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Essay Writing Tips and How-To

AIM : How to write an essay? How to write a thesis statement? How to answer a DBQ

Do Now: Take out your religions essay

WEDNESDAY IN CLASS ESSAY TOPIC

- **Question/Task: Did Justinian revive the Roman Empire or create a new Byzantine Empire?**
- **Use at least 3 documents in your response**
- **Step One: Read the Essay Question, then brainstorm how you would approach the essay with no further information.**

STEP TWO

- **Read/Analyze each document carefully, taking notes as you read and answering the questions below each document to assist your analysis.**

STEP 3

- **Finalize your answer to the question this will be your claim.**
- Decide which documents will be useful to you in your essay.
- Formulate a thesis
- Begin writing!

Question # 1: What is a thesis statement?

A thesis statement declares the main point or controlling idea of your entire essay. It tells the reader how you will interpret the significance of the subject matter.

Question # 2: Why do I need a thesis statement?

Would you set off on a trip without consulting a map or looking up the route? Think of the thesis as your “road map” for the essay. It tells the reader where you will be going.

Question # 3: What does a good thesis statement do?

A good thesis statement states the writer's clearly defined opinion on the subject he or she is writing about. It is specific and focused.

Christianity and Islam beliefs are based on the concept of monotheism, laws given by god, and the belief in heaven.

Question # 4: What does a bad thesis statement do?

It says nothing or is so vague as to be meaningless.

Islam and Christianity are two religions with a lot of beliefs.

WHY is this a bad thesis statement?

Question # 5: What is a three-point thesis?

It's a useful tool for stating the three key points of an essay.

Do you **HAVE** to use it? No. But teachers and the people who grade Regents and AP exams like to see it. It also gives **YOU** your road map. Each point can be the topic sentence of a paragraph.

Question # 6: Can you show me an example of a good three-point thesis? Pick 1 religion!

Confucianism's beliefs and practices are crucial to the development of Chinese society as evidenced in the importance placed on social structure, the emphasis on education, and the sayings of Confucius.

CANADA IS THE BEST COUNTRY IN THE WORLD BECAUSE IT OFFERS MANY GREAT RESOURCES SUCH AS: FREE HEALTH CARE, HIGH QUALITY EDUCATION, AND WELL-ORGANIZED CITIES.

First, the example starts with the main claim: “Canada is the best country in the world”. Then, it provides one big reason as proof: “because it offers many great resources”. Afterwards, it specifies the three main pieces of evidence that are examples of the one big reason: “such as: free health care, high quality education, and well-organized cities.” These three reasons become the topics of the three body paragraphs providing the reader a clear organization of your ideas

Question # 7: Why can't I say "I believe" or "In this essay I will..."?

This IMMEDIATELY gets attention – negative attention – from the teacher or a reader of the exam paper. Your job is to be coldly analytical. Save your opinions for personal essay and reflections in an English class. In a history essay, you CAN'T insert your own opinions.

Question # 8: What is the “Since the dawn of humankind” introduction, and why is it a bad thing?

Don't pretend to be a historian or a TV host. Often, an overly broad or sweeping thesis statement indicates that the writer doesn't know much about the subject or doesn't have much to say. You are given a topic – stick to it. Don't take on the whole world. And teachers know baloney when they see it. Don't try to impress.

OUTLINE

- I. Intro

- 4-6 sentences with thesis statement at then end.
- Thesis is one sentence which directly answers the question and informs the reader what your essay will be about.
 - Do NOT say “This essay will be about...” or anything similar to that
- Your intro should give historical context, background and basic information which will be explained in greater detail in the body paragraphs.
 - Do NOT use quotes or documents in the Intro – save the good stuff for the body!
 - Do NOT begin with a clever question.

BODY PARAGRAPHS

- 2-3 Body Paragraphs

- 8-12 explaining the basic beliefs of three religions and how these beliefs impact the lives of the followers.
- Incorporate a minimum of 3 Documents to prove your point.
 - How to use and cite documents correctly:
 - 1. Begin by introducing the Source (author, text, book, speech, year, etc...)
 - 2. The use the quote or paraphrase. At the end of the sentence in parentheses cite the source.
 - 3. Comment about the document you just quoted. This is called analysis

After you have composed your thesis (and teachers like to see a three-point thesis when possible, you must **CONSTRUCT** your **SUPPORTING PARAGRAPHS**.

A FEW BASICS:

Write in the order in which you list the points of your thesis.

Confucianism's beliefs and practices are based on the importance of social structure, education, and the sayings of Confucius

What would be the topic of your first supporting paragraph?

What Is a Topic Sentence?

The topic sentence contains the central idea around which a paragraph is developed. A good one has the following four characteristics:

1. It hooks the reader.
2. It uses thought-provoking words.
3. It is usually the first sentence (but not always).
4. It provides a transition from the previous paragraph.

Not all topic sentences will contain every single characteristic, but you should keep this in mind.

TOPIC SENTENCE

Chinese society places a major emphasis on social structure and Confucian philosophy provides the rules for all individuals to follow.

After this sentence I can discuss filial piety, five relationships, importance of ancestors.

What are Supporting Details?

After you have constructed the topic sentence of the paragraph, the paragraph must have **SUPPORTING DETAILS**.

Supporting details are just that – they provide **EVIDENCE (FACTS – NOT OPINIONS)** to support the **TOPIC**.

If the topic sentence is the “foundation,” of the paragraph, the supporting details are its “building blocks.”

The five relationships is a Confucius concept where every relationship is based on one person being superior and the other person inferior.

USE DOCUMENTS IN YOUR SUPPORTING DETAILS

- Example
- This document comes from the Analects
- "Meng I Tzu asked about the treatment of parents. The Master said, 'Never disobey!' When Fan Ch'ih was driving his carriage for him, the Master said, 'Meng asked me about the treatment of parents and I said, Never disobey!' Fan Ch'ih said, 'In what sense did you mean it?' The Master said, 'While they are alive, serve them according to the ritual. When they die, bury them according to ritual and sacrifice to them according to ritual.'"
- Book II, Ch. 5, p. 88-89

NOW I WILL INSERT IN MY ESSAY

- Paragraph 1: Social Structure

Chinese society places a major emphasis on social structure and Confucian philosophy provides the rules for all individuals to follow. Confucius lived during a time of war, so he believed that his ideas would restore and maintain social order. The five relationships is a Confucius concept where every relationship is based on one person being superior and the other person inferior. The Five Relationships were emperor and subject, father and son, husband and wife, elder brother and younger brother, and friend and friend. The inferior had to obey the superior in all relationships for social order to exist. Confucius states in the analects, **"While they are alive, serve them according to the ritual. When they die, bury them according to ritual and sacrifice to them according to ritual."** This belief of obeying your parents in Chinese culture is known as Filial Piety. In return for obedience the superior in the relationship must provide protection and a proper example. This respect for elders was not just given to the living but was also given to the dead. In Chinese culture worshipping ancestors had always been important because there was a fear that family ancestor spirits lived amongst the people, so ceremonies were performed to please these spirits. Confucius continued this ancient traditions believing that if people did what they were supposed to do, social order would be restored.

FIRST ANSWER THE QUESTIONS

- The answers should all be from the text! There is no reason when answering the DBQ to use outside information.
- Document 1
- Justinian created countless cities which did not exist before. And finding that the belief in God was... straying into errors... he brought it about that it stood on the firm foundation of a single faith. Moreover, finding laws obscure because they had become far more numerous than they should be, and in obvious confusion because they disagreed with each other. He preserved them in the Legal Code of Emperor Justinian... by controlling their discrepancies with the greatest firmness.

According to Procopius, what are three contributions of Justinian?

USING DOCUMENTS EXAMPLE

- Example One:
 - “The emperor is equal to all men in the nature of his body, but his authority of his rank he is similar to God, who rules all.”
- Example Two:



CONCLUSION

- Conclusion
 - 4-6 sentences summarizing main points and restating thesis at the end. No new information should be presented here.

DO NOTS

- Do NOT use abbreviations
- Do NOT use contractions (can't, won't, etc...)
- Do NOT use slang language
- Do NOT use anything other than 3rd person
- Do NOT use a flowery opening sentence or question.
- Do NOT introduce a document passage by saying “In Document 2...”
 - Instead use the author, title or person. See example below