalism Revenue Sharing Gas Rationing Guns and Butter

Level Three Thesis (not enough): The Vietnam war was only one phase in a greater struggle with communism that ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union. However, there was an increase in social, political, and economic tensions in the United States from 1964 –1975. In the end the war damaged America’s confidence in themselves and their government. *(Comment –This really tells me nothing more than what has already been stated in the prompt. You have a thesis statement, however, it is much too general. This is the most common mistake students make.)*

Level Two Thesis: The Vietnam war was only one phase in a greater struggle with communism that ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union. However, during the period 1964 –1975, America was racked by growing unrest and disenchantment over why the war was being fought, who should run it and how it should be waged, and how much American economic investment should be expanded into winning the war. Therefore, in the end, the war damaged America’s confidence in themselves and their government.

Level One Thesis (too much): The Vietnam war was only one phase in a greater struggle with communism that ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union. However, during the period 1964 – 1975, Black panthers rioted, a great rift divided the country over the Great Society’s war on poverty and the economic ability to continue the war, college sit-ins plagued the college campuses, Hippies and the Silent Majority continued to clash over America’s role in International affairs, and Congress and the President fought over the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution and the War Powers Act with regard to just how much power each should have in waging the war. In the end the war damaged America’s confidence in themselves and their government. (*Comment –there is too much specific information in this thesis.*)

Document Analysis Mnemonics

If the detail part of your brain suddenly shuts down during writing or the test, do not panic! A quick and easy way to teach yourself to look for importance in unfamiliar documents or guide yourself towards a useable argument is to use a mnemonic (memory device). There are many different mnemonics in APUSH, or feel free to make your own. Below is a sample of the most used by APUSH students and teachers nationwide. With this said, a cautionary statement: **do not look for meaning where there is none, and do not make up facts.**

Device 1: APPARTY

<i>Author</i>	Who created the source? What do you know about the author? What is the author’s point of view?
<i>Place and time</i>	When and where was the source produced? How might this affect the meaning of the source?
<i>Prior knowledge</i>	Beyond information about the author and the context of its creation, what do you know that would help you further understand the primary source? For example, do you recognize any symbols and recall what they represent?
<i>Audience</i>	For whom was the source created and how might this affect the reliability of the source?
<i>Reason</i>	Why was this source produced and how might this affect the reliability of the source?
<i>The main idea</i>	What point is the source trying to convey? Why is this source important? What is its significance ?
<i>Yeah, so what?</i>	Ask yourself, “So what?” in relation to the question being asked.

Device 2: PERSIA

Political

What political events were happening at the time that could affect the source or its author?

Economic

What economic conditions were present that could have impacted the source and/or are related to the prompt you must address?

Religious

What spiritual beliefs and values did society have at the time? Why were these significant?

Social

Social changes are broad—could be cultural shifts, relationships between people/groups, technological changes, etc.

Intellectual

What intellectual movements might have had an effect on the outlook of the people of the time?

Artistic/Other

Why was this significant?

How did artistic movements (art, architecture, literature, music...) reflect the changes or similarities of the time? Why are these significant?

Device 3: SPRITE

Social

What traditions and developments are happening in everyday life?

Political

What changes in power, authority and governing territories were occurring? Why?

Religious

What spiritual beliefs and values did society have at the time? Why were these significant?

Intellectual

What intellectual movements might have had an effect on the outlook of the people of the time?

Technological

Why was this significant?

What advancements were happening to create progression of society? (Inventions, science, etc.)

What effects might they have had?

Economic

How were money, goods, and services produced and consumed? How did this have an effect on the people of the time?

Device 4: HAPPY

Historical context

When and where was the source produced? How might this affect the meaning of the source?

Audience

For whom was the source created and how might this affect the reliability of the source?

Point of view (author)

Beyond information about the author and the context of its creation, what biases does the author have and how do you know?

Purpose

Why was this source produced and how might this affect the reliability of the source? What point is the source trying to convey?

Yeah, so what?

Why is this source important? What is its **significance**? Ask yourself, "So what?" in relation to the question being asked.

Approaching Common DBQ Essay Prompts

Important note: You do NOT have to have 5 paragraphs; however, you MUST answer all parts of the question to earn full points

“Change over time” (period-based questions)

Note: establish the two “points” of the question (beginning and end)

- Example: “Analyze the origins and outcomes of the intense social and political conflicts of the 1850s.”

Paragraph 1: Intro

- Formulate a short background statement about the topic(s) you select from the prompt
- Define/describe the “problem” addressed in the prompt (historical context)
- Create a thesis that **directly** addresses the prompt – TAKE A STAND
- For a prompt that asks you about change over time, make sure you address what was happening at the start of the period and at the end, along with descriptions of what caused the change
- Break down the thesis into sub-theses that you will use to prove your thesis

Paragraph 2/3/4: Supporting paragraphs using document and outside evidence

- Create a strong sub-thesis that addresses a part of the prompt/thesis, selecting ONE of the topics from the prompt – beyond the basic statement by adding a “how/why” clause
- Use a FACT with interpretive commentary (explain WHY or HOW this is important in relation to the prompt/thesis)
- Repeat previous step twice more
- Write a clincher sentence at the end of the support paragraph. This should relate back to the thesis and acts as a transition to the next paragraph

Conclusion:

- **Synthesize** the topic sentences and directly relate them back to the question. For a change over time essay, you should work to tie together the two topics – perhaps demonstrate HOW similar events may have caused the changes over time

“To what extent”

Example: “American farmers of late-19th century were justified in their complaints.” To what extent is this statement accurate?

Paragraph 1: Intro

- Formulate a short background statement about the topic(s) you select from the prompt
- Define/describe the “problem” addressed in the prompt (historical context)
- Create a thesis that **directly** addresses the prompt – TAKE A STAND
- For a prompt that asks you to answer to what extent something is true/false or to assess the validity of a statement, PICK one argument, but leave room for exception
- Break down the thesis into sub-theses that you will use to prove your thesis

Paragraph 2/3: Supporting paragraphs using document and outside evidence

- Create a strong sub-thesis that addresses a part of the prompt/thesis – beyond the basic statement by adding a “how/why” clause
- Use a FACT with interpretive commentary (explain WHY or HOW this is important in relation to the prompt/thesis)
- Repeat previous step twice more
- Write a clincher sentence at the end of the support paragraph. This should relate back to the thesis and acts as a transition to the next paragraph

Paragraph 4 (time permitting): the EXCEPT paragraph

- This paragraph should have some information that might refute your thesis – BUT you will briefly explain how your argument is more valid

Conclusion:

- Synthesize the topic sentences and directly relate them back to the question. *Make sure that you maintain the theme of proving your thesis as an extreme (pro/con) with room for exceptions.*

“Compare/Contrast”

Example: “Compare and contrast the ideals of the Populist movement of the late 19th century with those of the Progressive movement of the early 20th century. Confine your analysis to the years 1875-1925.

Paragraph 1: Intro

- **If you are given two dates, it’s for a reason! Figure out what they’re trying to get you to use that start or happen on/during those particular years, then what happens in-between.**
- Formulate a short background statement (two-three sentences) about the topic from the prompt
- Define/describe the “problem” or issues addressed in the prompt (historical context)
- Create a thesis that **directly** addresses the prompt – TAKE A STAND
- For a prompt that asks you to compare/contrast, make sure you **clearly** demonstrate that there are similarities *and* differences between the two topics.
- Break down the thesis into sub-theses that you will use to prove your thesis

Paragraph 2/3: Supporting paragraphs using document and outside evidence

- Create a strong sub-thesis that addresses a part of the prompt/thesis – the topic should be one of the appropriate *history stand-by topics (social, political, economic, cultural...)*
- Support with FACTS from the two topics that illustrate a comparison and/or a contrast and EXPLAIN how/why these points are significant
- Repeat previous step twice more
- Write a clincher sentence at the end of the support paragraph. This should relate back to the thesis and acts as a transition to the next paragraph

Conclusion:

- Tie the sub-theses from the support paragraphs together and demonstrate how your thesis was/is correct.