

# Guide to understanding how to write **-THEMATIC -DOCUMENT BASED ESSAYS**



Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Social Studies Period: \_\_\_

**Calkins Road Middle School**

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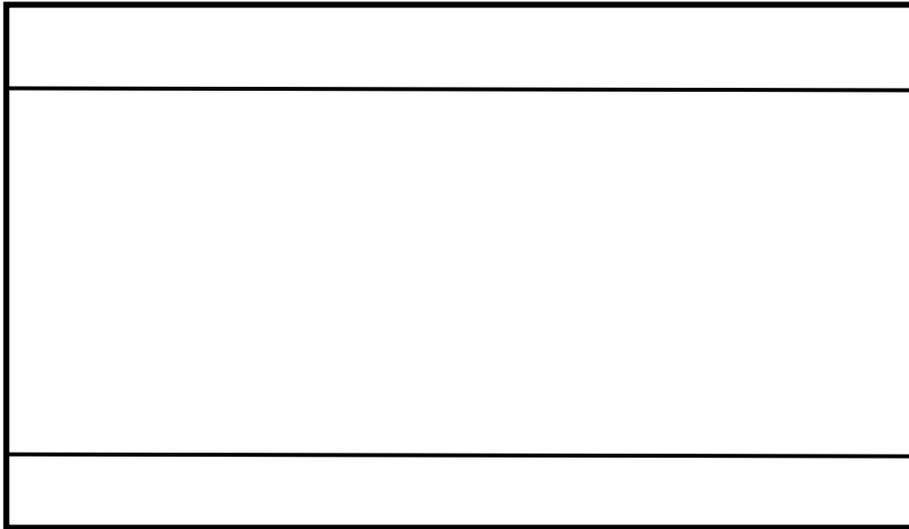
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# HOW TO SET UP A PRE-WRITE Sheet

## Step 1: Read the Cover Sheet

- ★ Actively read the Cover Page of the Essay
- ★ Do not skip over the directions.
- ★ Highlight/underline the Historical Context/Background
- ★ Pay very close attention to the Prompt (or Task)

## Step 2: Set up your Pre-Write Sheet

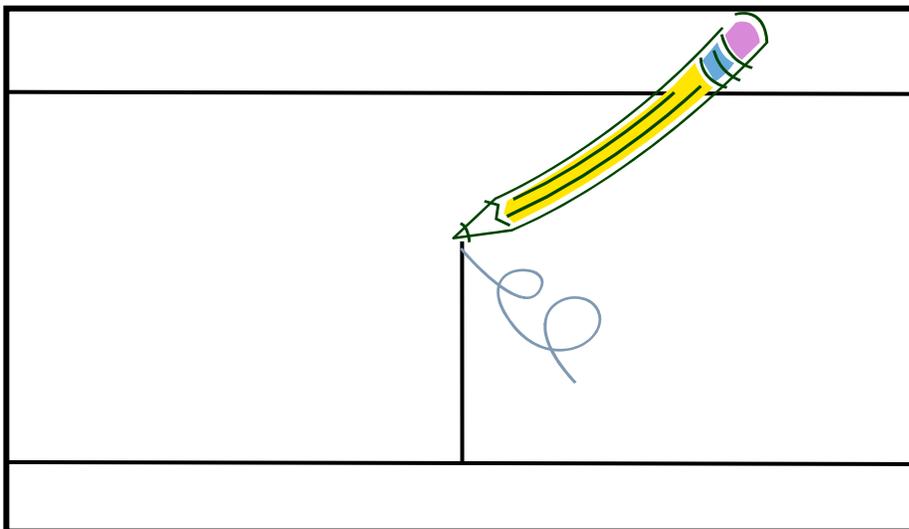


Always reserve this space for your INTRO formula

Always reserve this space for your notes on how to set up your BODY PARAGRAPH(s)

Always reserve this space for your CONCLUSION formula

## Step 3: Decide how many body paragraphs, and the theme of each.



Draw vertical lines to divide this section based on how many body paragraphs you plan to write

**Step 4 Set up your PRE-WRITE with the FORMULA FOR THE INTRO AND CONCLUSION**


**INTRO FORMULA:**  
 Historical Context (3-4 sentences) +  
 Controlling Idea/Thesis (1 sentence)

**CONCLUSION FORMULA:**  
 Restate Controlling Idea/Thesis (1) +  
 Body Sum-Ups(?) +  
 Closing Sentence (1)

**Step 5: Create a TOPIC SENTENCE (first sentence/theme) for each BODY PARAGRAPH. Use the INFORMATION from the COVER PAGE OF THE ESSAY under "Prompt" (see bulleted info)**

Thesis formula: XXXXX (3-4) + XXXXX(1)	
TOPIC SENTENCE: _____ _____	TOPIC SENTENCE: _____ _____
Conclusion formula: XXXX(1) + XXXXX(?) + XXXXXXXX	

**BODY PARAGRAPH:**  
 Use an individual bullet under the "Prompt" or Task to create your topic sentence.

**Step 6: If it is a THEMATIC ESSAY, begin to sort information relating to each of the topic sentences on your pre-write. If it is a DBQ Essay, examine and complete the questions under the first document, then place it correctly on the chart. For DBQ Essays, you should also include at least one detail or outside information relating to a topic sentence. Repeat this process for all documents, pausing briefly after each to place on your pre-write sheet, with one piece of outside information that relates to your topic sentence.**

# HOW TO WRITE AN INTRO

## Introductory Paragraph

There are many ways to write the first paragraph. Restating the Historical Context/Background is an excellent starting point for your introduction. Try to also incorporate background knowledge relating to the time period to make the introduction more unique. THE PURPOSE OF THE INTRO is to give background, and set up the stage for your essay. PLEASE DO NOT ATTEMPT TO GIVE SPECIFIC INFORMATION RELATING TO THE PROMPT HERE at this point. The first 3-4 sentences of your intro should be a combination of the "Historical Context"/"Background" (rephrased) and maybe one or two sentences that you include that relate to the "Historical Context" that you bring in as outside information.

The last sentence of the introduction paragraph is your Controlling Idea, which is sometimes called the THESIS. Use the bullets under the "Prompt/Task" to create your Controlling Idea/Thesis. Combine the bullets into **one** smooth flowing sentence.

### Simple Formula for writing an introductory paragraph:

Restate Historical Context & Incorporating Info you know about the time period- 3 to 4 sentences  
+ Controlling Idea/Thesis (what your essay will be about)- 1 sentence  
= TOTAL SENTENCES: 4-5 sentences

# HOW TO WRITE A BODY PARAGRAPH

## KEEP IN MIND.....

The number of body paragraphs for your essay is determined by two things...

- \*The amount of information you know on the subject
- \* The requirements that are listed under the prompt

As you use your planning page/pre-write as a reference, use it as a guide, you may find that a paragraph is getting lengthy, and instead of transitioning to the next idea, you start fresh with another paragraph.

## Let's Get Started.....

**TOPIC SENTENCE:** Begin each body paragraph with a TOPIC SENTENCE. A topic sentence should be a well-developed, clearly stated sentence indicating the subject of the paragraph. The topic sentence tells the reader what the theme of your paragraph is, and it is your job to stick to that theme throughout that paragraph. Be sure to use the Pre-Writing sheets as a reference.

**TRANSITION:** Once you have written your TOPIC SENTENCE, then you will need to TRANSITION to the first topic you will discuss that relates to the TOPIC SENTENCE. For

instance..."One example includes..."

**INFORMATION:** Once you present an idea, it is your job to describe, analyze and give examples which relate to the topic sentence of your paragraph. Be sure to always stay on task (relates directly to the topic sentence), you bring in outside information, and support statements with details and facts. **DO NOT INCLUDE OPINION, OR YOUR POINT OF VIEW.** You should **NEVER, EVER, EVER** use **PERSONAL PRONOUNS** ( I, we, you) while writing a Thematic or DBQ Essay.

**When you include information, the writer should keep in mind the information should:**

- \* include specific details as it relates to the theme of the paragraph
- \* go beyond simple listing of facts, explain the content in detail as it relates to the topic sentence
- \* incorporate relevant outside information to further support argument/point being made in each body paragraph
- \*IF THIS IS A DBQ ESSAY- you should also include document information, which is explained in depth, connects to the topic, and is cited. Often times, students forget to include the **WHY** this document relates to the theme of the paragraph in their essay.

**REPEAT THIS PROCESS AS NEEDED... transition, information, transition, information**

**To conclude a BODY paragraph, the writer should:**

- \*back the reader out of the paragraph
- \*rephrasing the topic sentence
- \*create a concluding statement that not only closes the body paragraph, but also transitions the reader into the next body paragraph.

## **HOW TO WRITE CONCLUSION PARAGRAPH**

### **Conclusion Paragraph**

The purpose of the closing paragraph is to sum up what you have talked about in a clear and concise manner. You should not present any new information at this point, just summarize and wrap up what you have already presented in your essay. Again, avoid any personal pronouns (I, we, you, etc.) and opinion. The formula for writing a conclusion is simple:

*Simple Formula for writing a conclusion paragraph:*

Rephrase Controlling Idea/Thesis (1 sentence)  
Body Sum-Ups (number depends on the number of prompts/bullets on cover)  
+ Closing Sentence (makes the reader think, predict what is to come, etc. (1 sentence)  
= TOTAL SENTENCES: 4-5 sentences

**REPHRASE THE CONTROLLING IDEA:** super simple, take your Controlling Idea from your intro paragraph (you know, that single sentence you placed at the end of your intro, made from the prompts/bullets from the cover page of the essay.

**BODY SUM-UPS:** The conclusion should be brief, to the point, and general. So far, you only have one sentence, your rephrased controlling idea. Next are the Body Sum-Ups. Body Sum-Ups should begin with the sentence you used for the body paragraph, but it should list off examples of what you talked about for each of the prompts/bullets.

**CLOSING SENTENCE:** Last, but not least, is the closing sentence. Simple, one sentence, that leaves the reader wanting more. It could predict the future, make a statement about your theme, state something memorable. In other words...a statement that is high on the "Hmmmmmm" factor...NOT an opinion, NOT a direct question and NOT a story!!! It stays on topic and wraps up your entire essay.

## **ONE LAST STEP: REVIEW & EDIT**

☐ **Check out the RUBRIC.....** for a Thematic Essay (page 8), or a DBQ Rubric (page 9). Pay special attention to the far right column, which contains an easy to read student checklist to ensure your essay has all the essential components.