

Creating Your Argument...The Thesis Statement – What are you defending?

Your thesis is not only your answer or stand on a question, it is your entire introductory paragraph which includes your answer/stand, analysis of an opposing or alternate viewpoint, context, and organizational categories/themes. Your introduction will typically be between 2 and 5 sentences, and it should clearly communicate your answer/stand and what you will be expounding upon in your body paragraphs.

The Thesis Formula Options:

Although X, Y because ABC.

'X' represents the strongest point against your argument. We call this the counter-argument. It can also be an alternate viewpoint. This X needs to be thoroughly explained (with evidence) in your introduction.

'A, B, and C' represent the three strongest points for your argument. We call these your organization categories. Sometimes you may only have two... other times four... three is usual but not mandatory.

'Y' represents the position you will be taking – in other words, your stand on the prompt. Your Y must be clear and ATFP... *address the full prompt!*

X. However A and B. Therefore, Y.

'X' represents the strongest point against your argument. We call this the counter-argument. It can also be an alternate viewpoint. This X needs to be clearly identified and briefly explained but the details and specific evidence will come in your first body paragraph (with this second formula... the X is the first body paragraph!)

'A & B' represent the two strongest points for your main argument (Y). We call these your organization categories. These two paragraphs will clearly explain your Y with specific evidence.

'Y' represents the position you will be taking – in other words, your stand on the prompt. Your Y must be clear and ATFP... *address the full prompt!*

For example, if you were addressing the prompt, "Evaluate the extent to which westward migration in the later 19th century contributed to maintaining continuity as well as fostering change in the United States," your thesis might include the following:

Y: led to dramatic changes

ABC: geographically, economically, and politically

X: maintained continuity culturally

Weak Thesis: Although westward migration maintained continuity, it fostered change to a greater extent because of changes in politics, economics, and geography.

Strong Thesis: Although westward migration in the later 19th century propagated the spirit of manifest destiny and white dominance which was consistent with westward expansion in the early 19th century with things like the addition of new states in the Louisiana Territory and the Trail of Tears, the movement westward in the later half of the 19th century fostered change to a greater extent than it maintained continuity. Change came economically with new technology, resources, and labor, politically with new, western political organizations and agendas, and geographically with dramatic changes to the environment.

Formulas for the BIG FOUR using formula #1: Although X, Y because ABC.

The formula is essentially the same for any type of question, and you can move the variables around. Below you will find some different ways to use it depending on what type of question you are answering.

1. Historical Causation:

What are the major causes or consequences of "event" and what were the most important causes or consequences of "event"?

X = least important cause or consequence, with an explanation why; explained thoroughly with a piece of specific evidence

A, B, C = most important causes / consequences, explanations why, broken up into organizational categories

Y = your assertion statement

2. Continuity and Change over Time:

What are the major patterns of continuity or change over the time period and was there more continuity or change over that time period?

X = continuity or change, your counter-argument explained thoroughly with a piece of specific evidence

A, B, C = continuity or change during the specified time period, broken up into organizational categories

Y = your assertion statement

3. Compare and Contrast:

What similarities and differences are there between the two things, are there more similarities or differences, and why, account for those similarities or differences?

X = more similar or different, your counter-argument explained thoroughly with a piece of specific evidence

A, B, C = similarities or differences between the two things, broken up into organizational categories

Y = your assertion statement

4. Periodization | (or Take a Position):

Evaluate whether something was a turning point or a major marking period in history, noting what things were like before and after that period.

X = counter argument, why something was or was not a turning point explained thoroughly with a piece of specific evidence

A, B, C = argument, why something was a turning point broken up into organizational categories

Y = your assertion statement

Formulas for the BIG FOUR using formula #2: X. However A and B. Therefore, Y.

The formula is essentially the same for any type of question, and you can move the variables around. Below you will find some different ways to use it depending on what type of question you are answering.

1. Historical Causation:

What are the major causes or consequences of "event" and what were the most important causes or consequences of "event"?

X = least important cause or consequence, with an explanation why – linked to a theme or organizational category which will also be topic of first body paragraph

A, B = 2 most important causes / consequences linked to Y, explanations why, broken into organizational categories (topics of your 2nd and 3rd body paragraphs)

Y = your assertion statement

2. Continuity and Change over Time:

What are the major patterns of continuity or change over the time period and was there more continuity or change over that time period?

X = continuity or change, your counter-argument – linked to a theme or organizational category which will also be topic of first body paragraph

A, B = continuity or change during the specified time period linked to your Y, broken into 2 organizational categories (topics of your 2nd and 3rd body paragraphs)

Y = your assertion statement

3. Compare and Contrast:

What similarities and differences are there between the two things, are there more similarities or differences, and why, account for those similarities or differences?

X = more similar or different, your counter-argument – linked to a theme or organizational category which will also be topic of first body paragraph

A, B = similarities or differences between the two things linked to your Y, broken up into organizational categories (topics of your 2nd and 3rd body paragraphs)

Y = your assertion statement

4. Periodization | (or Take a Position):

Evaluate whether something was a turning point or a major marking period in history, noting what things were like before and after that period.

X = counter argument, why something was /was not a turning point – linked to a theme or organizational category which will also be topic of first body paragraph

A, B = argument, why something was a turning point broken up into organizational categories (topics of your 2nd and 3rd body paragraphs)

Y = your assertion statement

Body Paragraphs – What are you saying?

Each body paragraph will focus on a category or theme and contain your exposition (defending your thesis) with specific, historical evidence relevant to your topic. Your goal is to have at least three – five specific pieces of evidence for each category or theme. If you are including document analysis, remember you still need outside evidence independent from the documents. For the DBQ, you will also need to extend your argument and analysis by illustrating contradictions, corroborations, and/or qualifications.

One last thing about your body paragraphs... end each one with “Close the Loop!”

Closing the loop means to explain *how or why* your evidence supports your thesis... always connect back to your thesis!

How to Reference the Documents in the DBQ

The most *unsophisticated* way to reference a document in a DBQ essay is to do the following, “According to ‘Document 1’ blah, blah, blah.” “Document 1 says this; document 2 says this . . . etc.” Don’t do this!

Instead, you should show the reader that you understand the documents and use them effectively within the argument of your paper. **DO NOT quote the documents.** In order to get full credit (3 points) for document usage on the DBQ, you must be **HIPP*** and you must use **ALL or ALL BUT ONE document**. Document usage in the DBQ will include (at least H + one of the other levels of analysis must be employed):

***H: Historical Context + I: Intended Audience or P: Purpose or P: Point of View**

Suppose you had a document that was excerpt from the Clayton Antitrust Act. Your **HIPP** may look something like this:

H: Historical Context – Progressive Era, President Wilson signed, Act of Congress to limit monopolies

I: Intended Audience – The United States of America (adding new laws) and businesses

P: Purpose - help the government break up trusts/monopolies, fix the problems of the earlier Sherman Anti-Trust Act

P: Point of View – It is in the nation’s best interest to support competition and fair business practices, therefore government needs the power to force trusts to bust up

YOU DO NOT NEED TO HAVE ALL FOUR COMPONENTS... JUST H + ONE OF IPP

What would it look like in an essay? If you had a paragraph addressing ways the federal government implemented progressive reform in the early 1900s, you could include the document like this: “The historical context of the Clayton Antitrust Act was the Progressive Era in the early 1900s when Wilson’s administration supported progressive legislation as they were desperately seeking help in enforcing anti-trust legislation under a relatively inefficient Sherman Antitrust Act. The purpose was to give some enforcement power over anti- trust legislation to the federal government.”

Conclusion – How much should you say?

Your concluding paragraph should NOT simply restate your thesis. You want to conclude with higher level analysis; however your conclusion does not need to be extensive. For your essays in this class, your conclusions will have three requirements.

Conclusion Formula: Therefore, Y + BC. BC is similar/different to OC, because E.

First: Restating your thesis with broad context... **Therefore, Y + BC.** (one sentence)

BC = Broad Context... what is the *big picture* within the era you are writing about... (identify one of the major historical themes – MAGPIES)

Second: Synthesis... or *Other Context* (similar in kind but in a different time)... One sentence connecting and comparing, then

OC = Other Context... what other time period experienced a similar or different big picture/theme?

Third: Explanation... One sentence explaining *how* your theme/topic is similar or different than that same theme/topic in a different era.

E = explanation (at least one strong piece of evidence to support your comparison)