***APWH: Essay Advice***

Based on what I’ve read this year from your essays and based on what I’ve read about APWH Essay standards, what follows is my very best advice for how to succeed at the APWH essays. There is a section of advice for each essay.

**DBQ:** Remember at the beginning of the year, when I said that this would be the easiest type of essay, because the answers were all in the documents? Yeah, well that was one of the dumbest thing I’ve ever said. However, I honestly believe you CAN get through it, if you do the following.

* Read all the documents first, then attempt to group them. Spend the allotted 10 minutes on this task, but no more (or less). After 10 minutes, you need to have THREE groups of documents.
* Answer the DBQ question as SPECIFICALLY as possible. Use your groups in your thesis. However, if you have a feeling that you’ve grouped wrong, don’t try to skirt the issue by being vague in the thesis. Answer the thesis in a SPECIFIC way. Even if you don’t earn the grouping point, you may still be able to earn the thesis point.
* When writing the body paragraphs of the essay, you need to write one paragraph for each attempted grouping. For each document in a group, you should first summarize what the document means, without quoting. This will earn a point for BASIC UNDERSTANDING Then, you must tie your document back to your thesis. For EVIDENCE points, choose a snippet of document that you can connect back to thesis. Remember, you can earn up to 2 evidence points (even if your thesis is flawed).
* Finally, try to earn POV and Additional Document points. Analyze POV for at least two documents, but preferably three. Look at the author of the document and try to figure out why a person in that position would feel a particular way about the event being discussed in the DBQ. For Additional Document, try to think of a specific piece of data that could be graphed in some way. You won’t get the point unless it’s something that you can actually graph. For instance, you can’t graph peasant reactions to the Green Revolution.

**CCOT:** This is a process essay. The APWH readers want to see that you understand how events evolve over time in history. History is a process of constant change, but people also behave in remarkably similar ways over the centuries. This is the basic paradox of history: the more things change, the more they stay the same.

* For this essay, use the following construction for your thesis statement. While \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ stayed the same during the period \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ went from being \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ at the beginning of this time period to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ by the end of this time period.

Here’s how it looks with actual words, taking a successful thesis from the 2013 CCOT essay.

*“At the beginning of the period, there was political centralization under the Roman Empire, which allowed for technologic [sic] and artistic advances and much trade. With the fall of Rome and the development of feudalism, the culture was drastically different and revolved around protection. Throughout the changes, Christianity and patriarchal society remained constant guiding factors in Mediterranean culture. By the end of the period, there was political fragmentation as the culture took the shape of the Middle Age, with less ability for trade and cultural exchange.”*

Note how this writer is somewhat rambling in his/her approach, but gets the job done with contiguous sentences. Try and plug the sample thesis into my template. It doesn’t fit perfectly, but the sample has all the same pieces. Just remember that you need to address the prompt. This particular question called for the linking of political transformations in the Mediterranean with continuities and changes in the culture. That’s tricky, because you can’t just talk about the change from the Roman empire to feudalism and call it a day. It has to be linked specifically to culture or no thesis point.

* Getting the two points for all parts on the CCOT is a little easier. Be sure to write one body paragraph where you lay out something that stayed the same. Two things is even better. Remember that continuities are simple things by nature. They are sometimes even obvious, such as patriarchy. The discussion of change over time is bit harder. You need to use phrases such as: **at the beginning of the time period**, **by the middle of the time period** and **at the end of the time period.** Don’t be afraid to beat the reader about the head with your points (figuratively of course). That’s what they signed up for.
* Toss in as many facts as you know for an additional two evidence points. Make sure you relate the facts to the thesis in some way. They can’t be totally random, but from the samples I’ve read, relevant is applied in a somewhat loose fashion. It seems like even the weak essay samples earn evidence points.

**Comparative:** This essay has the potential to be the easiest or the hardest. It’s all going to depend on the prompt. They most likely will offer you some internal choice within the question. They will require you discuss X and you can choose from three options for Y.

* The thesis can be phrased in the following way. Country A and Country B were similar during the time period \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in that they both \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_; however, Country A did \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, while Country B did \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Let’s use the 2013 samples for an illustration again. This prompt focuses on the economic role of the state in Japan and another country (Russia, China or the Ottoman Empire) in the late 19th and early 20th century.

Here is an example of a successful thesis: “*Japan and Russia, both downtrodden powers under the shadow of Europe, industrialized to become global powers. Both did so after European shows of force and political change, but Russia used local resources and foreign loans, while Japan used its own treasury and imported metals.”*

Now, let’s look at a thesis that was a good try, but didn’t earn the point: *“Although both cultures kept their traditions and culture during this time period, the Japanese government played a huge role in industrialization and bringing in western influence while the Chinese government did not emphasize industrialization and blocked out western influence.”*

Why didn’t the second thesis earn the point? Because the similarity in the thesis relates to culture and does not tie into the role of the state in economic development. I think that’s slightly nitpicky, because you could argue that the first thesis uses a similarity that is also not totally linked to the states role in economic development, but there you have it.

* Like, the CCOT, you can earn two points for addressing all parts of the Comparative prompt. To do this, you need one valid similarity and one valid difference. Remember, all year we’ve been shooting for two of each. This is so you have insurance. You can stick to the sim, diff, sim, diff pattern.
* There are also two points to be earned for evidence. Typically, the number of pieces of evidence required for two points is higher than the number required to earn two evidence points on the CCOT. For the Comparative, try for 10 pieces of evidence for the whole essay.
* You can also try for the Direct Comparison point. It’s not that hard to get. The trick is that you can’t “double-dip.” Thus, if a direct comparison is used in the thesis, it can’t be used again for direct comparison. Nor can it be used again if it earned you an All Parts point. So basically, it’s an extra statement concerning a similarity OR a difference. Make sure you put the Direct Comparison into ONE sentence.
* Finally, the Analysis point is more reachable here than in the other two essays. You just need to discuss why something was similar or why it was different between the two countries.

One more note: You have 130 minutes to write these essays. They will alert you to a 10 minute reading period for the DBQ at the beginning. But beyond that, you may work in any order you choose. My advice is to use the 10 minute period as intended, but if you don’t feel good about what you’ve come up with, go ahead and work on the other two essays, starting with your strongest. You can come back to the DBQ later. Watch the clock and keep track of your time. Remember, each essay counts for the same percentage of your total test score.