

# Rewriting the Thematic Essay

**Directions:** Using the Major Common Issues and Abbreviations listed below, review your essay and more feedback, and rewrite your essay for an improved grade. If you do not understand my comments or have other questions, email me directly at [pcasey@maspethhighschool.org](mailto:pcasey@maspethhighschool.org).

## Major Common Issues

### Introduction and Conclusion

The introduction and conclusion are flexible, but make sure that they both reference the Three Ts: the Theme, the Topic(s), and the Task. For this essay, the Theme is “Turning Points,” the Topic is the Neolithic Revolution, and the Task, outlined in the bullet points, is to first “Describe the historical circumstances surrounding the turning point” and then to “Explain how each turning point changed the course of history.”

The introduction should present the theme of the essay, then introduce the topic, and then introduce the task. In introducing the topic, you may give some general background information, such as dates, locations, or definition of terms, as long as it does not address the task (since that must be saved for the body paragraphs).

The conclusion is similar to the introduction, but this time, rather than introducing the Theme, Topic, and Task, you are using them to bring the reader back to the overall purpose of the essay, and essentially showing the reader that the task has been addressed, placing the task in the context of the more general theme.

### Responding to the Task with Support and Explanation

The body paragraphs are nothing without ADDRESSING THE TASK, the two bullet points mentioned above. Some people did not actually respond to the bullets, and just talked about whatever they wanted. That lost them more points than any other mistake, because they ignored the whole point of the essay. Even the most perfectly prepared Lasagna cannot win a Best Chili contest.

For those who did try to address the task, for some essays, there was not enough support, in the form of detailed explanations and examples, to answer the task FULLY. You cannot simply summarize or outline your response. You must show **HOW** and **WHY** each occurrence took place, and clearly and completely explain the connections that lead from one point to another.

This does not mean just dumping information into your paragraphs. Another big problem was irrelevant or off task information that took the essay onto an unnecessary tangent and did not support the overall task. Also, do not add in repetitive or meaningless sentences just to fill space. Your words must have a purpose.

### Vocabulary

Social studies vocabulary must be utilized in your essays, and you must define the terms you use. All of the following terms should be mentioned and defined in your essay: **Neolithic Revolution, Nomadic, Hunter-Gatherers, Domestication, Settled, Irrigation, Surplus, Job Specialization**. The rest of these terms do not have to be included, but I recommend including them: **Natufians, Levant, Younger Dryas Event, Agriculture, Social Inequality/Hierarchy**.

# Abbreviations

- **TNA = Task Not Addressed.** This is a comment that applies to the body paragraph as a whole. It means that the required task for that paragraph, as outlined in the bullet points, was either partially or completely left unaddressed. In other words, you never actually explained the main thing you were supposed to explain. Make sure you fully address all aspects of the task.
- **OT = Off Task.** Similar to TNA but for a specific point in the paragraph, OT means you are not responding to the task outlined in the bullet points. You are writing about something other than what this paragraph is supposed to be about. Check your bullet points and get back on track!
- **IR = Irrelevant.** Similar to OT, but usually for smaller cases where you have just inserted an idea that does not belong because it does not connect to the overall goal of the paragraph. Any details you provide should be supporting details, not just random facts.
- **IA = Inaccurate.** You have your facts wrong. What you said is not correct.
- **WP = Wrong Paragraph.** What you are discussing belongs in this essay, but you are addressing the task for a different paragraph, so move this to the correct paragraph.
- **How? Why? = How? Why?** Pretty straightforward. You made a statement or claim but you never explained it further, particularly how or why it is the case.
- **C/E = Cause and Effect.** Very similar to “How? Why?” but used in more general cases to mean that you need to explain how one thing leads to another rather than just listing events in the order they happen. You may also see this written next to two connected events, meaning you have to explain the connection.
- **+ = Say More.** You brought up something good, but you moved on without discussing it fully. Go further, explain in more depth, or finish the thought.
- **SD = Supporting Details.** You may have made a good point, but you need to back it up with more relevant examples and details. Make sure they actually support your point!
- **? = What?** I am confused. Either what you wrote does not make sense, or I can't figure out what you are trying to say, or I just don't know what is going on.
- **WC = Word Choice.** You used a word, or you used wording, that needs to be changed. It may be inappropriate, unprofessional in tone, unclear, or inaccurate. You need to reword this.
- **V = Vocabulary.** A more specific version of WC above, this means that you should have used a vocabulary term that we learned in class to describe something.
- **D = Define.** You mentioned a good vocabulary term, but you need to explain what it means to the reader so they understand its importance.
- **O = Order/Organization.** Your information may be all fine, but it seems to be out of order or in some way unorganized. Reread this part and fix the order to be clearer and more organized.
- **R = Repetition.** You just said that, and now you're saying it again.
- **DAQ = Don't Ask Questions.** Posing a question can be an interesting attention grabber, but it does not belong in your History paper. Find more professional phrasing for the same idea.
- **SP = Spelling.** You spelled something wrong.
- **M = Mechanics.** Any problems other than spelling, including grammatical, punctuation, and capitalization errors, use of contractions, or use of inappropriate symbols such as parentheses, slashes, bold, underline, italics, or in the case of thematic essays, quotation marks.
- **TTT = Theme, Topic, Task.** Used only for the introduction and conclusion, a reminder to make sure you are addressing in some way all three necessary aspects of the thematic essay introduction and conclusion. You may not be missing all of them, but you are at least missing one of them.
- **US = Unsupported.** Used only in the introduction and conclusion when something that was never addressed in the body paragraphs is presented as a key point of the essay.
- **✓ = Good!** You explained something very well, you brought up a great example, or I just really liked what you wrote here!
- **X = Not Good.** It may be something does not apply to other categories, but if something has an X through it, it means there must be something wrong with it.