

Formulating a strong thesis statement for AP History

AP Euro/APUSH/AP World

The thesis statement of an AP History essay is the most critical element of the essay. It will be establishing the basis of the entire paper, and if done properly will outline a comprehensive well-thought out essay.

For this reason, a lot of planning needs to be done for the thesis statement as your examples and phrasing could be the key to a successful essay and a great score on the AP exam.

The following steps should be completed to formulate a strong thesis statement for any DBQ or LEQ. The best thing you can do is to PRACTICE each element as much as possible – so it becomes second nature to you, and will not take long at all.

- 1) Read over the prompt, circle/underline task words, key phrases etc. You will not get credit for the thesis if you are not fully responsive to all aspects of the prompt.
- 2) Re-phrase the prompt for clarity – put it in to your own words!
- 3) Create a graphic organizer about the prompt. This is the part most people skip due to time restrictions, but is a really crucial element. If you do this on all essay prompts (in any class), you will find that by the time you get to the AP exam, it will take no time at all.
- 4) Complete the graphic organizer, brainstorming all of your ideas. Not only will this eventually help you with contextualization/synthesis, it will also help you organize your essay. Based just on the prompt, you may think your thesis examples will be A, B and C... but after you complete the chart, you may find that you do not have enough information to use those examples and instead you will use A, C and D.
- 5) Looking at the graphic organizer and the prompt, decide what your claim will be.. then look at the other examples to use in the first part of the thesis statement.

Basic Complex-split thesis formula:

Although (other example) , ultimately (claim responding to prompt specifying 3 examples).

Once you get used to writing a complex-split in this manner, you can tweak the wording – but for now, stick to this formula.

Example: Evaluate the main causes of World War 1

Simple thesis statement:

There were many causes of World War One

Complex thesis statement:

Militarism, Alliances, Imperialism and Nationalism were all causes of World War One.

Complex-Split thesis statement:

Although the build up of new militaristic technology was a cause, ultimately a complicated alliance system, competition for foreign lands, and a strong call for nationalism were the driving factors behind the outbreak of World War One.

Why the complex-split?

By giving credence to other arguments, you are demonstrating critical analysis. With the second part of the sentence (your claim), you are using the words ultimately and specifying three examples to leave little doubt as to your argument.

The claim should stand alone! This will be the argument you should refer to at the end of each body paragraph as well as rephrase for your conclusion.