

ESSAY WRITING

INTRODUCTION:

- **START – SHORT CONTEXT!** Start the introduction by putting the question into a historical background and context
- **WRITE THE QUESTION!** Refer to the question in your introduction. If you paraphrase the question, make sure you don't change it.
- **AN OUTLINE BUT NO ANSWER HERE!** Make a short outline of your essay in the introduction, but don't answer the question – yet.

MAIN BODY:

- **DIFFERENT PARTS!** This part could include a few clear parts:
 - *TRANSITION*
 - *ARGUMENTS*
 - *DISCUSSION*
- **MAKE A GOOD TRANSITION FROM THE INTRODUCTION TO THE MAIN BODY!** This could include a short background and/or an outline of a few themes – political, economic, social, religious, etc...
- **MAKE SURE YOU HAVE A HISTORICAL CONTEXT!** When did the asked event(s) take place; where did they take place, who were involved, etc...?
- **ANSWER THE QUESTION – NOTHING ELSE!!!** – If you have been asked to compare and contrast the causes of two or three revolutions – then do that. Don't try to bend the answer towards something else that you feel you know better – this always lead to problems (and poor results)
- **REFER TO THE QUESTION IN YOUR TEXT!** Fairly frequent references to the question are important
- **DON'T USE TOO MANY ARGUMENTS!** Use 3 or 4 paragraphs (3 to 4 main arguments – if you compare and contrast 2 to 3 arguments per view – 2-3 similarities + 2-3 differences) – If you have more arguments summarize the less important ones in the last paragraph
- **TRY TO NOT BE TOO NARRATIVE!** If you just gather a lot of factual information without discussions the answer becomes narrative. Don't get me wrong now – it's important to use facts when you form your argument but you have to also be able to discuss. One way to be able to write in a more analytical way can be to write thematically instead of chronologically. If you compare and contrast political, economic, social, religious themes instead of gathering the events in chronological order it's easier to discuss...
- **DISCUSSION:** After you have presented the different arguments it's important to have a discussion, often a comparison of the different arguments. This is where you show your analytical skills.
- **THERE ARE NO RIGHT ANSWERS IN HISTORY!** Controversial questions in History will give many different answers based on the authors' background as well as his opinions. Your task as a history student is to choose arguments and opinions that can be supported by relevant evidence. This can lead to many different answers of the same question. If you came across different opinions in your text(s) and you find them well supported, you should also try to include them in your answer

CONCLUSION:

- **REFER TO THE QUESTION** (Otherwise you have not answered the question)
- **SUM UP YOUR MAIN ARGUMENTS AND THE DISCUSSION**
- **POINT OUT FURTHER QUESTIONS.** Eventually set up further questions which could come up during the process of answering this question...

SOME ESSAY ADVICE

1. Use the Scrap paper! Write down the most important arguments and decide which order you should put them. Add some facts so you can see that you can support your arguments with evidence – detailed facts. This operation should take no more than 5-7 minutes.
2. Start the essay with a full introduction. Remember that this is always the part that the examiner sees first so it has to be good! Write one or two sentences that give the historical context (where, when, who...). Then add the question and a short outline (plan what you intend to do). This part should never be more than 6 sentences.
3. Make a transition into the text – background and/or some thematic approach.
4. Present your main arguments. Each main argument should have its own paragraph. Make sure you present the arguments in a logic order – either chronologically or thematically.
5. Each argument has to be supported with facts (narrative facts!). This is often factual details that reveal your knowledge.
6. Don't use too many main arguments. Concentrate on the most relevant ones and then gather the less important ones in its own paragraph. This paragraph could start with a phrase like "*Of certain importance was also....*".
7. If you comment some after each argument – that's good. If you haven't you need to make sure that you create a well-developed discussion at the end of the main text (before the conclusion).
8. End the essay with a conclusion that sum up your main arguments and discussion. Make sure that this conclusion clearly answers the question.

