
ESSAY SKILLS FOR AP EURO: THE LONG ESSAY QUESTION (LEQ)

The most important thing for students to realize – above all else – is this:

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO WRITE A GOOD ESSAY ON A TOPIC ABOUT WHICH YOU KNOW NOTHING.

You **MUST** pay attention in class, take good notes, and study for the essay just as you would study for any multiple-choice test.

WRITING FOR HISTORY

One of the first things students must realize is that people change the way they communicate based on their audience. You are writing for a history class. The instructions given here are for writing about history. It may be different (not necessarily better, just different) from what you learn in English.

1. Read the question or prompt carefully: The basic purpose is to answer the question. Read the question **three** times. Answering the question will be the central focus of your essay. Many essay prompts will "suggest" a particular format to follow for organizing your response.

- Break the question down with dates, points asked for, make sure you are aware of the entire question
 - EX: “**To what extent...**” – You must give a specific measured answer
- Be mindful of the verb – what exactly are you supposed to do? Be sure that you understand the required task. (Historical Thinking Skill)
 - Comparison
 - Causation
 - Historical Continuity and Change over Time

2. Brainstorm on paper everything that comes to mind regarding the topic at hand. What do you know about the topic? Put this down on paper to get your brain in gear for writing the essay.

3. Organize your thesis, develop two/three main points (if not already provided), and put your brainstormed information in a outline format for your three body paragraphs.

4. Write your introductory paragraph.

1. **Contextualization** - Describes a broader historical context relevant to the prompt.
 - a. To earn this point, the response must relate the topic of the prompt to broader historical events, developments, or processes that occur before, during, or continue after the time frame of the question. This point is not awarded for merely a phrase or a reference.
 - b. Give 2-3 Sentences of Historical Background in the beginning of your intro paragraph, this will provide **context** for your argument.
 - c. You also need to continue to reference Contextualization throughout the essay.
2. **Thesis statement** - Responds to the prompt with a historically defensible thesis/claim that establishes a line of reasoning.
 - a. To earn this point, the thesis must make a claim that responds to the prompt, rather than merely restating or rephrasing the prompt.
 - b. Responds to ALL parts of the question.
 - c. The thesis must consist of one or more sentences located in one place, either in the introduction or the conclusion.
3. **List** - A quick listing of the main organizational points that will be used to structure and present the data used to defend the thesis. In your brainstorm, you fleshed out three categories of information or three key points – list them here so the reader knows where you are going.

SUPPLEMENTARY (Body) PARAGRAPHS

1. SUPPLEMENTARY PARAGRAPHS SHOULD BE ARRANGED IN DESCENDING ORDER OF IMPORTANCE. The only exception to this rule would be in the case where you were going to address topics chronologically.
 - a. Generally students should expect three body paragraphs unless the essay question guides the student to write two body paragraphs.
2. SUPPLEMENTARY PARAGRAPHS SHOULD HAVE CLEAR AND RELEVANT TOPIC SENTENCES THAT FOLLOW THE ORGANIZATIONAL LIST IN THE INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH.

3. ALL **EVIDENCE** SHOULD SERVE TO PROVE YOUR THESIS.
 - a. 1 pt. - Provides **specific examples** of evidence relevant to the topic of the prompt.
 - b. 2 pts. - Supports an argument in response to the prompt using **specific and relevant** examples of evidence.
 - i. names, dates, people, bills, pieces of literature, and ideas that are relevant to the essay.
4. **ANALYSIS AND REASONING** - STUDENTS SHOULD DISPLAY AN APPRECIATION OF THE COMPLEXITY OF HISTORY.
 - a. 1 pt.- Uses historical reasoning (e.g. comparison, causation, CCOT) to frame or structure an argument that addresses the prompt.
 - b. 2 pts. - Demonstrates a complex understanding of the historical development that is the focus of the prompt, using evidence to corroborate, qualify, or modify an argument that addresses the question.
 - i. To earn the second point, the response must demonstrate a complex understanding. This can be accomplished in a variety of ways, such as:
 1. Explaining nuance of an issue by analyzing multiple variables
 2. Explaining both similarity and difference, explaining both continuity and change or explaining multiple causes or explaining both causes and effects
 3. Explaining relevant and insightful connections within and across periods
 4. Confirming the validity of an argument by corroborating multiple perspectives across themes
 5. Qualifying or modifying an argument by considering diverse or alternative views or evidence
 - ii. This understanding must be part of the argument, not merely a phrase or reference.
5. STUDENTS MUST AVOID THE USE OF FIRST. NEVER say I, you, your, we, our, my, or me.
6. USE SOPHISTICATED LANGUAGE - The verbs used in an essay are a critical element in presenting a more sophisticated and descriptive essay. Students should strive to go beyond the more mundane verbs. For example:

"The assassination caused the war..." vs. "The assassination provoked the outbreak of war..."

Or

"The diary showed the prejudice..." vs. "The diary vividly illustrates the deep prejudice..."

Do not use the verbs SHOW, FEEL, or BELIEVE when another stronger verb will work.

SOME WONDERFUL VERBS- REVEALS, ILLUSTRATES, PORTRAYS, EXEMPLIFIES, DEPICTS, IMPLIES, DEMONSTRATES, INDICATES, SYMBOLIZES

CONCLUSION

1. RESTATE YOUR THESIS.
2. **Contextualization** – discuss the Implications of the historical event or issue on the future of the country. (Optional)