

Nine Historical Thinking Skills (HTS)

Historical Argumentation: Historical thinking requires one to define and frame a question about the past and to address that question by constructing an argument. A plausible and persuasive argument requires a clear, specific, complex, and refutable thesis statement which is then supported by relevant historical evidence. Additionally, argumentation involves the capacity to describe, analyze and evaluate the arguments of others.

Use of Relevant Historical Evidence: Historical thinking involves the ability to identify, describe and evaluate evidence about the past from diverse sources (including written documents, works of art, quantitative data, etc.) with respect to content, authorship, purpose, format, and audience. It involves the capacity to extract useful information, make supportable inferences, and draw appropriate conclusions from historical evidence while also understanding such evidence in its context, recognizing its limitations, and assessing the points of view that it reflects.

Contextualization: Historical thinking involves the ability to connect historical developments to specific circumstances in time and place, and to broader regional, national, or global processes.

Interpretation: Historical thinking involves the ability to describe, analyze, evaluate, and create diverse interpretations of the past—as revealed through primary and secondary historical sources—through analysis of evidence, reasoning, contexts, and points of view.

Synthesis: Historical thinking involves the ability to arrive at meaningful and persuasive understandings of the past by applying all the other historical thinking skills, by drawing appropriately on ideas from different fields of inquiry or disciplines and by creatively fusing disparate, relevant (and perhaps contradictory) evidence from primary sources and secondary works. Additionally, synthesis may involve applying insights about the past to other historical contexts or circumstances, including the present.

And The Big Four HTS...

Historical Causation: Historical thinking involves the ability to identify, analyze and evaluate multiple cause-and-effect relationships in a historical context.

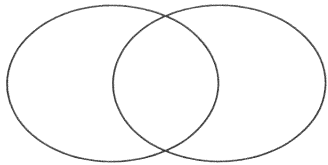
Patterns of Continuity and Change over Time: Historical thinking involves the ability to recognize, analyze, and evaluate the dynamics of historical continuity and change over periods of time, as well as relating these patterns to larger historical processes or themes.

Compare and Contrast: Historical thinking involves the ability to describe, compare and evaluate multiple historical developments within one society, one or more developments across or between different societies, and in various chronological and geographical contexts. It also involves the ability to identify, compare and evaluate multiple perspectives on a given historical experience.

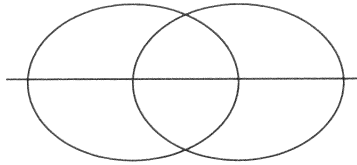
Periodization: Historical thinking involves the ability to describe, analyze, evaluate and construct models of historical periodization that historians use to categorize events into discrete blocks. Periodization challenges us to identify turning points, recognizing that the choice of specific dates favors one narrative, region or group over another narrative, region or group; therefore, changing the periodization can change a historical narrative. Moreover, the particular circumstances and contexts in which individual historians work and write shape their interpretations and modeling of past events.

3. Compare and Contrast (CC)

Simple:



Complex:



Example Essay Prompts:

Simple:

- Compare and contrast the New England colonies with the colonies in the Chesapeake.
- Immigration has always played an important role in the history of the United States, compare immigration during the 1840's and 1850's with immigration during the 1870's and 1880's.

Complex:

- Compare and contrast the New England colonies with the colonies in the Chesapeake. In so doing, address two of the three following characteristics in your answer: political, economic, and social patterns.
- Immigration has played an important role in the history of the United States. Compare and contrast immigration during the 1840's and 1850's with immigration during the 1870's and 1880's. In so doing, address two of the three in your answer: patterns of settlement, reasons for immigrating, reactions of nativist groups.

The Thesis Statement

You will write a thesis that is specific, refutable, and complex. The thesis must be the final sentence (or two) in the introductory paragraph. Your thesis is **the most important sentence in your essay**. Take the time to write it well. **Use the wording** of the question to demonstrate that you are responding directly to it.

- Specific—your thesis must be a clear and precise foreshadowing of your argument.
- Refutable—the reader must be able to disagree with your thesis. It must be debatable. If it is not debatable then you are not making an argument in your essay.
- Complex—demonstrate your understanding of the complexity of the issue by writing a sophisticated thesis and then by examining contradictory evidence in the body of your essay.

How specific must my thesis statement be?

It's a balancing act. You don't want to be too general (Level 3) or too specific (Level 1). Let the reader know where you are going, but delve too far into your evidence. We want the reader to keep reading. We will call the right amount of specificity **Level 2 Specificity**.

Consider the following prompt:

Evaluate the extent to which the Articles of Confederation were effective in solving the problems that confronted the new nation.

Level 3: The Articles of Confederation was successful as a first attempt at building a government. However, the Articles of Confederation was weak politically, socially, and economically. Therefore, the Articles of Confederation did not provide an effective answer to the problems facing the new nation.

Level 2 (just right): The Articles of Confederation created a well-organized system for dealing with newly acquired territories and providing a financial means to increase needed revenue. However, it established a loose confederation of states that lacked a sense of national unity, it created internal gridlock that failed to establish a system of checks and balances, and it created a government that did not have the powers to conduct basic governmental business. Therefore, the Articles of Confederation largely ineffective in solving many of the problems faced by the newly formed United States.

Level 1: Under the Articles of Confederation, the Land Ordinance of 1785 and Northwest Ordinance of 1787 created a well-organized system for dealing with newly acquired territories and a plausible means to increase government revenue in a time in which the country was facing massive debt. However, it established a decentralized government with limited sovereignty, creating a league of friendship, with limited effectiveness; it was unable to foster any sense of nationalism; it contained a lack of leadership and a lack of independent judiciary; it lacked provisions for raising revenues and collecting taxes from the states, as well as failing to handle the abuses of paper money, with no control over interstate commerce; and could not protect the country from rebellions like Shays' Rebellion. Therefore, the Articles of Confederation proved unable to handle the problems faced by the country after the American Revolution.

Contextualization: Setting the Stage and Showing the Broader Picture

To provide effective analysis, students must step back and explain **what's going on** in the country (or world) that could justify or explain historical issues/events/figures/developments (the facts).

Let's use the following prompt and thesis:

Analyze the causes of the American independence movement from the end of the French and Indian War until the end of the American Revolution.

Beginning on the North American continent and spreading to Europe and around the globe, the French and Indian War culminated with a British victory and acquisition of French lands from the Appalachians to the Mississippi River. With an enlarged empire and a burdensome war debt, Great Britain asserted its mercantilist power over its American colonies. However, American colonists tended to perceive Britain's policies as an attack on their rights as Englishmen, as a disruption to their regional markets and commerce, and a disregard of their egalitarian lifestyle and status. With each Parliamentary act, the American patriot cause increasingly clamored for proper recognition and, ultimately, separation.

The writer chose to address the political, economic, and social aspects of their position.

Contextualization for the POL paragraph

"The British victory following the French and Indian War and its culminating Treaty of Paris (1763) heightened British nationalism and position on the world stage. Increasingly confident, the British Empire attempted to secure their expanded territorial claims to avoid future potential wars by taking an authoritarian position over its American colonies and throughout the world."

The student can then argue this position with Proclamation of 1763, Stamp Act, Declaratory Act, Quartering Act, Coercive Acts, Sons of Liberty, Letters from a Farmer, Olive Branch Petition, Second Continental Congress, and Declaration of Independence.

Contextualization for the ECON paragraph

"Given Britain's stronger global position after the French and Indian War, the empire reinforced its commitment to mercantilist policies. Besides paying off the massive war debt, Parliament sought to use the colonies as a source of revenue and to ensure colonial raw materials fed the mother country's growing industries."

The student can then argue this position using the Sugar Act, the Townshend Acts, the Tea Act, colonial merchants, colonial regional economies, smuggling, direct and indirect taxes.

Contextualization for the SOC paragraph

"The colonies developed a unique American way of life centered on equal opportunity after decades of salutary neglect. As the British Empire encouraged strict adherence to its imperial authority, the colonists viewed Parliament's actions as disruptive to its American lifestyle and essentially subjugated."

The student can then argue this position using variety of Western Europe immigrants, fluid social hierarchy vs rigid European society, American identity, regionalism, colonists as second-class subjects, patriots vs loyalists, English nationalism vs American pride.

When should I offer context in an APUSH essay?

- Probably in the introduction, and
- Once or twice in the body
- ...and perhaps in your conclusion

Synthesis: inferring relationships among themes, positions, and periods

There are 2 ways students can provide synthesis according to the rubric:

1. Synthesis using theme and/or approach to history that is not the focus of the essay (such as political, economic, social, or intellectual history)

The Enlightenment ideals from Europe spread among American patriots like wildfire. A brief pamphlet written in the vernacular, Thomas Paine's Common Sense deployed rational arguments to criticize the perpetual European warfare and England's unfamiliarity with the diverse regions and cultures of North America. Reasoned, measured, Enlightenment-based argumentation explained the necessity for American independence. As the understanding of the patriots' cause spread from elites to the masses, the struggle for independence became a fight for liberal ideals.

2. Synthesis using historical period, situation, or geographical area.

The American independence movement of the 18th century proclaimed a righteous call to separate from England, who was increasingly seen as overbearing and overzealous. Less than a century later, a similar call for independence and self-determination emerged in America. The Southern states, with their unique agrarian lifestyle and economy, felt threatened by the growing influence and power of the industrializing Northern states. The South felt underrepresented and subjugated as more Northern states gained control and influence in the federal government. Eventually, the South echoed many of the sentiments expressed by the founding patriots against Great Britain.

Where should I offer synthesis points?

- Probably not in the introduction
- One could thoughtfully integrate a synthesis into any body paragraph
- If time permits a short synthesis paragraph is not unacceptable
- Usually fits rather tidily into the concluding paragraph

How to Write an APUSH DBQ

1. Begin by **reading the question**. Make sure you **understand exactly what is being asked** of you as a writer.
2. There is a mandatory 15 minute planning session during which you will **brainstorm to create an outline**.
 - Structure your argument and develop a vision for your essay
 - Write topic sentences for each body paragraph
 - Consider thoughtful transitions
 - Jot down all the names, events, acts, and writings that come to mind for the period covered in the essay
 - Consider how you will connect your argument to **broader events or processes**.
 - Consider how you will connect your argument to **a different historical context**
3. **Read the documents demandingly**
 - Note next to each document any additional outside information triggered by the document.
 - Use **HIPP or APPARTS**. Assume that every source has a point of view.
 - **Never quote** the documents. Ever.
 - You can and must paraphrase, in which case you must cite the document.
 - Integrate useful and meaningful outside information into your essay. DBQs without a reasonable **balance** of documentary references and outside information will not earn desirable marks.
4. **Write a thesis** that is specific, refutable, and complex. The thesis must be the final sentence (or two) in the introductory paragraph. Your thesis is **the most important sentence in your essay**. Take the time to write it well. **Use the wording** of the question to demonstrate that you are responding directly to it.
 - Specific—your thesis must be a clear and precise foreshadowing of your argument.
 - Refutable—the reader must be able to disagree with your thesis. It must be debatable. If it is not debatable then you are not making an argument in your essay.
 - Complex—demonstrate your understanding of the complexity of the issue by writing a sophisticated thesis and then by examining contradictory evidence in the body of your essay.
5. **Write an introduction** that sets the stage for your thesis by establishing time and place.
 - Lead sentences are important as they are your first impression on the reader.
 - “Funnel” introductions are advisable for history essays.
 - Your introduction should be 1-3 sentences + thesis.
 - Your introduction should offer clear **historical context**
 - Do NOT introduce evidence in your introduction. Evidence is used to prove your argument—save it for body paragraphs.
 - Do not fear the functional introduction. There is a law of diminishing return on creativity.
6. **Cite your sources** by using parenthetical citations **after** referring to a particular document
 - Example: Progressive social activist and city reformer Jane Addams, in a speech delivered in Chicago in 1899, argues that the forceful annexation of the Philippines begat violence in the streets of America. She asserts that the barbarism of the war and the barbarism of the propaganda machine that glorified the war, engendered barbarism in previously peaceful Chicago neighborhoods. Similar conclusions were drawn by critics from the Left and Right when assessing the perils of homeland violence during the Vietnam War (Doc 6).
 - You must use all or all but one of the documents given.
 - Documents do not speak. Thus to write, “Document 6 states that...” makes no sense.

7. **Conclude:** although the reader's mind is likely made up by the time (s)he reads your conclusion, it does leave a final impression.
- Restate your thesis (rephrase it, do not repeat it).
 - Offer an insightful closing remark that does not stray from your thesis or introduce new information.
 - Conclusions are a logical place—though not the only logical place—to **offer a synthesis**.
 - Find common ground between thesis and antithesis
 - Connect this historical period to another historical period
8. Some Other Tips:
- Never simply restate the question in the introduction.
 - Third person formal. No 'I', 'You' or 'We'
 - Demonstrate your awareness of **change over time** and **cause and effect** relationships.
 - Do not begin or conclude paragraphs with documents since the document is not the topic of the paragraph.
 - Do conclude paragraphs with a concluding thought, perhaps one that ties back to the thesis.
 - **Use transitions** BETWEEN and WITHIN paragraphs to demonstrate the connections that you are making. You absolutely must have an arsenal of transition words at your disposal. If you don't just Google "transition words" and start memorizing.
 - While there is **no correct answer**, there is always a good one.
 - Demonstrate that you are keenly aware of the **controversial** nature of the question.
 - Relax and **write with confidence** once you have determined your thesis and your approach.
 - Demonstrate your **understanding of the complexity of the issue** by writing a complex thesis and by examining contradictory evidence in the body of your essay. You should attempt to confront the point of view that you did not take or that was true **to a lesser extent**.
 - As always, appreciate and enjoy a challenge.