

*Writing Through
the
Social Studies*

A Bridge

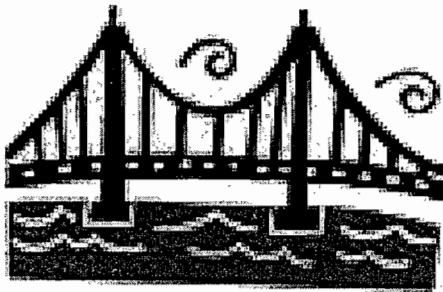


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Writing through the Social Studies

Studying history and the social sciences offers you a unique opportunity to explore with an open mind and discover evidence about a wide array of important questions of the human experience. You are challenged to grapple with complex historical questions, critically analyze historical information, draw your own informed conclusions from evidence, and express your views in a cogent, supported, and well-reasoned way. Writing is just one of the many ways in which we instruct and evaluate you; it is also part of our emphasis on instructing you to use reason and evidence to support your point of view.

We have found that the writing process is crucial in improving your critical thinking skills, especially your ability to analyze, and your facility to express yourself clearly and in a sophisticated way. We ask that you keep an open mind to this challenge — to understand that we know how difficult the writing process can be but that we will guide you with honest feedback and grades. The feedback and grades may, at times, be difficult to accept. You should be heartened to know that with careful attention to the instruction included in this guide and the feedback you receive from your teachers, your skills will improve.

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Social Studies Department Writing Goals

Goal: Graduating seniors should be able to comprehend, interpret, and critique Social Studies material, synthesize it into their respective and independent views, and express their thinking in a clearly written and logically organized manner.

In order to reach the above goal, the following writing skills will be emphasized in each grade:

Grade 9

Students will be able to:

- refine the writing of historical paragraphs
- effectively use supporting evidence
- focus on the “so what?” and “why is this important?”
- identify and create a thesis statement
- create an introduction that identifies the direction of the essay
- compose a clearly written and well structured five-paragraph essay
- write a conclusion, avoiding the introduction of new material
- title all papers to reflect the thesis

Grade 10

Students will be able to:

- understand appropriate use of citations
 - quotations should complement but not carry the argument
 - quotations must be explained and placed within context
 - information that is paraphrased
 - factual details not commonly known
- demonstrate how to cite
 - expand research skills using primary sources, secondary sources, and internet sites
 - the use of note cards
 - using the appropriate and consistent citation format
 - the original source of a quotation located within a secondary source
- become familiar with a variety of historical sources
- evaluate and integrate historical sources to strengthen the argument

Grade 11

Students will be able to:

- write a scholarly research paper

Grade 12

Students will be able to:

- maintain and develop departmental skills and standards through papers and projects in elective courses at all levels

Maintaining Academic Integrity

“Honesty is perhaps the most important virtue with respect to a student's academic work. Students' integrity and credibility are based on this honesty, which is one of the foundations of this school community. Wellesley High School students are expected to understand that dishonesty on exams, papers, and homework is a form of fraud and a very serious matter. Students are expected to avoid all forms of cheating, including practices that allow others to cheat from them. It is unfair to the students who earn their marks with hard work; it undermines the integrity of grades; it destroys trust between teachers and students; it is unacceptable.”¹

As part of this emphasis on Academic Integrity, your teachers will often require you to submit written assignments and projects with a signed copy of the following Honor Code Statement:

I certify that this paper/project is my own work, and I have cited any and all useful sources as necessary.

Keep in mind that this expectation of honesty extends to all of your work at Wellesley High School. **Copying papers, projects, or homework is cheating.** It is unacceptable to include text authored by you that you have previously submitted for other papers, projects, etc. In addition, it is not acceptable to work with other students on homework or projects unless your teacher has expressly indicated that such practice is acceptable.

¹ Wellesley High School, *Wellesley High School Student Handbook* (Wellesley, MA: Wellesley Public Schools, 2008), 70.

Plagiarism

“Plagiarism - knowingly representing the words or ideas of another as one's own work in any academic exercise. This includes submitting without citation, in whole or in part, prewritten term papers of another or the research of another, including but not limited to commercial vendors who sell or distribute such materials.”²

Plagiarism is the act of taking the words, ideas, data, illustrations, or statements of another person or source, and presenting them as one's own. Each student is responsible for learning and using proper methods of paraphrasing and footnoting, quotation, and other forms of citation, to ensure that the original author, speaker, illustrator, or source of the material used is clearly acknowledged.³

“In keeping with the responsibility of the school to teach standards of scholarly work generally accepted in colleges and to promote the integrity of its students, plagiarism is regarded as a most serious matter and will be handled as a form of cheating.”⁴

To avoid plagiarism, you must fully and clearly state the extent and nature of your borrowing from any source. If you do not understand what plagiarism is or how to properly cite material, check with your teacher.

Whether intentional or not, plagiarism is unacceptable.

Examples of plagiarism include **but are not limited to**:

- work not actually written by you. This includes using the exact words of a source without quotation marks even if you footnote or otherwise cite a source. It also includes cutting and pasting from any source, including an electronic source, without full and correct citation of that source.
- work in which you have incorporated as your own feedback you receive from others.
- ideas taken from books, magazines, television, films or any other sources that you present as original work.
- data that is not the result of you or your group's actual experimentation/analysis.
- ideas taken or copied from Cliffs Notes, SparkNotes or similar sources.
- thoughts, information, interpretations or organization of ideas without proper citation.
- sentences and paragraphs of borrowed material paraphrased by just changing a few words or rearranging sentences.
- work in which you have not sufficiently disrupted the structure of the original source. (This is why it's important to write one piece of information on each note card and to intersperse facts and ideas from different sources in your writing.)

² University of Massachusetts, Dean of Students Office: Academic Honesty (2006), http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/code_conduct/acad_honest.htm (accessed June 18, 2007).

³ Boston College, Academic Policies and Procedures: Academic Integrity, (September 21, 2006), <http://www.bc.edu/offices/stserv/academic/resources/policy/#integrity> (accessed June 18, 2007).

⁴ Wellesley High School, *Wellesley High School Student Handbook*, 71.

Paragraph Development

Paragraphs are the building blocks of the writing we do in Social Studies. A paragraph should contain at least five sentences. The paragraph begins with a topic sentence. The remaining sentences contain your evidence, analysis, and transitions that connect these different parts.

“Consider first the importance of paragraphs. When you share information with your friends, you naturally include a beginning, middle, and an end; and you do so without thinking much about it. You begin by identifying what it is you’re going to talk about and getting your friends interested in it (*Guess what?...*). You continue in the middle part by filling in all of the important details (*And then...*). And you end by carefully putting the finishing touches on your story (*Finally, I...*).

It’s a little different when you share something in writing. Much more thinking goes into how you will begin, how you will fill in the important details, and how you will end.”⁵

The following is a breakdown of the parts of a paragraph and the colors that will associated with each part for editing purposes

(For the purpose of editing, you may only highlight with the assigned color if the specific parts of a paragraph fulfill the required elements.)

Topic Sentences- Orange

Evidence- Green

Analysis- Blue

Transitions- Yellow

The following section describes the requirements of each of these parts of a paragraph. Under each explanation are actual examples from an in class essay that answered the following question.

Compare/contrast President Jackson and President Polk. You will need to discuss two characteristics when comparing or contrasting the two presidents.

Part I: Topic Sentences

What is a topic sentence? A topic sentence tells the reader what you will be proving in your paragraph. Therefore, if someone were to read only your topic sentences, they would understand the flow of your argument and how you will prove it.

Goal of a topic sentence: To introduce the ideas of the paragraph while simultaneously making a smaller argument that supports the thesis.

Requirements:

- A topic sentence is the first sentence of your paragraph.
- It contains an **idea** – not a statement of fact.
- It should be **ONE** main idea.
- It contains analysis.
- It should connect back to the thesis.
- It should contain transitional words or phrases that connect ideas from the prior paragraph.

⁵ Patrick Sebranek, Verne Meyer, and Dave Kemper, *Write Source 2000*. (Wilmington, MA: D.C. Heath and Company, 1995), 75.

Examples:

Needs Improvement – Jackson and Polk are comparable in many ways.

Proficient – Jackson and Polk both were unethical presidents, and used different methods to do their jobs.

Advanced – Andrew Jackson and James Polk had similar ideas about personal and national progress that were displayed in their presidencies.

Explanation: The *Advanced* example directly and narrowly addresses the question by providing two specific areas of comparison between Jackson and Polk. This topic sentence shows the author's idea — “*had similar ideas about personal and national progress*” — and tells the reader what the paragraph is about.

Part II: Evidence

What is evidence? Types of evidence include: People, events, dates, statistics, author's arguments, and policies. Evidence is what makes your argument valid. If your argument is based on unreliable or inaccurate evidence then it is not proven. Simply having facts in your paper is not evidence, the evidence must support your argument. Your evidence should be the strongest evidence you have; not *all* the evidence you have.

Goal: To support the arguments made in both your topic sentences and your thesis.

Requirements:

- Specific.
- Not your opinion.
- Numerous: at least 2 pieces of evidence per paragraph
- Explained, not just listed.
- Support your thesis and topic sentence.
- Accurate (based on reliable information).
- Contextualized and explained properly.
- Introduced properly-
 - As Historian Frederick Jackson Turner stated in his Frontier Thesis...

Examples:

Needs Improvement

Jackson and Polk are comparable in many ways. One way to compare them, they both gained land during their presidency. Jackson gained control over the land in Georgia occupied by the Cherokee and Black Seminoles during the Indian removal act. Polk gained Texas and part of California during the Mexican American war. The other way you can compare them, they both kicked people out of their land. Jackson kicked the Indians out of their land. He moved them west of the Mississippi river. Polk kicked the Mexicans out in the Mexican American War.

Proficient

Jackson and Polk both were unethical presidents, and used different methods to do their jobs. Jackson kicked over 100,000 Indians from the Creek, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Cherokee, and Seminoles off of their land, to take it for “the good of the economy.” In the process, over 25% of Cherokees and Seminoles died. Causing death for wealth is very unethical. Also, using the spoils system, Jackson replaced many Republicans with loyal Democrats in the governments infrastructure. He also moved money from the federal bank to pet banks

run by his supporters, transferring power to him and his party. His methods were blunt and forceful. . . . Polk was also unethical during the Mexican American War. He first acted friendly to Mexico, but actually caused the war by sending the army into disputed territory in Texas. His methods were far stealthier than Jacksons', as he provoked the Mexicans by placing his troops on the border. He also garnered support from believers in Manifest Destiny with this stealth, claiming the Mexico started the war and gaining 50,000 volunteers.

Advanced

Andrew Jackson and James Polk had similar ideas about personal and national progress that were displayed in their presidencies. Both men showed restraint in using force to expand the country. Andrew Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act, allowing him to eventually move Indian groups living east of the Mississippi River west of the river. This land now in American hands helped southern farmers, but hurt Indian peoples. Polk fought the Mexican War to gain the territory of Northern Mexico so that the country could expand westward to the Pacific. Also, the idea of a self-made man was prevalent in both presidencies. Andrew Jackson was the first self-made man to become president. He had modest upbringings and became successful and wealthy, unlike his predecessors. During the Gold Rush in Polk's presidency, many Americans became self-made by moving to California and getting rich. One can see, that although Polk and Jackson were not particularly similar men, their presidencies and actions had a lot in common.

Explanation: The evidence in the Proficient and Advanced paragraphs is better because it is more specific than in the Needs Improvement paragraph: 100,000 Indians, Manifest Destiny, disputed territory in Texas, Mexican American War, Indian Removal Act, Gold Rush. Facts are presented about these and they relate to the topic sentence. A big problem in the Proficient paragraph the writer offers an opinion — “acted friendly” — without a factual example of how Polk acted friendly. OPINION is NOT evidence. Although both the proficient and the advanced paragraphs may seem similar, they are different in how the writers analyze the evidence to support their point.

Part III: Analysis

What is analysis? The analysis is your opportunity to tell the reader why **you** picked pieces of evidence to support your topic sentence and thesis. You need to ask yourself and answer the questions “So What?” and “Why is my argument important?” Not only should analysis connect evidence to the topic sentence but it can also connect pieces of evidence to each other. Your analysis might include words and phrases such as although, unlike, whereas, consequently, these actions reflect, this event shows, and the previous examples illustrate. Analyses often contain adjectives and adverbs that show your opinion. Avoid using vague, general, and absolute words such as good, bad, a lot, huge, kind of, actually, very, always, never, greatest, worst, many, sometimes and maybe. Also avoid hypothetical and conditional claims: if...then, would have, could have.

Goal: To explicitly explain how your evidence connects to and furthers your argument.

Requirements:

- Supported by evidence.
- Sophisticated (not something obvious).
- Explicitly tied to your argument.

Explanation (refers to the examples under Evidence): The author of the advanced paragraph in the evidence section clearly explains how the evidence relates to the topic sentence. In other words, the author answers the “So what?” question for the reader. For example, the author writes about the Indian Removal Act and how it moved Indians west of the Mississippi. The author then explains that by moving the Indians Jackson benefited southern farmers and hurt the Indians. This supports the author’s idea about national progress in the topic sentence.

Part IV: Transitions

What is a transition? Transitions give your paragraph clarity and movement. In other words, think of your paragraph as connect-the-dot. Transitions help you connect the dots from beginning to end. In other words, think of your transitions as bridges between your paragraphs that are islands. You must connect the paragraphs together. Transitions are **not** a form of analysis, it is a bridge to connect analysis and evidence.

Goal: To connect the parts of your paper in order to increase clarity and flow.

Requirements:

- Should exist within a paragraph
- Should exist at the start of a paragraph
- Should be varied
- Should be appropriate to the context

The following page contains some common transitions that are divided into categories based on when they are used. You must select an appropriate transition for the point you are making.

Example #1

Wrong: You must complete this essay by 5 p.m. **Likewise**, you must do the exercises on page 47.

Right: You must complete this essay by 5 p.m. **In addition**, you must do the exercises on page 47.

Example #2

Wrong: Teenagers usually enjoy loud music. **Otherwise**, the elderly often dislike it.

Right: Teenagers usually enjoy loud music. **In contrast**, the elderly often dislike it.

Common Transition Words and Phrases

Adding Information

and
not only . . . but also
also
moreover
furthermore
in addition/Additionally
Besides
Another
Together with

Examples

We have seen the movie twice, **and** now we want to see it again.
Not only did my brother break his leg, **but** he **also** bruised his rib.
My friend speaks Korean and English. She **also** speaks Chinese.
Cheating is dishonest. **Moreover**, it hinders students from learning.
Students should be on time. **Furthermore**, they must be prepared.
You must complete this essay by 5 p.m. **In addition**, you must do the exercises on page 47.
Besides getting all As in all her classes, she also joined student government.
Another time when Trisha felt fear was when she saw a snake.
Together with the high cost of the trip and the recent plane crash, Tom could not take his trip to Tokyo.

Giving Examples

for example
for instance
specifically
in particular
The first (second, another, etc.)
example/reason is . . .

Examples

I have been to many countries. **For example**, I have been to Russia, Canada, Mexico, and Spain.
He often eats strange foods. **For instance**, he once ate cow brains.
I like to travel. **Specifically**, I enjoy places with old cathedrals.
I love fruit. **In particular**, I like bananas, pineapple, and berries.
My friend hates skiing for several reasons. **The first reason** is that she dislikes being cold. **Another reason** is that she often falls.

Showing a Contrast

but
however
on the other hand
otherwise
instead
in contrast
Unlike
Neither ___ nor ___

Examples

Bill earned an A on his essay, **but** Susan got a B.
We wanted to leave at 8:00. **However**, Mike arrived too late.
She hates housecleaning. **On the other hand**, she doesn't mind cooking.
Students should attend class. **Otherwise**, they may lose their status.
I am not going out tonight. **Instead**, I will stay home and watch a video.
Teenagers usually enjoy loud music. **In contrast**, the elderly often dislike it.
Unlike the snowy winters in Vermont, South Carolina has little snow.
Neither constant raids **nor** famine stopped the King from spending tax money on silk robes for

himself.
 Confucius expected people to follow the law because of their own morality. **Conversely**, Legalists strong laws because people did not have strong morality.
 The new immigrants faced hard times their first few years in America. **Even so**, they refused to leave.
 Patrick always set his alarm for 6 am **yet** could not get up on time.
Counter to the way Michelle bullied the new girl, Dawn offered her a seat at the lunch table.
As opposed to the smiling faces of the audience, her mother looked angry.
 The king refused to sign the bill. **Still**, the nobles still fought for more rights.

Showing a Concession

yet
 even so
 however
 Even though
 Although
 despite the fact that . . .
 despite
 Nevertheless

Examples

He knows that he should do his homework, **yet** he never does it.
 I know you don't like to study. **Even so**, you must pass your exam.
 There are many benefits to exercising. **However**, you must take some precautions to avoid injury.
Even though the book is difficult to read, it is very interesting.
Although the book is difficult to read, it is very interesting.
Despite the fact that Kate is good at tennis, she lost the match.
Despite Kate's skill at tennis, she lost the match.
 Colin was nervous to take the penalty kick. **Nevertheless**, he went on the field and took the shot.

Showing a Similarity

likewise
 similarly
 in the same way/manner
 Equally/Equally important
 Likewise

Examples

Math was hard for me in high school. **Likewise**, it is hard in college.
 Houseplants require much care and attention. **Similarly**, outdoor plants must be cared for properly.
 Rock climbing takes much practice and skill. **In the same way**, learning to write well requires a great deal of practice.
 Brett always completed his homework on time. **Equally important**, he shows up to class to turn it in.
 Ms. Katz always calls a parent when a student misses a major assignment. **Likewise**, Ms. Gordon sends a letter home when a student fails to complete a major assignment.
 Google is a search engine. **Similarly**, Yahoo can also help you find information on the internet.
 The bookshelves were helping in organizing Jane's books. **Also**, they were a place to display her favorite photos.

Showing a Result/Conclusion

so
as a result
therefore
thus
as a consequence
consequently
Accordingly
Due to
Therefore
Clearly
Ultimately

Examples

Janet passed her exam, **so** she is very happy.
Tim was late. **As a result**, we could not go to the concert.
James is not feeling well. **Therefore**, he will not be here today.
The committee voted against the proposal. **Thus**, we must consider another idea.
I forgot that the cake was in the oven. **As a consequence**, it burned.
Tina lost her keys. **Consequently**, she could not drive home.
Josh was always acting out in class. **Accordingly**, the teacher gave him detention.
Due to the enormous popularity of the new album, all concerts we sold out.
Jane studied really hard for her test. **Therefore**, she earned her top grade all year on the test.
Kim went over her credit card limit; **clearly** she was not ready for the responsibilities of having a credit card.
Students followed all the instructions for their research project. **Ultimately**, the earned high graded on that portion of the project.

Establishing Time Relation or Sequence

first
second
finally
in conclusion
in summary
meanwhile
At the same time
In the meantime

Examples

First, I think that she is studying hard.
Second, I believe that she is a bright student.
Finally, I know that she has great potential.
In conclusion, I feel that she deserves to win the scholarship.
In summary, we should offer her some financial help.
Jeff was working hard to clean the house. **Meanwhile**, his brother was watching television.
At the same time that Lincoln freed the slaves, the first railroad was built.
Spain was slowly rebuilding after the war.
In the meantime, the Muslims were preparing another attack.

Explaining or Emphasizing

in fact
actually
in other words

namely
Especially
For instance
Indeed

For this reason

To put another way
Stated differently

Again

Examples

The bookstore sells cards. **In fact**, they have the best cards around. James is **actually** the first person I have known who has been to Africa. He was late to class again when he overslept. **In other words**, he didn't wake up on time.

The plan needed only two things to succeed—**namely**, time and money. Chris always liked going to the mall, **especially** when he was allowed to buy a toy. Kelly is a nice person, **for instance**, she always volunteers her extra time. The Wellesley tap water tastes good. **Indeed**, people often say it is the best water in all of Massachusetts.

The class was always rowdy after lunch, **for this reason**, the teacher allowed the students a little extra time to settle down.

Their school building was in poor shape. **To put another way**, the students needed a new school.

Tara was always picked first for softball. **Stated differently**, she was one of the best softball players in the school.

Again, the purpose of the rally was to fight for equal rights.

Dos and Don'ts for Writing in Social Studies

Recognize that writing for social studies is a little different than other types of writing you do.

Do...

- **understand and answer** the question.
- create a **topic sentence/thesis statement** that answers the question.
- write in the **past tense**.
- write in the **third person**.
- write **in your own words**. If you paraphrased (summarized) then you need to **cite** that material.
- put each main idea in a **separate paragraph**. The topic sentence should capture that idea.
- make sure that each paragraph has at least **five sentences**.
- write in **complete** sentences – no fragments or run-ons.
- spell words **correctly**. Be careful with using the word you want (their-there, are-our, hear-here).
- use **accurate**, **relevant** and **specific evidence**. Dates, key terms, events, full names, help provide context for the reader and support the argument.
- write as if the reader has no prior knowledge of the topic even when the reader is your history teacher. Remember, this is your chance to **demonstrate your knowledge of the topic**.
- use **transitions** to give your paragraph(s) clarity, focus and movement.

Don't...

- use **flowery language**.
- use the **first or second person**. Any use of "I think" and "you" is a significant problem and needs to be changed.
- **ever** use phrases such as "according to the textbook," "this is shown/found in," "in this essay," "this paragraph will."
- use **informal or vague words**. A formal essay should sound different than the way you talk. Some words that fall into this problem category: thing, stuff, a lot, many, huge, good, bad, and wicked. If you state many or several, then that should be a major clue to yourself to provide specific information about that subject.
- **ever** have a quotation stand alone. If any part of your essay looks like what follows, you have a significant problem with how you are using quotations:
*Washington also warned against developing permanent alliances with other countries because choosing sides could draw the U.S. into war. "Observe good faith and justice toward all nations. Cultivate peace and harmony with all."*⁶
- **repeat information**. One common problem is that students say the same thing in multiple sentences – once you have said it, be done.

The dos and don'ts can be found in checklist form at www.whssocialstudiesdept.wikispaces.com

Sterling, Stuckey, and Linda Salvucci. *Call to Freedom: Beginnings to 1867*. (Austin, TX: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 2001), 320.

Developing a Thesis

A thesis is your answer to an historical question that you will support with evidence from the research process. It is NOT an indisputable fact on its own. If you ask yourself, "What is the point of this paper?" your answer should resemble your essay's thesis. Condense your central *argument* into a one-sentence thesis statement and include this sentence in the introduction of your essay. Everything you write should then develop around this clear thesis.

Although it makes sense to have an idea of what your thesis statement is before you begin writing, it is crucial to understand that developing a well-crafted thesis is a process and that *refining and revising that statement as you research and write* will help you discover what your essay is really about—what you want to say.

Frequently during the writing and research process, your original thesis may no longer be as valid as you thought. Review and revise your thesis, if necessary, to reflect what you have learned.

The guidelines below suggest how to evaluate and refine your thesis, while showcasing your ideas.

When writing a thesis, bear in mind that a thesis must:

- be provable through evidence
- specifically address the question asked
- be focused on one narrow topic
- reflect your position on an arguable issue

The following was taken from The Writing Center at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill website:

How do I know if my thesis is strong?

If there's time, run it by your instructor or go to the Social Studies Lab to get some feedback. Even if you do not have time to get advice elsewhere, you can do some thesis evaluation of your own. When reviewing your first draft and its working thesis, ask yourself the following:

- Do I answer the question? Re-reading the question prompt after constructing a working thesis can help you fix an argument that misses the focus of the question.
- Have I taken a position that others might challenge or oppose? If your thesis simply states facts that no one would, or even could, disagree with, it's possible that you are simply providing a summary, rather than making an argument.
- Is my thesis statement specific enough?
- Thesis statements that are too vague often do not have a strong argument. If your thesis contains words like "good" or "successful," see if you could be more specific: why is something "good"; what specifically makes something "successful"? Does my thesis pass the "So what?" test? If a reader's first response is, "So what?" then you need to clarify, to forge a relationship, or to connect to a larger issue.
- Does my essay support my thesis specifically and without wandering? If your thesis and the body of your essay do not seem to go together, one of them has to change. It's o.k. to change your working thesis to reflect things you have figured out in the course of writing your paper. Remember, always reassess and revise your writing as necessary.

- Does my thesis pass the "how and why?" test? If a reader's first response is "how?" or "why?" your thesis may be too open-ended and lack guidance for the reader. See what you can add to give the reader a better take on your position right from the beginning.

Developing Your Thesis:

Suppose you are taking a course on 19th-century America, and the instructor hands out the following essay assignment: Compare and contrast the reasons why the North and South fought the Civil War. You turn on the computer and type out the following:

The North and South fought the Civil War for many reasons, some of which were the same and some different.

This weak thesis restates the question without providing any additional information. You will expand on this new information in the body of the essay, but it is important that the reader know where you are heading. A reader of this weak thesis might think, "What reasons? How are they the same? How are they different?" Ask yourself these same questions and begin to compare Northern and Southern attitudes (perhaps you first think, "The South believed slavery was right, and the North thought slavery was wrong"). Now, push your comparison toward an interpretation—why did one side think slavery was right and the other side think it was wrong? You look again at the evidence, and you decide that you are going to argue that the North believed slavery was immoral while the South believed it upheld the Southern way of life. You write:

While both sides fought the Civil War over the issue of slavery, the North fought for moral reasons while the South fought to preserve its own institutions.

Now you have a working thesis! Included in this working thesis is a reason for the war and some idea of how the two sides disagreed over this reason. As you write the essay, you will probably begin to characterize these differences more precisely, and your working thesis may start to seem too vague. Maybe you decide that both sides fought for moral reasons, and that they just focused on different moral issues. You end up revising the working thesis into a final thesis that really captures the argument in your paper:

While both Northerners and Southerners believed they fought against tyranny and oppression, Northerners focused on the oppression of slaves while Southerners defended their own right to self-government.

Compare this to the original weak thesis. This final thesis presents a way of interpreting evidence that illuminates the significance of the question. Keep in mind that this is one of many possible interpretations of the Civil War—it is not the one and only right answer to the question. There isn't one right answer; there are only strong and weak thesis statements and strong and weak uses of evidence.⁷

⁷ <http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/thesis.html> (accessed July 29, 2008)

Instructions for Writing a Multi-Paragraph Essay

Introduction

When writing the introduction you should:

- explain the key words/phrases in the thesis statement
- provide the reader with the historical context for your thesis statement and paper
- engage the reader
- place your thesis statement as the last sentence

When writing the introduction, you should AVOID:

- statements like: “I plan to prove in this paper...”; “This paper will show...”; “Throughout history...”
- personal pronouns such as “I,” “you,” “me,” and “we;” your name is on the paper so it is assumed to represent your thinking.
- indefinite words such as “seems,” “appears,” and “maybe.” This will cause the reader to think that you are unsure of your position.
- using quotations or specific evidence to support your thesis

Body Paragraphs

Refer to *Paragraph Development* on pages 6-9 to assist you in the construction of your paragraphs when writing a multi-paragraph essay.

Conclusion

The conclusion wraps up your paper. The conclusion is also your chance to end on a strong note.

When writing a conclusion you should:

- Make your first sentence of the conclusion a restatement of your thesis. You should try to use different words to capture the same ideas of the thesis.
- Subsequent sentences summarize what you discussed in the body paragraphs.
- The last sentence of the conclusion makes it clear to readers why they should care about what you wrote. Ask yourself if you have answered the “So what?” and “Why is my argument important?” questions.

When writing the conclusion, you should AVOID:

- repeating specific evidence from the body paragraphs.
- presenting new evidence
- Introducing new ideas
- using quotations unless it encapsulates your entire argument
- making sweeping generalizations about either the time period in question or today

Essay Checklist

Before handing in your paper you should make sure that all your paragraphs contain the required elements. Use the checklist below to make sure that you have fulfilled the requirements of writing.

Topic Sentences should...

- A topic sentence is the first sentence of your paragraph.
- It contains an **idea** – not a statement of fact.
- It should be **ONE** main idea.
- It contains analysis.
- It should connect back to the thesis.
- It should contain transitional words or phrases that connect ideas from the prior paragraph

*Your topic sentences should be able to be read independently from your paper and the reader would understand the flow of your argument and how it is going to be proven.

Evidence should...

- Specific
- Numerous-at least 2 per paragraph
- Accurate
- Contextualized and explained properly
- Introduced properly

Analysis should...

- Make a complex connection between evidence and argument

Transitions should...

- Should exist within a paragraph
- Should exist at the start of a paragraph
- Should be varied
- Should be appropriate

Introduction should...

- Have the thesis statement as the last sentence
- Set the historical context
- Introduce the key terms in the thesis statement

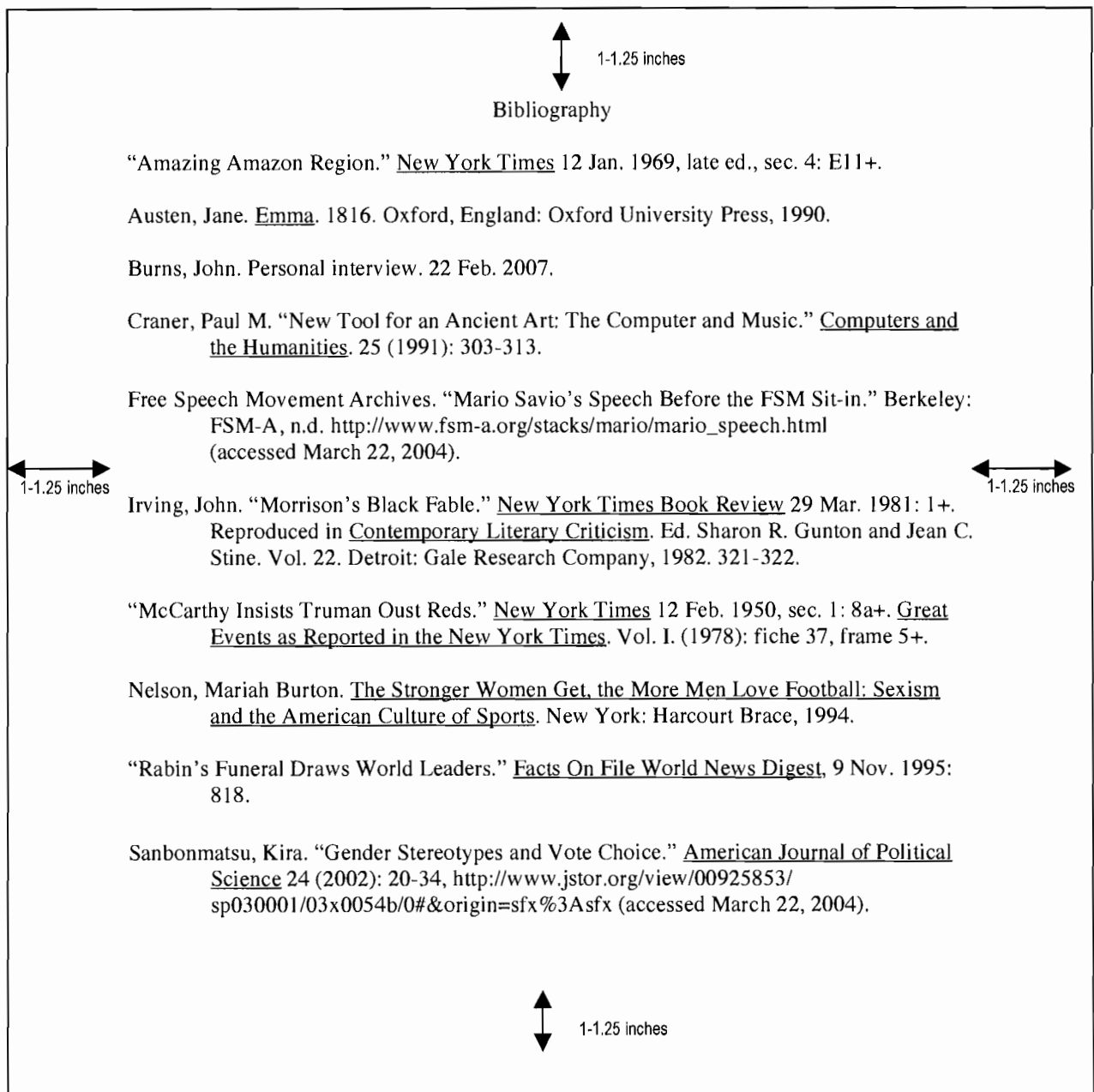
Conclusion should...

- Restate the thesis statement in new words
- Briefly summarize your main argument
- Help the audience understand the importance of your essay, the “so what?”

Bibliography Format

- Start a new page for your bibliography.
- Alphabetize according to the author's last name or, if not available, the first word of the title, excluding *a*, *and*, or *the*.
- Indent second and subsequent lines 5 spaces (or ½ inch). (This is called a “hanging indent.”)
- When you have two or more works by the same author, alphabetize entries by the first word in the title (excluding articles). Entries after the first begin with three hyphens positioned at the left margin followed by a period and one space.
- Entries are single-spaced, but skip a line between each entry.
- Proofread for proper citation format and punctuation. (Watch out for end punctuation!)
- Do not number or letter your bibliography!

This is what a bibliography page should look like.



Citations

Below is a list of how to cite various sources.

Book

- 1 author Austen, Jane. Emma. 1816. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1990.
- 2 authors Mounir A. Farah and Andrea Berens Karls, World History: The Human Experience (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1997).
- 4 or more authors William McPherson et al., English and American Literature: Sources and Strategies for Collection Development (Chicago: American Library Association, 1987), 67.

Encyclopedia

Collier's Encyclopedia. 1987 ed.

Newspaper

Pamela, Mercer, "U.S. Venture Bets on Colombian Coal," New York Times, 27 July, 1995, D7

Music Lyrics

The Beatles, "The Long and Winding Road," by John Lennon and Paul McCartney, Let It Be (New York: Apple, n.d.), recording.

Electronic Database

"Athens and Sparta (Overview)" World History: Ancient and Medieval Eras. ABC-CLIO. <http://www.ancienthistory.abc-clio.com> (accessed August 18,2009).

Website

With known author Knox, E.L. Skip. "The Crusades." <http://crusades.boisestate.edu>.

With Unknown author The Ohio state University Department of History. "The Scopes Trial." <http://history.osu.edu/Projects/Clash/Scopes/scopes-page1.htm>

*If you are citing a website whose authorship is unknown, begin with the owner of the website. Use periods in place of commas to separate the title, date, and URL.

Photo Image

Herndon, William Lewis. Exploration of the Valley of the Amazon, 1815-1852. Edited by Gary Kinder. New York: Grove Press, 2000.

Lecture

Drew Kelton, "The French Revolution" lecture to World History ACP, Wellesley High School, Wellesley, MA, 2, June, 2009.

Film

The Civil War. Produced by Ken Burns. 11 hours. PBS Video, 1990. 9 Videocassettes.

Appendix

Grade 6 Persuasive Paragraph Rubric

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Spelling• Grammar• Punctuation• Complete Sentences• 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strong opening sentence (topic sentence)• Three supporting details (evidence)• Accurate historical facts• Specific names, dates, and events from the reading to support ideas• Meaningful use of transition words (first, second, third)• Concluding sentence that addresses the questions and brings your argument to a close (analysis)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Persuasive language• Discusses and connects main points rather than just listing them.• Interesting observations (So what?)		

Dos and Don'ts for Social Studies Writing in Grades 7 and 8

DO

- Make sure that all the writing is in the past tense in history essays.
- Make sure that you write in the third person format. You can use the word "one" as a substitute if needed. ("When one looks at his presidency, it is clear that Washington faced challenges.")
- Make sure that all the writing is in your own words. It must be significantly different than the words of your sources.
- Put each main idea in a separate paragraph started by a topic sentence.
- Make sure that each paragraph has at least 4 sentences.
- Make sure that each sentence is complete. Don't use fragments or run-ons.
- Make sure that you use transition words to connect ideas and make your arguments clear to your reader. ("First", "Next", "In conclusion", etc) *To further develop your tone and style avoid using these transitions words.*
- Make sure you have spelled words correctly. (Don't just rely on spell check because it will not find the problem with Untied States.)
- Make sure that you are using the correct form of a word. (Watch out for the common problems: their v. they're v. there; your v. you're, then v. than, etc)
- Try to put in dates and time periods to make the history as clear as you can. ("In 1793", "During the Industrial Revolution" are good. DON'T say "Back in the day" or "Nowadays.")
- The first time you mention people, use their title and first and last name. "President George Washington." Later write "President Washington" or "Washington", but not "George."
- EDIT and REVISE. You should print out, read, and correct/revise at least once. Writing is a process with multiple drafts.
- BE SPECIFIC. Instead of writing "The purchase cost a lot.", write "The Louisiana Purchase cost \$15 million."

DON'TS

- Don't use first or second person. (No using "I", "I think", "In my opinion", "you", or "we".)
- Don't use slang, informal, or vague words such as "thing", "stuff", "he", "it", "as usual", "huge", "Of course", etc. A formal essay should sound different than the way you talk.
- Don't use the same words (especially verbs) over and over again, especially in the same paragraph.
- Don't tell the reader what you plan to do. For example, don't do this: "In this essay, I am going to write about Clara Barton and tell you her life story." Or "And those were the reasons the mills were dangerous." Or "My thesis is that mills were bad and now I am going to prove it."
- Don't assume the reader has a lot of prior knowledge of the event/issue. Explain the background and prove your point. If you are not sure how much background is too little or too much, write a sample paragraph and bring it to your teacher. Even when your reader is a teacher who knows the background, you need to show that you know it also.
- Don't use absolutes such as "only, everyone, no one, always" unless you really mean it. It is very rare that these can be supported by evidence.
- Don't use exclamation points, rhetorical questions, and parenthetical phrases. (Really!! Like, do you know what I mean??)

Common social studies essay questions and the key words that tell me which type of thinking map to use

Types of Thinking Maps

Explain

Explain...

What are the main ideas, supporting ideas, details?

Give your opinion with clear reasons....

Summarize...

Tree Map

Order of Events

What is the order of events?

What happened at the beginning, middle, end?

What was the sequence of events?

Plot the events....

Trace the events....

Flow Map

Cause and Effect

What are the causes and effects of this event?

What caused this event? How did this event change the nation, world, etc?

Why did this event happen?

Predict the effects of this event?

Cause and Effect Map (Multi-Flow Map)

Compare and Contrast

Compare and contrast these two people, places, events, challenges, situations....

How are these _____ alike and different?

How do these connect/tie in?

What are the similar and different qualities of these things?

Double Bubble Map

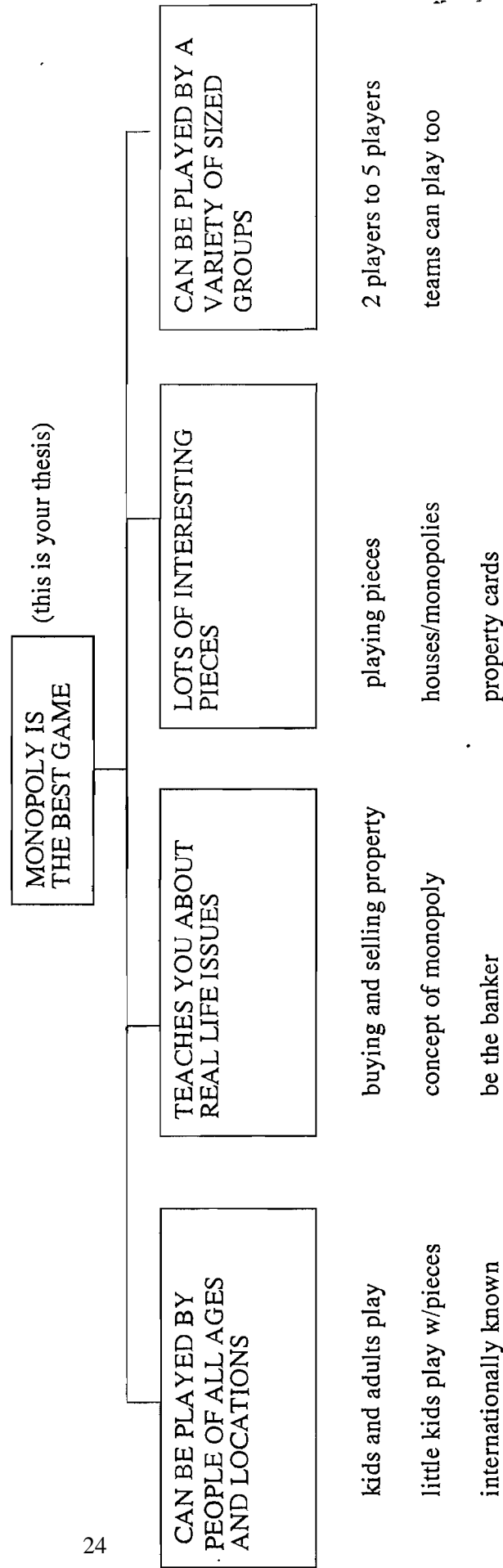
BE CAREFUL...Sometimes it is obvious which type of thinking you are being asked to do, but sometimes it is not. Teachers may use words that could fit in multiple categories or none at all. For example, the word "describe" might fit in several maps depending on what is written next.

HOW TO CREATE THE PERFECT TREE MAP

A Tree Map is a graphic organizer that works very similarly to an outline. Here's how it is set up:

- The top of the map has a single box with the topic. It can be a phrase, or the thesis (the main point you are making), of your essay.
- In the next level down you list the main reasons or claims you are making in your essay. Each one goes in a separate box.
- Underneath each box, you list notes to put in the paragraph. It should be enough info to build your paragraph, but it does not have to have every detail/statistic.
- When you are done, you look back and decide what the best order would be to write this information. Number the boxes with the order you will form your essay. ALSO, number the evidence below each topic (1A, 1B, 1C, etc)
- You are now ready to form your essay. Make sure you follow the plan you've just created when writing the body of the essay.

Example: What is the best board game? Write an essay explaining your choice



How to Write an introduction paragraph...the pizza example strikes back!!

The Intro paragraph has three parts:

1. **The lead:** This is 1-2 sentences to grab the attention of the reader by opening in an interesting way.
2. **The transition:** this is one sentence that hints at the topic and gets us closer to the thesis.
3. **The thesis:** This should be LAST sentence of the first paragraph It states your thesis.

1. The lead: Food is one of the great luxuries in life. From sushi to snack food, we have so many choices that is sometimes difficult to decide what to try.
2. The transition: However, when it comes to taste, variety and a number of other factors, not all food is as good to eat as others.
3. When one considers all the factors, it is clear that pizza is the best food.

Putting it all together:

Food is one of the great luxuries in life. From sushi to snack food, we have so many choices that is sometimes difficult to decide what to try. However, when it comes to taste, variety and a number of other factors, not all food is as good to eat as others. When one considers all the factors, it is clear that pizza is the best food

Other notes to Consider:

1. The first paragraph should be short. **Don't** waste space with overly fluffy leads.
2. Do not start giving reasons why your thesis is accurate in the opening paragraph-just state the thesis. There should be no statistics, quotes or specific evidence in the intro.
3. Underline your thesis so that I am clear that you know what the thesis is.