

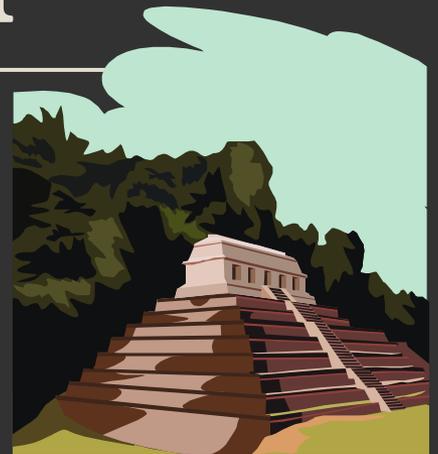
# DBQ ESSAY WORKSHOP

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## Writing a History Essay

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AP US History



# Writing a History Essay

1. Have a thesis statement
2. Get to the point
3. Use factual evidence
4. Take contrary evidence into account
5. End the essay simply & cleanly
6. Do **NOT** use **personal pronouns**
7. Do **NOT** misspell or use poor grammar
8. Do **NOT** **ask rhetorical questions**

# 1. Reading and Analyzing an Essay Question

There are 3 Levels of Questioning:

## Level 1: Recall

The answer is in the text; explicit, fact.

(fully and clearly expressed; leaving nothing implied)

*How did Cinderella get to the ball?*

*What were her slippers made out of?*

## Level II : Analysis or Inference

*(The act or process of deriving logical conclusions from premises known or assumed to be true)*

Implicit or what is implied; analysis, ask how and why, require analysis of the text, reading between the lines, hidden meaning, (understood though not directly expressed).

*Why does Cinderella stepmother care whether she went to the ball?*

*Why did everything turn back the way it was except the slipper?*

*Why don't the stepsisters like Cinderella?*

## Level III : Synthesis

Go beyond the text and inquire into the value, importance and application of the information presented.

*Does a women's salvation always lie with a man?*  
*What does it mean to live happily ever after?*  
*Does good always overcome evil?*

# Question Modes in a History Essay...

- Analyze
- Assess/evaluate
- Compare/Contrast
- Criticize
- Describe
- Discuss
- Explain
- Identify
- Define
- Enumerate
- Illustrate
- Interpret
- Justify
- Prove
- Rank
- Trace

## 2. Create your Thesis Statement

**An effective thesis will have all these components**

- Fully addresses the question (prompt) asked.
- Takes a position with regard to the question asked.
- Provides organizational categories that will be used in the essay.

# The Thesis Statement

MAGIC FORMULA:

X. However, A, B, and C. Therefore, Y.

X= the strongest point **against** your argument

A,B, & C= the 3 strongest points **for** your argument

Y= the position you will be taking (your stand on the 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

- Emotionally satisfying
- Make a difference in the world
- Summers off
- Work during the summer for more pay
- Not much competition in job market
- Only need a bachelors degree

# Cons

- Physically demanding
- Low pay
- Long work hours
- Not much respect in our society
- Requires certification
- Have to do additional work—coach, etc.
- Work usually comes home with you

# Sample Thesis

- X. However, A, B, and C. Therefore, Y.

*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 our society. Therefore, teaching is clearly not considered the most important profession and would be an unwise career choice.*

X. However, A, B, and C. Therefore, Y.

- 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 our society. Therefore, teaching is clearly not considered the most important profession and would be an unwise career choice.

### 3. Collecting/Grouping/Categorizing the Documents & Outside Information

*Categorizing information involves brainstorming, creating simple or sophisticated groupings of information. Often, the question posed will determine the types of categories used:*

- **Cultural:** the technology, arts and institutions of a given group of people at a given time.
- **Economic:** the ways that people meet their basic needs; the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services; includes such issues as domestic and international trade, monetary policies and taxes.

**Geographic:** the environment in which people live and interact.

**Ideological:** relating to the ideas, the manner or the content of the thinking characteristics of an individual, group or culture.

**Intellectual:** the people's philosophy, values, beliefs and attitudes.

**Legal:** pertaining to the law; conforming to or permitted by established laws or rules.

**Political:** gaining, seeking and organizing power; events related to the functions of government: making laws, enforcing laws and interpreting laws.

**Religious:** religion or beliefs, whether organized or traditional and the religious institutions of the culture.  
*(It is sometimes viewed as a subcategory of culture, but can be separated to add emphasis)*

**Social:** people in groups, their living together and relations with one another; includes such issues as gender, economic status and ethnicity.

**Constitutional:** in accordance with or authorized by the Constitution of the United States or the constitution of individual states or countries.

*HOW ADVANCED WERE THE MAYAN, AZTEC, AND INCAN CIVILIZATIONS? WHAT WERE THEIR MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS?*

Categories	Cultural ?	Political ?	Economic ?
Level 3			
Level 2			
Level 1			

Level 3 thesis= not enough info.

Level 1 thesis= too much info.

Level 2 thesis= just right

# Prewriting Organization

*WERE THE MAYAN, AZTEC, AND INCAN CIVILIZATIONS ADVANCED? WHAT WERE THEIR MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS?*

- The prewriting organization chart helps you organize content knowledge, argument and evidence to better understand the task (topic) you are to work on and write a good thesis statement.

It asks the following five components:

**Subject:** What, specifically, is the question about?

**Mode:** What is this question asking me to do?

**Time frame:** What is the time period that is being addressed in the question? Does it include change over time?

**Parts/categories:** What categories you need to answer the prompt or question.

**Vocabulary:** Are there any words of which you don't know the meaning?

# Prewriting Organization

Prompt: *WERE THE MAYAN, AZTEC, AND INCAN CIVILIZATIONS ADVANCED? WHAT WERE THEIR MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS?*

Subject:

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Mode:

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Time frame:

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Parts/ categories:

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Vocabulary:

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- What do you know that will help you answer this question?  
(Documents, outside info.)

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- Take a position

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Why did you take this position?

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Now put your information or facts into categories:

1.	2.	3.

Which facts best support your position? Rank the order of your facts above.

# 4. Write your Introduction Paragraph

- Write an introduction sentence on the topic, set the time period or date
- Write your thesis statement. (X. However, A, B, and C. Therefore, Y.)

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**Does your thesis statement:**

Yes

No

Fully address the question?

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\_\_\_\_\_

Take a position about the question?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Explain why you took that position?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Provide organizational categories?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# Great Power Words (If used correctly)

- Strong Statement
  - ~Therefore
  - ~Thus
- Grey Area
  - ~Although
  - ~While
- Linking
  - ~However
  - ~In addition

The “Magic Formula” uses two!

**X.** However, **A**, **B**, and **C.** Therefore, **Y.**

# 5. Write your Body Paragraphs

- Each supporting paragraph should contain the following:
  - a. Document analysis to category (1~2 sentences per doc.)
    - Introduce doc. #1, analyze
    - Introduce doc. #2, analyze
  - b. So what? (historical significance)

Min. 4 pieces of outside information somewhere within the paragraph (doesn't have to be at end).
  - c. A **conclusion sentence** that summarizes the information and create a **transition** to the next paragraph.

## Paragraphs:

Each paragraph should contain one major point that was discussed in your thesis, which advances your argument.

## Style:

Write in clear, concise English. Use the least number of words possible to make your point. **Always write your history paper in third person past tense.** Short in sentences, this helps you to make your points clearly and forcefully.

## Quotations:

Keep all quotes short: The reader is looking for what **YOU** have to say not someone else's words.

# Three Levels of Point Of View

When mentioning or citing an author of a document in your essay make sure you include the following:

## **Attribution**

Cite the document and author(s) in your essay.

## **Point of View**

"WHO IS the author? What does he or she represent, think or feel?"

## **Bias**

Bias can be positive or negative--who the person is can make the person more disposed or less disposed to a particular position or outlook on the issue of this essay.

Bias can also mean "expertise," i.e., the author(s) of the document have special knowledge or experience that makes them more knowledgeable, and hence makes the source more reliable.

## Example:

*The Incas developed a very sophisticated and advanced irrigation system, that allowed them to feed the people of the kingdoms conquered, as implied by a descendent of the Incas' emperor, Garcilazo de la Vega in his description of farming, as seen in document 4.*



## 6. Write a Conclusion

A conclusion should reinforce the significance of the evidence presented in the essay as a response to the question asked.

It should **not** contain new information.

It should reinforce the thesis and synthesize the main points from the supporting paragraphs.

# REVIEWING THE SEVEN-STEP ESSAY PROCESS

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Civilizations of the Americas

# 1. Read and analyze the question

- What is the question asking?
- What is the question asking you to do?  
(Know key words of the prompt)

# 2. Collect and Sort information

- Brainstorming, categorizing, generalizing  
(Creating categories)

### 3. Create your thesis statement

An effective thesis will have all these components:

- Fully addresses the question (prompt) asked
- Takes a position with regard to the question asked
- Provides organizational categories that will be used in the essay

## 4. Introductory Paragraph

- Lead in sentence (explains event(s) that shows an understanding of chronology)
- Thesis
- Topic sentences from thesis categories
- One transitional sentence that ties opening paragraph together

## 5. Body Paragraphs

- One paragraph for each category in the thesis
- Begin with topic sentence
  - Explains main idea of paragraph
  - Supports thesis
- Fact and Details (3 things)
  - Interpreting/analysis/commentary
- End with a conclusion sentence that creates a transition to next paragraph

## 6. Conclusion

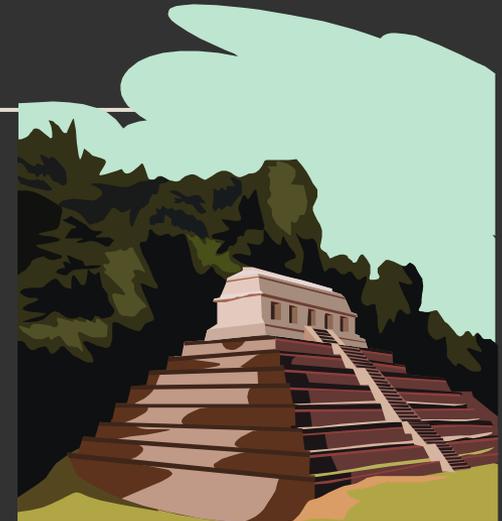
- Reinforce thesis
- Addresses the question “So What?” (assigns importance)
- Exit sentence~ explains what the topics leads into next (puts essay in historical perspective)

## 7. Proofread essay and fix it!

*WERE THE MAYAN, AZTEC, AND  
INCAN CIVILIZATIONS  
ADVANCED? WHAT WERE THEIR  
MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS?*

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Examples of Introductions and  
Conclusions



Following each introduction and thesis below is the conclusion in the essay. Find the thesis statement.  
Determine if the conclusion reinforces the thesis.

## I. Introduction

The first civilizations of the Americas have left us with many important architectural, farming and building techniques. These people were the first to create irrigation systems, calendars and many other things that we still use today. The three main civilizations of the Americas are the Mayas, Incas, and Aztecs. There are more civilizations but these three are the most important. Most of their lives are a mystery and we are still discovering their way of life; but one thing is for sure, they were very sophisticated for their time and we are still learning from them.

# I. Conclusion

These ancient civilizations were very important in our lives because they taught us some important things that are still used today. The Incas taught us mostly about building and farming techniques. The Mayas, or the “Greeks of the Americas”, left us with their calendar which is very similar to the one we use today. Then there are the Aztecs, these people taught us that the civilization that is strong, is most likely to prevail in life. All of these ancient civilizations are the ones that molded us into the people that we are today and because of their ingenious ideas we can live the way we do today.

**Does this conclusion reinforces the thesis? What is wrong with both introduction and conclusión?**

## II. Introduction

The Mayans, the Aztecs and the Incas were the three main civilizations in Central and South America that had established great advancement in various areas. From 300 A.D to the 1500 these native indians had astonishing developments, that afterwards became accomplishments. They strived in the grounds of architecture, agriculture, science, math and language.

**Can you identify the thesis? Is it a strong introduction?**

## II. Conclusion

Every civilization, whether it was the Mayans, the Aztecs or the Incas dominated and acquired a certain wisdom in a different field. Each and every one of these accomplished tasks symbolized the advancement within them. No matter what they were mostly acclaimed for, architecture, agriculture, science, math, or language they were all important, and all of them intercept in a way. The type of land defines the architecture and agriculture because for them to thrive they had to know where to construct and how to construct, and create a well system for the benefit of the crops as well as the structure. In this case enter the fields of science and math. To construct one has to know about engineering like the Incas. As said before every science incorporates math, therefore, all natives in one way or another, used a mathematical method. Lastly the language, although communicated differently by glyphs like the Mayans, pictographs by the Aztecs, and tying strings like the Incas they sent a message, and realizing all of these civilizations gave their intellectual thoughts and made a difference that changed the lives of so many people it became an advancement, it became a progress, a new vision not only to the natives, but for the Europeans, as well as the people today. For the resources they had in the land the Mayans, the Aztecs, and the Incas were very advanced indeed.

**Does this conclusion reinforces the thesis? Does it include new information? Can it be simplified?**

# III. Introduction

Some of the most advanced civilizations in the Americas, before contact with the Europeans, were the Mayans, the Aztecs, and the Incas. First, how do we know when a civilization is advanced or not? A society can be considered advanced when their discoveries are still relevant after a long time. These three civilizations were able to shape great empires and possess vast knowledge on many subjects; some so advanced that we still use their technology today. They gained new lands and technologies using different methods and did so because of different reasons. Although these civilizations were different to each other in many ways, they were all conquering and expanding prospering empires in America before the Spanish did in 1519 when Hernán Cortés arrived in Mexico.

**Is it a well constructed history paper introduction? Can you identify the thesis? Can you identify the categories?**

# III. Conclusion

As I stated at the beginning of this paper: a society can be deemed advanced if their technology is still relevant after a long time. The Mayans devised a calendar that is so precise that it resembles the one used today and they discovered how to make rubber products 2,000 years before Goodyear patented rubber in 1843. The Aztecs were one of the first civilizations in the world to have mandatory education. Incan people performed brain surgery that is still done by doctors today and they conducted a census, an essential part of keeping track of an empire. In conclusion, all three civilizations were advanced because they all made discoveries that have shaped mankind over time and are still in use today.

**Does this conclusion reinforce the thesis?**