ADVANCED PLACEMENT EUROPEAN HISTORY
Essay Writing Practice Activity

Throughout this course you will write several essays as practice for the AP Examination. Knowing how to set up a historical essay is important to doing well on the exam. Follow the steps outline below to practice writing an AP History Essay.

Step 1. Know the Topic

It's important to first outline everything you know about your topic. You can choose to do any number of things like mind-map out the essay, make a fact list, or any other approach you have that works well for you. Look at the topic below, and then list out all of the different facts, concepts, people, and events that tie into it in different categories.

Many historians contend the Renaissance was a turning point in European history. Support, modify, or refute this interpretation using specific evidence to support and justify your answer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facts &amp; Concepts</th>
<th>People/Figures</th>
<th>Events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Step 2. Outline Your Essay in Hierarchical Format

Use the Harvard-style Outline format to outline your answer briefly. Do not waste time going into too much detail. Eventually, and with enough practice, you should be able to do this without outlining.

The Harvard style is as follows:

I. Roman numerals are for main points. There should be one for your intro, one for each part of your thesis, and one for your conclusion.
   a. Next are major sub-topics for your main points.
      i. After that come specific categories and information.
      ii. Choose either complete sentences or phrases throughout, do not mix styles.
          1. This indent is for specific, detailed information.
          2. Put examples, people, dates, and other detailed evidence here.
   b. You must always have a minimum of two parts to each indent (i.e. “a” and “b”, or “1” and “2” or “i” and “ii”). If you only have one point, you need to incorporate it into the larger point above.

II. Make sure you keep your indents aligned. Main points should always have a Roman numeral and line up on the page, sub-points should always have the same symbol and line up at the same point on the page, etc.

Now, try the same thing below over the topic on from Step 1.
Step 3. Build a Thesis Statement

The thesis is the central part of your essay. Without it, nothing else makes sense. The thesis always follows the same formula: Thesis = Topic + What You’ll Prove (Claim) + How You’ll Prove It (Main Points)

Practice making a thesis for the topic from Step 1 below.

Step 4. Write Your Introduction Paragraph

In AP History courses, the intro paragraph always involves the same set up as a traditional essay introduction. You have to first open with an introductory statement. This statement is meant to help ease the reader’s mind into the topic. Then, you make a significance statement, or a statement of why your topic is important. Then, you state your thesis. After that, you provided a detail statement for each main point of your thesis briefly stating the main point and its impact. Then, you transition out to the first main point. This is the same format for all research-based or evidence-based non-fiction writing. The depth of your study and length of your writing dictates how long this is. For these essays, it should be a paragraph of about 5-7 sentences and the introductory statement and significance statement can be the same sentence. For something like a book, this would take several pages to do.

Practice doing each part of the introduction paragraph for the topic in Step 1 below.

Introductory Statement:

Significance Statement:

Thesis Statement:

Supporting/Detail Sentences for Each Main Point:
Step 5. Practice Including Detail and Analysis

In the body of your essay is a detailed look at each main point. To help prove your thesis, you must prove each main point. Doing this always involves the same thing: using detail evidence, and analyzing that evidence to back up your claim. To analyze, ask yourself “so what?”, “why does this matter?”, or “what’s the impact of this?” for each example.

Practice describing and analyzing specific, detailed, illustrative examples for one of the main points you outlined in Step 2 of your practice essay below.

Detailed Example 1:

Analysis of Detailed Example 1:

Detailed Example 2:

Analysis of Detailed Example 2:

Detailed Example 3:

Analysis of Detailed Example 3:
Step 6. Practice Concluding and Synthesizing

Every essay conclusion should include three parts: a summation of your arguments, a restatement of your thesis, synthesis, and a closing statement. As your skill level grows, you can eventually incorporate certain types of synthesis with the closing statement.

Synthesis is the combination of multiple ideas into a bigger picture idea, or a new whole. This can be a statement of the impact of a topic or concept. It can also be a connection to another geographic area’s history, another time period, or another thematic element of history (e.g., connecting a political historical event to its economic impact).

Practice the parts of a conclusion below, including two different synthesis statements.

\[\text{Summation of Your Argument(s):}\]

\[\text{Restatement of Thesis:}\]

\[\text{Synthesis 1:}\]

\[\text{Synthesis 2:}\]

\[\text{Closing Statement:}\]

Congratulations! That’s all it takes to successfully write an essay. Use this guide as reference as needed.