**WRITING AP HISTORY LONG ESSAYS: “Mostly this; however, some of that.”**

**40 minutes, 15% of the total exam grade**

**For APWH: Pick ONE Long Essay prompt from Periods 1-2, OR periods 3-4, OR from periods 5-6.**

**For AP US History: Pick ONE Long Essay prompt from Periods 1-3, OR periods 4-6, OR from periods 7-9.**

**For AP Euro: Pick ONE Long Essay prompt from Periods 1, OR periods 2-3, OR from periods 3-4.**

**All of the Long Essay choices will have the same historical skill:**

There are three kinds of Long Essays:

**Comparison** (similarities and differences),

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

**Continuity and Change Over Time**

**ALL** of these types of essays are **argumentation essays** because you must take a stand based on the prompt (“a historically defensible claim”) and provide evidence and arguments to support your stand. **So your thesis and your essay should be about “Mostly this; however, there was also some of that.”** (A lot of change, but a little continuity; a lot of similarities, but some differences.”

**For example, a prompt in AP World History could be:**

**“Evaluate the extent to which trade fostered change in West Africa in the era c. 600-1750.”**

A successful essay could argue that trade fostered a lot of change (“a lot of” being a minimal “extent to which” argument) in West Africa c. 600-c.1750, but also offer examples of things that didn’t change (“However, not everything changed. For example….”)

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 credit. AP history is about showing how much you know. If some of your “evidence” is wrong, graders don’t count points off. They only score what you get right. So load up on evidence.

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/Claim (1 point):** Present a thesis that makes a historically defensible claim that responds to all parts of the question. The thesis must consist of one or more sentences located in one place, either in the introduction or the conclusion.
* **Contextualization (1 point):** Relate the topic of the prompt to broader historical events, developments, or processes that occur before, during, or continue after the time frame of the question.
* **Evidence (1 or 2 points):** Provide specific examples of evidence relevant to the topic of prompt (1 point); Support an argument in response to the prompt, using specific and relevant examples of evidence. (1 point).
* **Analysis and Reasoning (1 or 2 points):** Use historical reasoning (such as: comparison, causation, CCOT) to frame an argument that addresses the prompt ( 1 point); and demonstrate a complex understanding of the historical development that is the focus of the prompt, using evidence to corroborate, qualify or modify an argument that addresses the question. (such as: using additional reasoning skills in an argument, explaining connections across time periods—i.e. synthesis, considering alternate views or evidence) (1 point)

(This 6th point is awarded to the rare Long Essay that is so thorough and stellar, it makes the reader glad they majored in history)

**See next page**

**“How to” guides for success on the AP History Long Essay**

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

**1.The Comparison Long Essay**

**Decide which comparison is stronger: sims or diffs, and structure your thesis and essay around them. Remember: *“Mostly this; however, some of that.”***

**Paragraph 1:** (thesis): SAMPLE: “There were many similarities but a few differences in (name the 2 things/eras/events being compared).  For example, there were great similarities in (provide an example or two) However, there were differences in (provide an example or two). Perhaps the greatest (sim or diff) was (provide an example of your greatest sim or diff).

**Paragraph 2:** Put the question in historical **context.** What was happening in this question’s world? Define key terms of the prompt, too.

**Paragraph 3: “Similarities** between (name the 2 things) were strong. For example, (name some similarities). These two were similar **because** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_.”

**Paragraph 4: However,** there were some differences between \_\_\_\_\_\_. For example, (discuss as many differences as you can think of). They were different **because** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_.”

**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.

**If you think there are more differences than similarities, then your 3rd paragraph would argue for mostly diffs.**

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

**Which was the greatest cause or effect? Why? Remember: *“Mostly this; however, some of that.”***

**Paragraph 1:** (Thesis): “There were many causes (or effects) of (name the event). Causes (or effects) include (name 1 or 2). Perhaps the most important cause (or effect) was (name a 3rd cause/effect). “However, some things had little (cause or effect), like….”)

**Paragraph 2:** **Define the event itself and put it in historical context:** What was happening in this question’s world? Define key terms of the prompt, too.

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

**Paragraph 4: “However, some things had little (cause or effect), like\_\_\_\_\_\_, because….”**

**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. If your thesis is not “all there”, but your conclusion is, it could count for a thesis point.

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

**Pick a side to argue: More changes than continuities, or more continuities than changes? Why?**

**Remember: *“Mostly this; however, some of that.”***

**Paragraph 1**: (thesis) Sample: “There were more changes than continuities in (insert the topic of the question) in the era (insert the years of the question). For example, changes in included (1-2 specific examples). However, there were some continuities, like (1-2 specific examples). Perhaps the greatest (continuity or change) was…“

**Paragraph 2: Define the topic and put it in historical context:** What was happening in this question’s world? Define key terms of the prompt, too.

**Paragraph 3**: “Significant changes in (insert terms of the question) in this era included: **discuss as many specific examples you can think of.**  Perhaps the most important change was \_\_\_\_\_\_because\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. These changes happened over time **because** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.  **Provide as many relevant examples as possible**

**Paragraph 4**: “However, there were also some continuities. **Discuss as many specific examples you can think of.***Perhaps the greatest continuity* was\_\_\_\_\_ because\_\_\_\_\_\_. This changed over time **because** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.  **Provide as many relevant examples as possible**

**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.**

Don’t get fancy with synonyms for Similarities and Differences, Cause or Effect, or Continuity and Change.

This helps your essay reader target your arguments.