

## History 12 – Essay Writing 101

You are expected to be able to write an essay in History 12.

Here are some pointers . . .

### **INTRODUCTION**

The introductory paragraph introduces the topic, and concludes with your thesis statement.

Start in an interesting way to capture the reader's attention.

Try using an important quote from history. Try making a strong statement.

Then demonstrate that you understand the topic by providing sufficient background information on the topic.

At one point, you should try to paraphrase the topic question.

This focuses the introduction, and provides a good lead up to your thesis statement.

Then bring down the hammer . . . your thesis statement.

Your thesis statement is the final sentence in the introduction. It is your argument.

It is also the most important element of the whole position paper!

Without a thesis statement, it is easy to wander off topic or to list ideas that are only loosely connected. Ultimately, a thesis statement helps a reader follow your train of thought.

The strongest thesis statement consists of three parts: a topic, a point of view, and a sequence.

The topic refers to the question you are being asked to write about.

The point of view is your position on the topic.

The sequence is the order in which you plan to present the content paragraphs that will follow.

Here is an example . . .

Lester B. Pearson was largely responsible for defining modern Canada's national identity through social programs, political autonomy, and retooling the military for peacekeeping.

## **CONTENT PARAGRAPHS**

The content paragraphs must correspond to the sequence in the thesis statement, and therefore they need a topic sentence.

Your topic sentence is the first sentence of every paragraph, and it should always relate back to the thesis statement.

Here is an example . . .

*Lester B. Pearson defined modern Canada's national identity through social programs.*

After writing the topic sentence, you are free to make your argument.

Support your argument with details, facts, and information. You should also use quotations, evidence, and examples to support your position.

Show what you know!

Think ACE . . . Assertion, Citation, and Explanation.

At the end of each content paragraph, you need a transition sentence.

A transition sentence allows for a smooth switch into the next paragraph.

Here is an example . . .

*While social programs were at the heart of how Lester B. Pearson defined the national identity of Canada, he also pushed Canadians towards a greater sense of political independence.*

## **CONCLUSION**

Your conclusion restates and confirms your thesis statement. The last sentence of your conclusion is the second most important sentence in your essay, so make it count!

I might suggest finishing with something bold. Really show the reader that you have learned something, and that you have deep understanding of the subject.

## ***Command Terms***

Most essay questions contain a key verb, which is called a command term.

The command term is your key to understanding what the question is asking. It should guide your whole essay!

Here is a reference on command terms . . .

| <b><i>Command Term</i></b> | <b><i>Explanation</i></b>   | <b><i>Question &amp; Expectations</i></b>   |
|----------------------------|---|---|
| Assess                     | <p>Estimate the success, value, or the extent to which something has or has not been achieved.</p> <p>Give an informed judgement based on criteria.</p> | <p>Assess the role of the Canadian International Development Agency in supporting developing nations.</p> <p>You are expected to list ways that the CIDA has been effective in developing nations.</p>                      |
| Evaluate                   | <p>Make judgements based on standards or criteria about the strengths and weaknesses of a particular situation.</p>                                     | <p>Evaluate the role of the Canadian International Development Agency in supporting developing nations.</p> <p>When asked to evaluate, you are expected to list the successes and failures and decide which is greater.</p> |
| Compare                    | <p>Describe how one event, issue, or personality is similar to another.</p> <p>This is often used in conjunction with Contrast.</p>                     | <p>Compare the treatment of returning Canadian soldiers following WWI and WWII.</p> <p>You are describing the similarities between these two groups, despite the differences.</p>   |
| Contrast                   | <p>Describe how one event, issue, or personality is different from another.</p>   | <p>Contrast the treatment of returning Canadian soldiers following WWI and WWII.</p> <p>You are describing the differences between these two groups, despite the differences.</p>   |

|                      |  |   |
|----------------------|--|---|
| Describe             | Give a detailed account of an object, event, or concept.   | Describe the key events leading up to the First World War.<br><br>You are asked to list the events leading up to the First World War in chronological order.  |
| Discuss              | Discuss the various points of view and conflicting opinions on a particular topic, process, or concept.<br><br>Explain the merits of those opinions. | Discuss the key events leading up to the First World War.<br><br>You are asked to list the events leading up to the First World War, and how they were important in creating that conflict.   |
| Explain              | Give a fact filled account of a topic, process, or concept.<br><br>Provide evidence and reasons.   | Explain the causes of the Great Depression in Canada.<br><br>You are expected to list the causes and explain why they led to the Great Depression.  |
| To what extent . . . | Describe the successes and failures of the given event, with emphasis on one or the other.<br><br>Be sure to include the opposing point of view.     | To what extent could the Canadian government have minimized the hardships of Canadian citizens during the Great Depression?<br><br>You are expected to consider both sides of the statement (successes and failures) and decide which side has the stronger argument. |

## ***Assessment Tool***

### **6**

- Essay contains an excellent thesis statement as directed by the command term.
- Essay contains superior recall of factual content.
- Essay contains a point of view that is supported with fully developed details, and exemplary evaluation and judgement.
- Essay is organized in an effective manner.
- Essay contains insightful conclusions.
- Essay contains written expression that is clear with few flaws in communication.

### **5**

- Essay contains a strong thesis statement as directed by the command term.
- Essay contains proficient recall of factual content.
- Essay contains a point of view that is supported with good details, and sound evaluation and judgement.
- Essay is organized in an effective manner.
- Essay contains effective conclusions.
- Essay contains written expression that is generally clear with few flaws in communication.

### **4**

- Essay contains a thesis statement as directed by the command term.
- Essay contains competent recall of factual content.
- Essay contains a point of view that is supported with satisfactory details, and satisfactory evaluation and judgement.
- Essay is generally organized in a clear manner.
- Essay contains adequate conclusions.
- Essay contains written expression that is satisfactory . . . errors may distract from meaning.

### **3**

- Essay contains an attempt to form a thesis statement as directed by the command term.
- Essay contains adequate recall of factual content.
- Essay contains a point of view that is supported by simplistic details, and weak evaluation and judgement.
- Essay attempts organization.
- Essay contains weak conclusions.
- Essay contains written expression that is weak . . . errors distract from meaning.

### **2**

- Essay contains a thesis statement that is not good enough, and may be absent or inaccurate.
- Essay contains limited recall of factual content.
- Essay contains a point of view that is supported by very minimal details, and no evaluation or judgement.
- Essay lacks organization.
- Essay contains no conclusion.
- Essay contains written expression that is awkward . . . errors distract from meaning.

### **1**

- Essay does not contain a thesis statement.
- Essay contains deficient recall of factual content.
- Essay contains a point of view that is not supported by details.
- Essay lacks organization.
- Essay contains no conclusion.
- Essay contains written expression that is full of errors making understanding difficult.