

Writing the Long Essay – Outline Overview
AP US History

Always remember that this is not a creative writing assignment. Your job is to compare, contrast, describe, and present historical evidence, while providing your own analysis of the evidence in order to prove your argument (Thesis). The AP readers will be grading the essay using a 0-6 point grading scale. Any score of 4 or higher is considered a “passing” score.



Your essay must follow the outline below in order to maximize the chances of getting your passing score. You have the liberty to add to the structure below, but make sure that the skeleton of your essay remains the same.

| Introductory Paragraph Structure | |
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| Context | 3-4 Sentences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe in as much detail as you can the time period that is being referenced in the prompt. What is going on at that time? Describe it like you would describe the basic plot of a movie. Make sure to include at least 2-3 pieces of historical facts / phenomena that show you know the time period. Using specific dates will always help your score. NOTE: Try not use any historical facts / phenomena that you plan on using in your essay. |
| Thesis | 1-2 Sentences / Always the last portion of your Introductory Paragraph <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow 4 point procedure on how to create an APUSH thesis. (See Thesis Handout) Make sure that your thesis addresses all parts of the question Do not restate the question in your thesis. |

| Supporting Paragraph Structure (Please repeat for all Supporting Paragraphs in your Long Essay) | |
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| Topic Sentence | Topic sentences make an essay's claims clear to a reader. Good essays contain topic sentences, because they reveal the main point of a paragraph. Additionally they show the relationship of each paragraph to the essay's thesis and telegraph the point of a paragraph. Topic sentences. argue rather than report. <p>Suggested Sentence Stems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> One important.... In order to fully understand.... (Thesis Statement Argument) is best illustrated by.... In addition to (topic of previous paragraph)... Retell Idea 1, which is the whole point of this paragraph, in one sentence. Include: who/what/when/where and why or how. |
| Historical Evidence #1 | Make sure you identify and describe in as much detail as you can , specific pieces of historical evidence (dates, terms, events, era's, people, historical phenomenon) that support your thesis. |
| Warrant | Essentially you have to clearly link your specific historical evidence provided above to your thesis. Depending on the Historical Thinking Skill being measured, you need to make sure you accomplish the following with your WARRANT. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain in detail how your your historical evidence proves your thesis. DESCRIBES & EXPLAINS the reasons for the causes AND/OR effects of a historical event, development, or process. (Causation) DESCRIBES & EXPLAINS the reasons for similarities AND differences among historical individuals, events, developments, or processes (Comparison) DESCRIBES & EXPLAIN the reasons for historical continuity AND change over time (Continuity & Change Over Time) DESCRIBES & EXPLAINS the extent to which the historical development specified in the prompt was different from and similar to developments that preceded AND/OR followed. (Periodization) |
| REPEAT | REPEAT THE 3 STEPS ABOVE (Topic Sentence, Historical Evidence, Warrant) 2-3 Times in a Single Supporting Paragraph |

Concluding Paragraph Structure

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| Historical Synthesis | <p>1-2 Sentences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin your conclusion with “It is interesting to note the similarity of <essay prompt time period> to that of <a different historical time period in US History>” • You can make connections between the time period/events your essay is covering and time periods/events from US History, World History, Literature, the Modern Era. |
| Explain Historical Synthesis | <p>1-3 Sentences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the connection above. How is that time period/event similar? Why is it similar? • Provide and describe evidence from the other time period /event that proves the connection. Example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <i>The guerilla fighting tactics employed by the American colonists during the Revolutionary War were also employed by the Vietcong against the United States in the Vietnam War. In both cases a small inexperienced fighting force took on the most powerful country in the world at that time, and defeated them using these methods.</i> |
| Rephrase Thesis | <p>1-2 Sentences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restate your thesis statement in “another way” without repeating the prompt. This is a safety measure in case you don’t get awarded points initially with the thesis located in your introduction. |

Sample Outline

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| <p>Introduction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Context • Thesis Statement <p>Supporting Paragraph #1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic Sentence (Paragraph) • Historical Evidence #1 • Warrant for Historical Evidence #1 • Sub-Topic Sentence (Evidence #2) • Historical Evidence #2 • Warrant for Historical Evidence #2 <p>OPTIONAL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sub-Topic Sentence (Evidence #3) • Historical Evidence #3 • Warrant for Historical Evidence #3 <p>Supporting Paragraph #2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic Sentence (Paragraph) • Historical Evidence #1 • Warrant for Historical Evidence #1 • Sub-Topic Sentence (Evidence #2) • Historical Evidence #2 • Warrant for Historical Evidence #2 <p>OPTIONAL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sub-Topic Sentence (Evidence #3) • Historical Evidence #3 • Warrant for Historical Evidence #3 | <p>Supporting Paragraph #3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic Sentence (Paragraph) • Historical Evidence #1 • Warrant for Historical Evidence #1 • Sub-Topic Sentence (Evidence #2) • Historical Evidence #2 • Warrant for Historical Evidence #2 <p>OPTIONAL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sub-Topic Sentence (Evidence #3) • Historical Evidence #3 • Warrant for Historical Evidence #3 <p>Conclusion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historical Synthesis • Explanation of Historical Synthesis • Rephrase Thesis <p>NOTE: DO NOT SKIP THE CONCLUSION! THIS IS WHERE YOU WILL EARN YOUR HISTORICAL SYNTHESIS POINT!</p> <p>MAKE SURE YOU GIVE YOURSELF TIME FOR THIS VERY IMPORTANT SECTION OF YOUR ESSAY!</p> |
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Following this format will become very easy and natural by the time of the AP US History Test. Your main task between now and then is to review, study, and retain content! The whole point of the LE is to....

YOU HAVE TO SHOW THAT YOU KNOW AMERICAN HISTORY!

