

## Writing a Thematic Essay

1. Read the essay question and highlight major parts; key words, eras, names, issues. Determine what the question is asking you to do. In other words, what are you going to be writing about. (Pay attention to words such as describe, explain, and evaluate.) Make sure you pay attention to the suggestions given after the task. You don't have to use them, but they will provide you with some guidance. Also, pay attention to the guidelines at the bottom of the page.
2. Brainstorm and write down facts. What do you remember about the topic that might be useful.
3. Reread the essay question. Remind yourself of what you have to do, and how your brainstorming fits.
4. Charting Your Answer
  - Charting gives you a chance to organize your thoughts and preview your essay before you actually write the whole thing. One of the keys to a quality essay is the organization and development of your points. It can also ensure that you answer the whole questions. A typical chart for an essay may have a format like this:

### Thesis:

	Example #1:	Example #2:
First part of the task:		
Second part of the task:		

- The thesis statement is the stand that you are taking in regards to the essay question. What is your essay trying to prove? Remember to give each main idea its own body paragraph. Look for hints in the question to show you how many paragraphs you should have. Be sure to provide support for each of your assertions. An assertion which is not supported by a well-developed, factual argument is useless. If you aren't comfortable with your level of knowledge, you need to find something else to write about.

## 5. Writing the Essay

- Use your chart as a skeleton for the essay.
- Be sure as you write that your information is clearly and logically developed. Think of your essay as an argument – a one-sided argument in which you are trying to prove your point of view beyond a shadow of a doubt. The person you are arguing with has no prior knowledge of the subject, so you can't take anything for granted. As any good argument, your essay should clearly and logically build on its own points, with smooth transitions from one part to the next.
- Use proper essay format:
  - I. Introduction
    - A. restatement of the task
    - B. define key terms
    - C. thesis statement:
  - II. 1<sup>st</sup> body paragraph
    - A. assertion
    - B. supporting details
  - III. 2<sup>nd</sup> body paragraph
    - A. assertion
    - B. supporting details
  - IV. Conclusion
    - A. restatement of thesis statement
    - B. summary of assertions (no new information!)

Obviously, the number of body paragraphs depends on the particular essay.

- Use proper indenting and margins.
- When handwriting, be sure the essay is legible.

## 6. Editing the Essay

- On exams, you may not have time to rewrite an essay, but it is essential that you read it once you have written it. Very often, as we write, we will make careless mistakes that we can catch before handing it in. Make sure each sentence contains a complete thought, and makes sense.
- Essays should not refer to the writer or the reader, unless it specifically asks for your opinion. Otherwise, everything in the essay is a statement of fact, and should be worded as such.
- Grammar matters! Pay attention to sentence structure. Avoid using “non-words” like gonna, cuz, etc. Misspelling words that are found in the question is unacceptable.