**Essay Tips for Modern History**

History essays have a particular style and format. They argue a case or a hypothesis. They require you to not only present a case but to provide historical data to back up your argument.

* Look at the essay question and work out what it actually wants you to do. Most essays want you to show what you know and apply this knowledge analytically. The bit that requires you to think will have actions words like evaluate, assess, examine the proposition and account for etc. It can be helpful to underline or highlight the different parts of the question so that you make sure you don’t leave bits out. **The markers can only give you marks for what you have included, so it is very important you answer what is asked of you.**
* You also need to make sure you answer what the question is asking, not what you would like the essay to be. Make sure you reread the question so you don’t misinterpret what the question is about. It is not advisable to have prepared answers as you do not know what the questions are going to be.
* Once you have chosen your question PLAN. This is really important as it helps you structure your essay and it allows you to get your head around the question.
* All essays need introductions, body and conclusions.

The **Introduction**:

* + Here the main argument or thesis is outlined and perhaps agreement or disagreement with the essay topic is declared.
  + **Introductions** need
* Your Historical context i.e. time frame and setting.
* Key terminology defined.
* Your essay thesis or hypothesis clearly explained.

A **Body**:

* in a series of paragraphs an argument is developed which proves or develops the hypothesis presented in the introduction
* **Body** needs
  + One key idea per paragraph, with lots of supporting evidence such as quotes, dates, data etc.
  + You need to structure your writing so that it is clear, coherent and logical.
  + You need to demonstrate your historical knowledge and apply it to the question. Make sure you do not just write the narrative of the period.
  + Refer to your question throughout your essay as this will demonstrate to the marker that you are actually answering the question.
  + Make sure you look at both sides of an issue or event and make the relevant judgements.

A **Conclusion**:

* This is **NOT** a summary of the whole essay. Rather it is a synthesis of the evidence presented, and in many ways is an affirmation of the hypothesis which appeared in the introduction.
* **Conclusions** need
  + To be more then one sentence long
  + Restate your thesis or hypothesis and sum up how your essay answers your question. Remember, the marker wants to give you marks- try to make it as easy as possible for them to see that you have answered the question in a relevant way with lots of depth.

***Remember...***

Essays are formal pieces of writing so do not use colloquial expressions, text writing or refer to Australia as ’we’ or us’. Use formal language, try to get your grammar and spelling correct (especially key names) and proof read your work to make sure the sentences make sense.

**Tips**

* Read and re-read the question
* Underline important words and clarify what is actually being asked.
* Highlight the key words
* Box the instructional words
* Make brief notes and a rough plan of the main points.
* Leave room for making changes
* Answer the question directly in the first paragraph saying what points the essay will contain
* Write one paragraph for each main point
* Summarise the answer by restating major points in the last paragraph

Both of your essays will be marked according to whether you have:

* covered all parts of the question
* used relevant evidence, details or examples
* written a well structured and coherent response
* formed and maintained a point of view or logical argument
* recognised different interpretations and viewpoints
* shown independent thought and empathy
* demonstrated historical knowledge and understandings

***So… for each essay section...***

*Read the questions and choose the best one for you.*

*Break the essay question into parts.*

*All in less than five minutes!*

*Decide on your point of view.*

*Plan your answer.*

**Essay Writing Techniques**

**Planning:**

* Planning is essential to good essay writing. Once an effort has been made to establish the habit of planning, writing becomes much easier.
* Take careful notice of what the question is asking and of any dates which it mentions, making sure that you plan stays relevant to the question.

Highlight Key Words

* The key words should suggest natural divisions in your essay: for example the various causes of an event; the two sides of an argument; social, economic and political factors.
* Write headings for the divisions. Under each heading jot down as many points as you think are relevant. You now have the rough outlines of major paragraphs.
* Number points within a division to give you the order in which you will deal with them in writing the paragraph.
* Number the divisions themselves to show the order in which you will write paragraphs.

Box the instructional word(s)

* Write the introduction after you have written the plan. The introduction should come straight from your plan.
* Use the instructional word(s) as the guide to how you have to answer the question.
* Once you start writing your essay, as you expand your points or think of new ones, the major paragraphs you have planned may naturally break up into more paragraphs.
* Don’t worry about the conclusion until you finish

**The 5 Minute Essay Plan**

**Step 1:** Read the question. ½ minute

Evaluate the proposition that political forces had limited impact on post WW1 USA society.

**Step 2:** Highlight the key terms in the question and Box the instructional words. ½ minute

**Step 3:** Rephrase the question 1 minute

*What do you think it is asking you?*

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**Step 4:** Write a one-sentence thesis statement (i.e. your answer to the question) 1 minute

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Double-check that your thesis statement answers all parts of the question

**Step 5:** Plan your essay 2 minutes List very quickly all the main points that you need to make

**Then…**

1 minute

* Use the introduction to state the topic, comment on the broad era or context (check the years) and your point of view/argument/judgement
* Write on one main topic per paragraph
* Include relevant supporting examples or evidence
* At the end of each paragraph or topic, link back to the question and reiterate your point of view
* Make links between the main topics within your essay and how it affected or shaped the overall era
* Remember to compare the situation/person/era to another when commenting on its significance
* Write using formal language, use correct terms, grammar and spelling
* Proof read it.

*Practise before the exam* – study historical content effectively, practise your history skills with many different sources, practise planning and writing fluently and practise using examples/ evidence to support your views.

**Conventions for essay writing**

**Never do the following:**

* Use the word ‘I’ in an essay. The opinions that matter are those who have studied the subject so well that they are experts. The use of the first person pronoun does not indicate that the writer is serious; rather they want to have a ‘chat’ with the reader.
* Write to the reader as though you are writing in a diary or writing a letter to a friend. Don’t speak directly to them, try to sound serious and detached. Avoid saying “As you can see…”
* Avoid asking yourself (or the reader) deep and meaningful questions – “After all, how democratic would Australia be without the Rule of Law?”
* Avoid starting sentences with conjunctions. The words ‘therefore’, ‘but’, ‘because’ and ‘and’ should appear part way through a sentence.
* You must avoid presenting new evidence in a conclusion.
* Do not use quotes in the introduction and the conclusion.
* Do not write the word ‘alot’ - there is no such word