

Essay Writing For the Regents

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 on next page.) Give historical background. For example, if you are discussing Brown v. Bd. Of Ed., discuss Jim Crow, voting restrictions, plessy, etc. 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.
6. **Conclusion**
 - a. **Pyramid**
 - i. Restatement of thesis
 - ii. Significance of what you've discussed in your essay or what the future holds

DBQ's

- **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?)

Thesis Statement – The American Revolution was caused by Parliament's decision to tax the American colonists, enforce its mercantilist regulations, and limit the colonists' settlement of the west following the French and Indian War.

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.