How to: Write Historical Essays

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Essential Components

• Introductory Paragraph
• Thesis Statement
• Body Paragraphs
• Concluding Paragraph
Introductory Paragraph

• Establish the **Time and Place** of the Essay.
• Provide **background knowledge** to establish context for the Readers.
• Just **Introduce** the topic.
• Do Not begin to argue the points of your essay.
• End with your **Thesis** statement.
Thesis Statement

- **Location:** Last Sentence of Introductory paragraph.

- **Answers Question...** Do not get cute or flowery

- **Contains** **Categories of Analysis**
  - These are the reasons that you explain to prove the point of your essay.
Body Paragraphs

- Each **Category of Analysis** is a topic of a body paragraph.
- Take each part to the **argument** and explain it completely using the following:
  - Vocabulary
  - Specific Examples
  - Information for primary source readings
Concluding Paragraph

- Start with a “concluding phrase”
- Restate your thesis differently
- Put your essay in historical context
  - Was this the end of trend/movement?
  - Was this the beginning of a trend/movement?
  - Answer the Question “So what?”
Other Tips to Remember

• Value **clarity and conciseness** over cuteness.
• Write consistently in the **past tense**
• Do not reference current events or the present unless the question asks you to do so.
• Never use **1st person point of view**.
• Write as if reader is intelligent by uninformed
  – Identify all **people and organizations**
  – Incorporate meaning and significance of **vocabulary and events**.
Practice Question

• Many British North American colonies in the 1600s were founded in order to achieve complete religious freedom. By using two examples each, explain how British colonies represented this idea of religious toleration but also limited it as well.
Step 1: Intro Paragraph

- Brainstorm all that you know about this topic.
- Introductory Paragraph:
  - Establish **Time and Place**:
  - Discussion of **Context** (Some Suggestions)
    - Protestant Reformation
    - Separatists
    - Puritans
    - Dutchification
    - “City on a hill”
    - John Winthrop
    - Covenant Theology
Step 2: Thesis Statement

• Make sure that it answers the question.

• Use of although/however evidence of analysis

• Develop your **Categories of Analysis**
  - Examples that you plan to use to prove your answer
Step 2: Thesis Statement

- One suggested thesis statement:
  
  "Although colonies such as Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay were founded to achieve religious freedom, this concept was protected in other colonies such as Maryland and Pennsylvania, however the treatment of dissenters such as Anne Hutchison and Roger Williams proved the limits to colonial understanding of religious toleration." (Categories of Analysis or C of As)
Step 3: Body Paragraphs

• Body Paragraph #1
  – Topic: (C of A) Maryland and Pennsylvania support religious freedom
  – Maryland
    • Lord Baltimore, Catholic Haven, Maryland Act of Toleration
  – Pennsylvania
    • William Penn, Quakers, beliefs of Quakers, religious toleration of all faiths, relations with Native Americans.
Step 3: Body Paragraphs

- **Topic (C of A):** Anne Hutchison and Roger Williams
  - Dissent in MBC resulted in expulsion
  - Anne Hutchison
    - Antinomianism, trial, banishment, death used to support covenant theology
  - Roger Williams
    - Dissent, banishment, founding of Rhode Island, complete religious toleration in RI, referred to as “sewer” by MBC
Step 4: Conclusion

• Begin with **concluding phrase**
• Restate **thesis** differently
• Establish historical context or relevance (“**So what?**”)
  – This is evidence of established basis for religious freedom in America.
  – Continued in the foundation of American government and principles in the 1st amendment protections in the U.S. Constitution.