

Essay Writing For the AP Exam

- Have a clearly stated thesis that addresses the question. Thesis can be more than one sentence.
- Address all parts of the question in your introduction
- Have a topic sentence that relates back to the question in each body paragraph
- Support your point with examples and historical facts.
- If you blank out and don't think you can answer the question – jot down everything you can remember that happened during the time period – something will probably come out that will help you answer the question
- Answer the question that allows you to include the most relevant facts, details etc. Beware of the “sucker question.” These seem very easy to respond to, but are often very difficult to support with many historical details.
- I'm sorry to say – on these types of tests quantity matters (but, of course, quality is more important).

Using Documents to Support Your Position in a DBQ

- **INCLUDE OUTSIDE INFORMATION**
- Make your point first, then offer the document as supporting evidence
- Do not lead a paragraph with a document
- Double cite documents
- If you quote, make it very short and use only the section that is relevant to your point
- **INCLUDE OUTSIDE INFORMATION**

Example (Essay question: What caused the American Revolution?)

Body Paragraph

The British policy of taxing the American colonists was one important cause of the American Revolution. After the French and Indian War, Britain was left with a very large debt and the expense of having to defend their recently won territories. The British believed that the colonists should help pay these expenses. In 1765 Parliament passed the Stamp Act, which put a tax on all printed materials. The colonists protested this measure by forming the Stamp Act Congress. In the Resolutions of the Stamp Act Congress, the colonists argued that Parliament could not tax them because they were not represented in Parliament (Document A). The Stamp Act Congress organized a boycott of British goods. Not all of the colonial protests were peaceful however. The Sons of Liberty often used intimidation and violence. A 1765 cartoon from a colonial publication shows a tax collector being tarred and feathered by members of this organization (Doc. B). Although Parliament repealed the Stamp Act, it asserted in the Declaratory Act that it had the authority to “bind the colonies in all cases whatsoever” (Doc. C). This claim by Parliament infuriated colonists because it showed that Parliament believed it had complete authority over the colonies. Later, Parliament passed the Townshend Duties, which imposed duties on imports of various commodities such as tea, paper and glass. Although most of these duties were later repealed (with the exception of the tax on tea), the Townshend Acts helped unify the colonists in their opposition to taxation measures and other British policies.

WRITING TIMES –

DBQ

- 15 minutes to plan your essay. Read documents. Jot down list of relevant outside info in the margins. Write a thesis that is responsive to all parts of the question. Make a rough outline.
- 45 Minutes to write your essay.

FRQ

- TWO essays, 35 minutes for each essay (this is about 10 minutes longer than the amount of time you have on our in-class essays). You can spend more time on one than the other. If you have a lot more to say on one than the other, make sure you devote enough time (perhaps more time to that essay) It's probably better to do that essay first. Its better to get a 3 and a 7 on the essays than a 3 and a 4.

For writing thematic essays, the approach is basically the same. Support your points with evidence and relevant details.

Essay Writing Tips for Social Studies.

- 1. Understand the question. Is there more than one question? Are you being asked to identify, explain, discuss, etc.**
- 2. Jot down key facts and ideas that are related to the question.**
- 3. Plan and outline your essay. Use traditional outline or graphic organizer.**
- 4. Introduction**
 - a. Inverted Pyramid.** Start broad but not too broad. Give some historical background to the topic you will be discussing. Narrow discussion as you get to your thesis.
 - b. Thesis.** This is the point or argument that you are trying to make in your essay.
 - i. Be sure that it addresses all parts of the question.
 - ii. Simple statements are better than convoluted ones. It's ok to have a thesis that is more than one sentence.
 - iii. A good thesis will help you structure the body paragraphs of your essay.
- 5. Body Paragraphs.** Have a topic sentence that relates back to your thesis. Support your topic sentence with relevant facts and details. (see sample body paragraph below.) Explain and discuss rather than simply identifying. Avoid giving a "laundry list" of details. Explain them! It's better to explain two details well than to simply identify six.