

## 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 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:

**X. However, A, B, and C. Therefore, Y.                      or                      Although X, Y because ABC.**

- 'X'                      represents the strongest point against your argument. We call this the counter-argument.  
'A, B, and C'        represent the three strongest points for your argument. We call these your organization categories – your roadmap.  
'Y'                      represents the position you will be taking – in other words, your stand on the prompt.

For example, if you were addressing the prompt, "Evaluate the extent to which westward migration in the later 19<sup>th</sup> 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 19<sup>th</sup> century promoted the spirit of manifest destiny and white dominance, the movement westward 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.

Overkill Thesis:                      Although westward migration in the later 19<sup>th</sup> century maintained continuity in that it promoted the spirit of manifest destiny and white dominance by enclosing the territories between east and west as well as implementing the Reservation system, the movement westward fostered change to a greater extent than it maintained continuity. Change came economically as new technology, resources, and labor expanded production and opportunity, politically as farmers faced new problems and formed new organizations which influenced state and federal government, and geographically as new states were added and the environment was altered in many areas with new farming and ranching techniques such as long drives and irrigation systems.

**Formulas for the BIG FOUR:** The formula is essentially the same, but there are 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

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

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

Y = your assertion statement on the extent of continuity or change

#### 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

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

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

Y = your assertion statement

### **Body Paragraphs – What are you saying?**

Each body paragraph will focus on a category or theme and will prove 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.

### **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 **CAPP\*** and you must use **ALL or ALL BUT ONE of the documents.** Effective document usage in the DBQ will include at least C + one of the other levels of analysis for each document:

**\*C: Historical Context + A: Intended Audience or P: Purpose or P: Point of View**

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

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

**A: 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 C + ONE OF APP**

**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 passed under Wilson’s administration when progressives 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.”

### **An Opportunity for Synthesis – Where Does It Go?**

There are several ways of getting the Synthesis Point in the LEQ or the DBQ. For the DBQ it can involve the following:

1. Extending or modifying the thesis or argument,
2. Recognizing and accounting for contradictory evidence in crafting a coherent argument, or
3. Connecting the topic to other historical periods, geographical areas, contexts, or circumstances.

For the LEQ it can involve the following:

1. Extending or modifying the thesis or argument,
2. Employing an additional category or analysis beyond that called for in the prompt, or
3. Connecting the topic to other historical periods, geographical areas, contexts, or circumstances.

Type of Essay	Synthesis Type	Where Does It Go?	Example
DBQ	1	After the Opening Paragraph	X paragraph, pointing out the counter-example to your thesis
LEQ	1	After the Opening Paragraph	X paragraph, pointing out the counter-example to your thesis
DBQ	2	Anywhere in the Essay	Combining (rectifying) contradictory evidence to support your argument
LEQ	2	Last Body Paragraph	Additional paragraph expanding the categories of analysis
DBQ	3	In the Conclusion Paragraph	Conclusion paragraph, reaching back or forward, or beyond the given
LEQ	3	In the Conclusion Paragraph	Conclusion paragraph, reaching back or forward, or beyond the given

Following the thesis formula will help you incorporate synthesis into your introduction, and if you include an X paragraph... the explanation will further enable you to expand on opposing views. You will be required in class to incorporate your synthesis (other context) in your concluding paragraph, but there are other places you could incorporate it additionally.