

# HISTORICAL ARGUMENTATION... *American Imperialism*

In 2009, Cletus Wilbury wrote in his article, The Great Hypocrisy, “The United States has had a tradition of imperialism. Even the author of the U.S. Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson, did not consider the rights of the natives when he purchased the Louisiana Territory from the French government of Napoleon. Jefferson too, had considered annexing Cuba, as had John Quincy Adams, James Monroe, James Polk, and Franklin Pierce. The Monroe Doctrine, the War with Mexico, and the purchase of Alaska were continuing examples of U.S. expansionism.” Do you agree that imperialistic expansion was not new in 1898? Or, do you disagree and assert that foreign policy in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century was different because of America’s new role in the world?

## From the 2015 Revised Framework:

*Students Will...*

### **CREATE AND DEFEND AN ARGUMENT...**

- Articulate a defensible claim about the past in the form of a clear and compelling thesis that evaluates the relative importance of multiple factors and recognizes disparate, diverse, or contradictory evidence or perspectives.
- Develop and support a historical argument, including in a written essay, through a close analysis of relevant and diverse historical evidence, framing the argument and evidence around the application of a specific historical thinking skill (e.g., *comparison, causation, patterns of continuity and change over time, or periodization*).
- Evaluate evidence to explain its relevance to a claim or thesis, providing clear and consistent links between the evidence and the argument.
- Relate diverse historical evidence in a cohesive way to illustrate contradiction, corroboration, qualification, and other types of historical relationships in developing an argument.

## Use This Thesis Formula:

### **LC. X. However A and B. Therefore, Y.**

**LC** = add local context of your event/topic to the beginning of your introduction to “set the scene.” If you explain how your topic connects to other themes or disciplines in that same era, this will help you ensure credit for the contextualization.

**X'** = represents the strongest point against your argument. We call this the counter-argument. It can also be an alternate viewpoint. This X needs to be thoroughly explained (with evidence) in your introduction, and it will be the subject/category for your first body paragraph.

**A, B** = represent the two strongest points for your argument. They should be stated as broad categories or themes. (think MAGPIES or some subsection of one of those themes)

**'Y'** represents the position you will be taking – in other words, your stand on the prompt. Your Y must be clear and ATFP... address the full prompt! If there is a qualifier in your prompt such as “to what extent” or “support, refute, or modify” you must directly address that in your Y.

This activity includes responding to a continuity and change over time question. Remember your thesis and approach MUST include analysis of both.

Also, make sure you identify if there was more or less of each! Complexity! Don't just describe events. (*no story-telling!*)

(see writing guidelines in your binder for more information)

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## Step #1 Read the question or prompt carefully:

Read the question three times and be able to paraphrase the question and know the essential task demanded by it. Answering the question will be the central focus of your essay, and you want to be sure to **ATFP**: Address *The Full Prompt*. What are the parameters? What is your purpose? What is the skill being tested? Make sure you understand these components before planning!

**Prompt:**

**To what extent was late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century United States expansionism a continuation of past United States expansionism and to what extent was it a departure?**

## Step #2 Brainstorm on paper everything that comes to mind regarding the topic at hand. Aim for at least 5 specific things.

What do you know about the topic? Consider context (local, broad and comparative), people, movements, events, etc. Put this down on paper to get your brain *in gear* before writing the essay. Once you have ample information, categorize it and develop your thesis. Remember to use the formula!

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

## Step #3 Write your introductory paragraph. USE THE FORMULA! Make sure your thesis **ATFP**! *Don't restate the prompt!*