

THE PAPER 2 & 3 BIBLE

HOW TO SUCCESSFULLY WRITE A DP HISTORY ESSAY

Paper 2 is based on 12 world history topics. Students must answer **two questions** chosen from **different topics**. The total exam length is 1 hour 30 minutes (45 minutes per essay).

% OF GRADE	
HL	SL
25	45

Paper 3 is based on 18 sections of the regional depth study. Students must answer **three questions**. Unlike the Paper 2, students may choose two answers from the same section. The total exam length is 2 hours 30 minutes (50 minutes per essay).

% OF GRADE	
HL	SL
35	N/A

1. Selecting the Question

- Read all the questions from the topics (P2) and sections (P3) you have covered in class.
- The first step in writing a good paper is choosing an appropriate question.
- When you choose a question make sure you understand the (command/key/ambiguous) terms in the question and the chronological, geographic, and thematic scope of the question, and that you have appropriate historical evidence to support any response.
- You should feel *confident* with the question you choose.

2. Understanding the Question

"Question analysis means reading the entire question, breaking down the task into constituent parts or themes and then avoiding the temptation to reproduce an avalanche of information whose relevance to the specific demands is quite marginal." – May 2009 History Subject Report

"Understanding the task (question analysis) is essential for success in the examination. Candidates need to be aware of the demands of the command terms and to take note of any dates provided in the question." May 2010 History Subject Review

Scope

- Chronology
- Region
- Theme (cultural, economic, legal, political, social, territorial, technological)

- Read the question three to four times. Make sure you know what it's asking:
 1. What type of a response does the **command term** demand?
 2. Are there **nebulous/key terms** in the question that need to be defined?
 3. What is the (chronological, regional, thematic) **scope** of the question?
- Answer the question as it is, not as you want it to be!
- Do not just blindly agree with whatever the question asks. (ex. "To what extent were dandelions important in Hitler's rise to power?")
- Don't be afraid to challenge any built in assumptions (ex. "Why were the intentions of those responsible for treaties rarely fulfilled?")

3. Planning the Essay

"A thematic approach to essays, when appropriate, usually provides a more successful outcome. The chronological narrative often tends towards descriptive writing and curtails analytical treatment of topics." – May 2010 History Subject Report

- Plan all your essays before you begin writing your first one
- Take 4-6 minutes to plan each essay; you may feel like this is a waste of time but it will save you time overall and will mean you do most of your thinking at the start, allowing you to spend the rest of your time writing
- Write your planning in a spare answer booklet so that you can keep your planning in front of you as you write
- Organize your arguments/paragraphs into suitable themes as thematic approaches generally score better than chronological accounts
- After you have established your arguments, write down related key names, policies, dates, events, key actors and statistics in point form
- Use pertinent and appropriate information only; make sure your arguments and historical knowledge are relevant to the question (this will help prevent your writing going off on a tangent)
- Now begin writing the essay question you are most confident with

Command Terms

Compare - Give an account of the **similarities** between two items or situations, referring to both of them throughout.

Contrast - Give an account of the **differences** between two items, referring to both of them throughout.

Discuss - Offer a **considered and balanced review** that includes a range of arguments, factors or hypotheses. Opinions or conclusions should be presented clearly and supported by appropriate evidence.

Evaluate - Make an **appraisal** weighing up the strengths and limitations of an argument or concept.

Examine - **Consider** an argument or concept in a way that **uncovers the assumptions and interrelationships** of the issue.

To what extent - **Consider the merits or otherwise** of an argument or concept. Opinions and conclusions should be presented clearly and supported with appropriate evidence and sound argument.

Note: The primary differences between a "to what extent" question and an "evaluate" question are: 1) that a "to what extent" question opens the door to the role other factors played, while an "evaluate" question demands that the student focus on the topic being evaluated, and 2) an "evaluate" questions require more of a judgment or clear stance on the question.

Introduction

"Higher awards also tended to go to those candidates who were able to effectively define/explain key terms at the outset." – May 2009 History Subject Report

- In your introduction you want to be sure to:
 - Set the historical context
 - Clarify any key terms (total war, guerrilla warfare, ideology, propaganda, militarism, brinksmanship) or nebulous terms (success, circumstances, modern) from the question
- Your introduction should narrow from a broad overview of the historical context to a thesis, which directly answers the question



Thesis

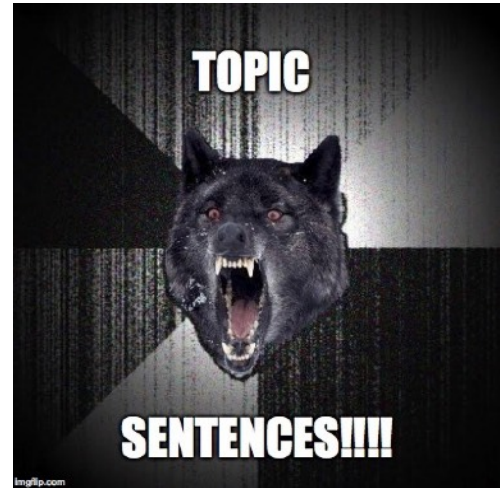
- The thesis should be the last sentence(s) of your introduction
- It should directly answer the question by using the language of the question
- It should state the main idea you plan to prove; it is the one statement you would make if you could only make one statement about the essay question
- An ideal thesis not only directly answers the question but also specifies the arguments that will be presented in the body of the essay

Body

"The best responses revealed command of chronology, task identification, structure and above all the provision of relevant historical detail. It cannot be emphasized enough that answers must be supported by reference to historical knowledge." – May 2010 History Subject Report

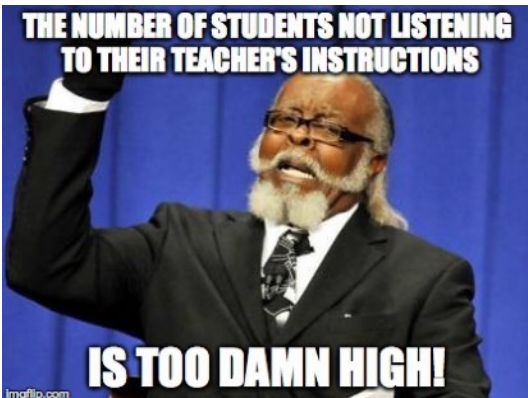
"Too many responses suffered from a great [lack] of sufficient, relevant, accurate historical knowledge. Sweeping generalizations devoid of convincing historical substantiation seemed to characterize too many responses." – May 2010 History Subject Report

- "Hit 'em hard" - Start your body paragraphs with your strongest argument
- Each body paragraph should begin with a topic sentence that introduces the paragraph's main argument; historical evidence should not be presented in the topic sentence as this leads to a narrative approach
- The use of topic sentences ensures that you are answering the question and supporting your thesis statement, while avoiding heading off on a tangent
- Ideally the topic sentence neatly transitions from the previous paragraph
- Everything in the paragraph should support the topic sentence
- The use of rhetorical questions can help clarify and channel your ideas, while sounding sophisticated
- The best support is in the combined form of explanation and historical knowledge
- Avoid narrative or descriptive accounts ("storytelling")
- Use dates to demonstrate you understand chronology and the historical context
- Be specific in your responses; avoid generalizations



Using Historical Vocabulary

Try to incorporate the academic language into your essay, such as: *hegemony, irredentist, ratify, geopolitical, sovereignty, casus belli, unilateralism, Manichean, etc.*



- Avoid using non-academic language or slang
- Use a concluding sentence that summarizes the paragraph and ties it back to your thesis; don't finish your paragraph with a quote from a historian

SEX - An Easy Guide to Body Paragraph Writing

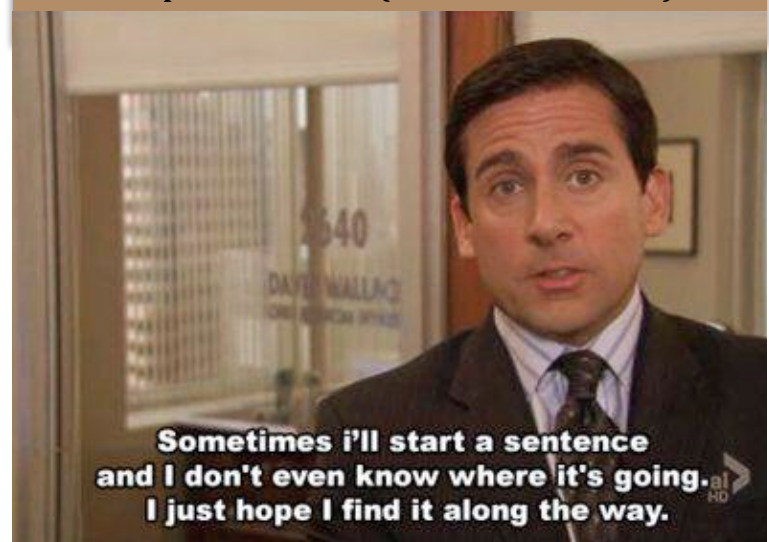
Statement - introduce the paragraph with your topic sentence

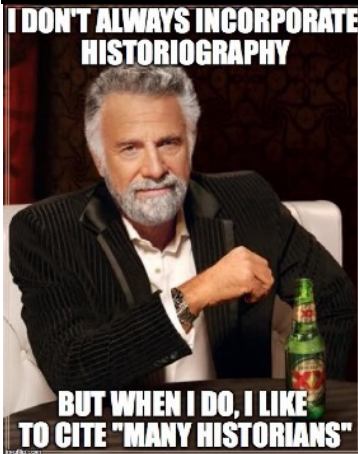
Explanation - develop the idea put forward in your topic sentence; "flesh it out"

eXample - provide historical knowledge, examples, details and statistics to support your argument

Concluding statement - restate your argument and link it back to your thesis statement, demonstrating how the paragraph serves to prove your thesis

Recipe for Distaster (aka. Don't Do This!!!)





Historiography

"Historiography is not the be-all and end-all of history essay writing: it should not be a substitute/replacement for solid factual knowledge, accurate chronology and sequencing which must form the basis of any effective essays." – May 2009 History Subject Report

"Candidates throw around terms like revisionist, intentionalist, structuralist, orthodox, etc. without real understanding of the terms and without any real appreciation of the basis of evidence which each of these schools uses in their argumentation." – May 2010 History Subject Report

- Historiography is useful but should be used to support arguments, not in lieu of them
- Avoid name dropping schools of thought (orthodox, revisionist, post-revisionist schools) without demonstrating some understanding of how/when/why they developed
- Quoting academic historians is much more appropriate and fruitful than quoting the authors of school textbooks
- The markband awards students who evaluate different approaches to historical events and use historiography to support their argument more than students who simply state different historical views.

Conclusion

- Briefly summarize your arguments, draw them together and demonstrate how they support your thesis (two-three sentences). In total, your conclusion should not be more than five sentences.
- Aim to include some *big picture thinking* in your conclusion that links your question to the key concepts of the course (see page 4). For example, "While it is next to impossible for the historian to definitively identify three concrete and primary causes..." or "While promoting change, the late Qing reforms represented significant continuity with China's past."
- If you run out of time, skip writing a conclusion so you can write a good final body paragraph
- Don't introduce any new information

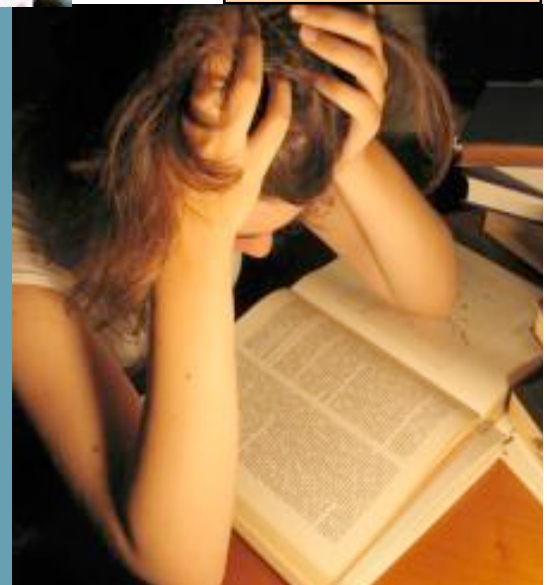


Commonly Misspelled Words

Aggressive
Dependent
Disastrous
Led
Separate

General Tips

- The first essay you write should be the one you're most confident in. However, don't spend more than 50 minutes (P2) or 60 minutes (P3) on your first paper as you risk not having enough time for your other(s)
- Don't use the first person (saying "Hitler was a poor military tactician," is more powerful than saying "I think Hitler was a poor military tactician.")
- Avoid hypotheticals (use *is*, *was*, and *will*, not *can* and *could*)
- Write consistently in the past tense
- Do not use white out.; cross out unwanted words by drawing a line through them
- Use terms from the language of the event you're studying (*latifundistas*, *bainian guochi*, *Wehrmacht*)
- Textbook authors aren't historians
- Avoid clichés ("all in all"), superlatives that you can't support (all, every, none, never) and the use of etc. or e.g.
- If you realize there is text you want to add to a paragraph, try to add it later that same page, not at the end of your essay





The Paper 2&3 Criteria (Simplified)

- The response is **focused** on the demands and implications of the question
- Well **structured** and effectively **organized**
- Response is **clear** and **coherent**
- **Knowledge** is detailed (P3), accurate and relevant
- Events are understood within their **historical context**
- Clear understanding of **historical concepts** (see right)
- Appropriate and relevant **examples** support **analysis/evaluation**
- **Different perspectives** are evaluated
- Well-developed **critical analysis** (P3)
- Main points are **substantiated**
- **Conclusion** is consistent with evidence

Concepts
Change
Continuity
Causation
Consequence
Significance
Perspective

Hitting the Criteria

Evaluating different perspectives - integrate historiography or show different ways of looking at the issue ("though it may be argued...")

Demonstrating conceptual knowledge - make explicit some of the six concepts in the course

Understanding Historical context - use dates or cause and effect

Structured and organized - use topic and concluding sentences that use the language of the question

10 Commandments of History Essay Writing

Thou shalt not...

1. Use the final moments before the exam to madly cram
2. Story-tell

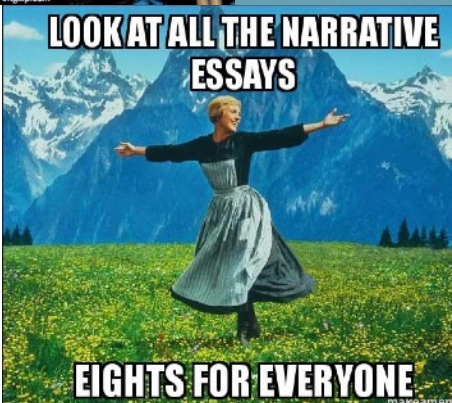
Thou shalt...

3. Give great thought to question selection
4. Read the question and know thou scope
5. Define key terms in thy intro
6. Finish thy intro with a thesis
7. Include arguments in thy thesis
8. Use dates, dates, dates
9. Begin paragraphs with topic sentences
10. Believe in thyself



Coping with Stress

- Get a good night's sleep before your exam
- Be confident entering the exam knowing you've done all you can to prepare
- Take a series of deep breaths while closing your eyes
- Use positive silent self talk ("I know this", "I am smart", "I am going to be fine")
- Put things in perspective – let's be honest, it's *just* a History Paper!



Common P2/P3 Mistakes

- Forgetting to include dates in the essay
- Confusing methods and conditions
- Misusing the terms USSR/Russia
- Mixing up 19th century and 1900s

Common P2 Mistakes

- Answering two questions from the same topic area
- Answering questions on topic 11 (twentieth century wars) using examples from outside the twentieth century (e.g. Sino-Japanese War, Opium Wars)
- Failing to observe the need to provide examples from two different regions
- Failing to distinguish between *rise* and *rule* of SPS (Topic 3)



At the End of the Essay

- Make sure the question numbers are written in the left hand margin and match the question you actually wrote on
- Fill out your candidate and page #s
- Cross out any material you do not want marked