**WRITING AP HISTORY LONG ESSAYS 35 minutes, 15% of the total exam grade**

There are four kinds of Long Essays:

**Comparison** (similarities and differences),

**Causation** (cause and/or effect),

**Continuity and Change Over Time**, and

**Periodization**, which can be about a Turning Point in history or a “Define the Era” question.

You will be given two Long Essay topics. Pick one. Both essays will be the same type; for example, pick 1 of 2 Comparison essays, or 1 of 2 “Define the Era” essays.

ALL of these types of essays are **argumentation essays** because you must present arguments on two sides of an issue and provide reasons why you chose one argument over the other. For example, a Define the Era prompt could be, “Many historians have labeled the 20th century, “The American Century”. To what extent is this an accurate description of this era?” You must argue—with specific examples--that this label is accurate, AND give counter-arguments *against* the label—with specific examples--and then explain why one side is more accurate.

Students often want to know, “How many specific pieces of evidence do I need?” The answer is, as many as you can think of. AP history is not about how little you can do and get away with it. AP history is about showing how much you know.

It doesn’t matter which side you pick as long as you can back up your argument with facts. The idea here is to show complexity in your thinking, and not write about history all one way or the other.

Avoid terms like, “everyone”, “always”, “all”, “nobody”, never”, “none” and instead, use terms like, “most”, “usually”, “sometimes”, “rarely”, “a few”. For example, “Everyone in China feared the invading Mongols.” Really? You know for a fact that every…single…person in China feared the Mongols? NOBODY was pro-Mongol? That’s why, “Most people in China feared the invading Mongols” is a more defensible argument.

**Long Essays** are graded on a **6 point scale:**

* **Thesis** (1 point);
* **Address all parts of the question** ( 1 point);
* **Analysis:** explaining *WHY* this or that happened (1 point);
* Specific **Evidence** that supports your thesis

(1 point for some evidence, 2 points for more evidence);

* And **Synthesis:** Connect a similar event that happened in a different era or place (or provide an “anti-example”: “The opposite thing happened a hundred years later when….”), **OR**…art, literature, society, or economics of the era in question that connects to your discussion of the question. (1 point)

**Below are “how to” guides for success on the AP Long Essay**

**Important! You must adapt these suggestions to fit THE terms of THE question.**

**1.The Comparison Long Essay** Note: This essay may ask you to evaluate the significance of an event or historical process. In that case, offer examples that show that the event has great significance and how it isn’t very significant.

**Paragraph 1:** (thesis): There were many similarities and differences in (name the 2 things being compared).  For example, there were similarities in (provide an example or two) and differences in (provide an example or two). Perhaps the greatest (sim or diff) was (provide either a sim or a diff).

**Paragraph 2:** Perhaps the **greatest similarity** between (name the 2 things) was \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ because\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Other similarities include (name as many similarities as you can think of). They were similar **because** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**Paragraph 3:** Perhaps the **greatest difference** between (name the 2 things) was \_\_\_\_\_because\_\_\_\_\_. Other differences include (discuss as many differences as you can think of). They were different **because** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**Paragraph 4:** **Discuss a similar/different event** from another time or place in history (“This also happened when….”)…OR…Discuss how literature, society, culture, the environment or economics of the era was part of the event.

**Paragraph 5**

(2nd chance at Thesis) Conclude with a summary that accurately reflects all the terms of the question, with specificity.  In other words, re-write your thesis in another way.

**2.** .**The Causation Long Essay (Causes and/or Effects of an event or movement, for example)**

**Paragraph 1:** (Thesis): There were many causes (or effects) of (name the event). Causes (or effects) included (name 2). Perhaps the most important cause (or effect) was (name a 3rd cause/effect) because of its impact on history.

**Paragraph 2:** **Define the event itself and put it in historical context:** WHAT was the event? WHEN did it happen? WHO was involved? WHAT was its significance?

**Paragraph 3**: **Discuss** **as many** **causes and/or effects** of the event as you can think of. Name the **MOST** significant cause (and/or effect) and tell WHY it is so significant.

**Paragraph 4:** **Discuss a similar/different event** from another time or place in history. How was that cause (or effect) similar (“This also happened when….”) …OR…Discuss how literature, society, culture, the environment or economics of the era was part of the event.

**Paragraph 5:** (2nd chance at thesis) Write a conclusion that summarizes all parts of the question, with specificity, like in your thesis but worded differently.

**3. The Continuity and Change Over Time Long Essay**

**Paragraph 1**: (thesis) “There were many continuities and changes in (insert the dates of the question)in (insert all tasks of the question). Continuities included (1 specific example) and changes were in (2 specific examples). “

**Paragraph 2**: Continuities in **insert the terms of the question** in this era included: **discuss as many specific examples you can think of.**  Perhaps the most important continuity was \_\_\_\_\_\_because\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. These remained the same over time **because** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.  **Provide as many relevant examples as possible**

**Paragraph 3**: Changes in **insert all tasks of the question** in this era included: **discuss as many specific examples you can think of.**Perhaps the greatest change was\_\_\_\_\_ because\_\_\_\_\_\_. These changed over time **because** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.  **Provide as many relevant examples as possible**

**Paragraph 4:** Discuss an event **from another time or place** in history that also changed or stayed the same…OR…Discuss how **another** field (literature, art, politics, society, religion, economics e.g.) of the era reflects a similarity or change that’s in your essay already.

**Paragraph 5:** (2nd chance at Thesis) Conclude with a summary that accurately reflects all the terms of the question, with specificity.  In other words, re-write your thesis in another way.

**4. Periodization: The Turning Point Long Essay**

This essay is kind of a CCOT and Comparison question at the same time. The basic structure of this essay is: society/government, etc., was like *this* until a **turning point** happened, and then society/government, etc. changed to *that*. Why did they change? However, some things in this topic were **not** changed at this turning point. Why did those continuities happen?

**Paragraph 1:** (Thesis) “There were many reasons why *the topic of the question* (for example, a war) was a turning point in (society, government, etc). Some of these reasons were (a and b) but the greatest reason was (c). However, some things showed this wasn’t a turning point, like (d).” Include one sentence defining the turning point.

**Paragraph 2:** Set the stage **before** the turning point. What was (society, politics, economics, the environment—whatever *the terms of the question* are) like in the era just before? Link your examples only to the terms of the question. Provide as many specific examples as you can.

**Paragraph 3:** Discuss the turning point. What was it? **How** did it lead to changes in the next era? What was the greatest change infrom one era to the next?**WHY?**

**Paragraph 4:** This paragraph argues AGAINST the Turning Point. WhatDIDN’T change from one era to the next? Provide as many examples as you can think of. **WHY did some things stay the same, despite the Turning Point?** **AND:** Compare this Turning Point to another Turning Point in history. **OR…** How did art or literature of the era reflect the T.P. **or** continuities in the era?

**Paragraph 5:** (2nd chance at Thesis) Conclude with a summary that accurately reflects all the terms of the question, with specificity.  In other words, re-write your thesis in another way.

**5. Periodization: The Define the Era Long Essay**

Like the “Turning Point” Long Essay, this is kind of a CCOT and Comparison question at the same time. The essay prompt will include an era—let’s say the Industrial Revolution. Discuss features that support the idea that there really was a revolution, and features that *didn’t* change, in other words, what wasn’t so revolutionary about this era. Pick a side: do you agree or not agree with the label of the era? WHY?

**Paragraph 1:** (Thesis): There were many reasons why *the era of the question* is correctly named, for example: (cite two examples), and he greatest reason why this era is aptly named is\_\_\_\_. However, one could argue that this label is incorrect because \_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**Paragraph 2**: Provide a definition of the era and briefly include why historians gave it that name.

**Paragraph 3:** Provide as many examples as you can think of that support the idea that this era is correctly labeled. Which example MOST supports the label of the era? **WHY?**

**Paragraph 4:** What evidence counters the idea that the era is correctly labeled? **AND:** Discuss another era that would be a better “fit” for the label given the era in the question. **OR:** How did art or literature of the era reflect or counter the name of the era?

**Paragraph 5:** (2nd chance at Thesis) Conclude with a summary that accurately reflects all the terms of the question, with specificity.  In other words, re-write your thesis in another way.

**Final Note:** It is to your advantage to repeat THE terms of THE question throughout your essay.

For example, write “Turning Point” for a Turning Point essay. Don’t get fancy with synonyms for   
“Turning Point”. This helps your essay reader target your arguments.