

Thinking and Writing as an Historian

Accelerating Writing in the
AP History Classroom





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Introductions & Welcome



Writing as Thinking

I USED TO HATE WRITING
ASSIGNMENTS, BUT NOW
I ENJOY THEM.



I REALIZED THAT THE
PURPOSE OF WRITING IS
TO INFLATE WEAK IDEAS,
OBSOLETE POOR REASONING,
AND INHIBIT CLARITY.



WITH A LITTLE PRACTICE,
WRITING CAN BE AN
INTIMIDATING AND
IMPENETRABLE FOG!
WANT TO SEE MY BOOK
REPORT?



"THE DYNAMICS OF INTERBEING
AND MONOLOGICAL IMPERATIVES
IN *DICK AND JANE*: A STUDY
IN PSYCHIC TRANSRELATIONAL
GENDER MODES."





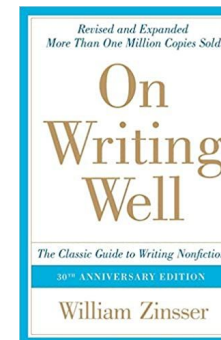
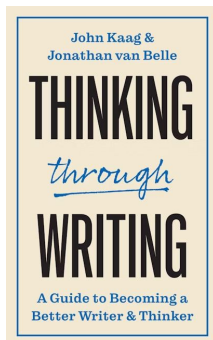
thinking



writing

“Writing is thinking on paper, or talking to someone on paper. Anyone who thinks clearly can write clearly, about anything at all.”

William Zinsser



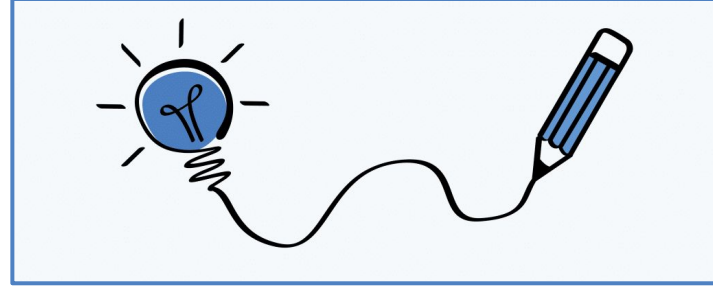
Psychology Today

COGNITION

Writing Is Thinking

Personal Perspective: The secrets of starting to write are right in front of you.

Posted May 8, 2025 |  Reviewed by Michelle Quirk



AMERICAN
HISTORICAL
ASSOCIATION

Publication Date

February 1, 2010

LYNN HUNT

PERSPECTIVES
ON HISTORY

How Writing Leads to Thinking (and Not the Other Way Around)



Inside
Higher
Ed

November 02, 2021

Writing Is Thinking

Writing is not simply a matter of expressing pre-existing thoughts clearly. It's the process through which ideas are produced and refined.



Historical Thinking



AP Historical Thinking Skills

Skill 1	Skill 2	Skill 3	Skill 4	Skill 5	Skill 6
Developments and Processes 1 Identify and explain historical developments and processes.	Sourcing and Situation 2 Analyze sourcing and situation of primary and secondary sources.	Claims and Evidence in Sources 3 Analyze arguments in primary and secondary sources.	Contextualization 4 Analyze the context of historical events, developments, or processes.	Making Connections 5 Using historical reasoning processes (comparison, causation, continuity and change), analyze patterns and connections between and among historical developments and processes.	Argumentation 6 Develop an argument.

SKILLS

1.A Identify a historical concept, development, or process.

1.B Explain a historical concept, development, or process.

2.A Identify a source's point of view, purpose, historical situation, and/or audience.

2.B Explain the point of view, purpose, historical situation, and/or audience of a source.

2.C Explain the significance of a source's point of view.

3.A Identify and describe a claim and/or argument in a text-based or non-text-based source.

3.B Identify the evidence used in a source to support an argument.

3.C Compare the arguments or main ideas of two sources.

4.A Identify and describe a historical context for a specific historical development or process.

4.B Explain how a specific historical development or process is situated within a broader historical context.

5.A Identify patterns among or connections between historical developments and processes.

5.B Explain how a historical development or process relates to another historical development or process.

6.A Make a historically defensible claim.

6.B Support an argument using specific and relevant evidence.

- Describe specific examples of historically relevant evidence.
- Explain how specific examples of historically relevant evidence support an argument.

6.C Use historical reasoning to explain relationships among pieces of historical evidence.

6.D Corroborate, qualify, or modify an argument using diverse and alternative evidence in order to develop a complex argument. This argument might:

- Explain nuance of an issue by analyzing multiple variables.
- Explain relevant and insightful connections within and across periods.
- Explain the relative historical significance of a source's credibility and limitations.
- Explain how or why a historical claim or argument is or is not effective.



AP HISTORY

Reasoning Processes

Reasoning processes describe the cognitive operations that students will be required to apply when engaging with the historical thinking skills on the AP Exam. The reasoning processes ultimately represent the way practitioners think in the discipline. Specific aspects of the cognitive process are defined under each reasoning process.

Reasoning Process 1

Comparison

- 1.i:** Describe similarities and/or differences between different historical developments or processes.
- 1.ii:** Explain relevant similarities and/or

Reasoning Process 2

Causation

- 2.i:** Describe causes and/or effects of a specific historical development or process.
- 2.ii:** Explain the relationship between causes and effects of a specific

Reasoning Process 3

Continuity and Change

- 3.i:** Describe patterns of continuity and/or change over time.
- 3.ii:** Explain patterns of continuity and/or change over time.

Answer either Question 3 or Question 4.

3. Respond to parts A, B, and C.

- A.** Describe one significant motivation for European overseas expansion in the period 1450 to 1600.
- B.** Describe one significant change in European overseas expansion in the period 1600 to 1700.
- C.** Explain one way that European overseas expansion affected Europe's economy in the period 1700 to 1900.

AP UNITED STATES HISTORY 2025 • FREE-RESPONSE QUESTIONS

1. Evaluate the extent to which the role of the federal government in the United States economy changed from 1932 to 1980.

AP WORLD HISTORY: MODERN 2025 • FREE-RESPONSE QUESTIONS

3. During the eighteenth century, Enlightenment philosophers developed new ideas about individual rights and the role of governments.

Develop an argument that evaluates the extent to which Enlightenment ideas encouraged movements for political change and/or social reform during the period circa 1750 to 1900.



Putting it Together: Historical Writing

How does the student demonstrate
they have or have not not learned
to think (and write) like a
historian?



How do you assess students use of complex argumentation?

1. ■ Use sample essays from AP Central for examples/
2. ■ Look for complexity in the essay
3. ■ Use a colored pencil and highlighting attempts at complexity
4. ■ Now apply it to the rubric.
5. ■ Does the student earn the point?
6. ■ What will be the standard in your classroom?

Complexity is not a Unicorn if you help your students understand how to develop it.



How do you begin to introduce a complex understanding/complexity in a FRQ/DBQ?

CONSIDER

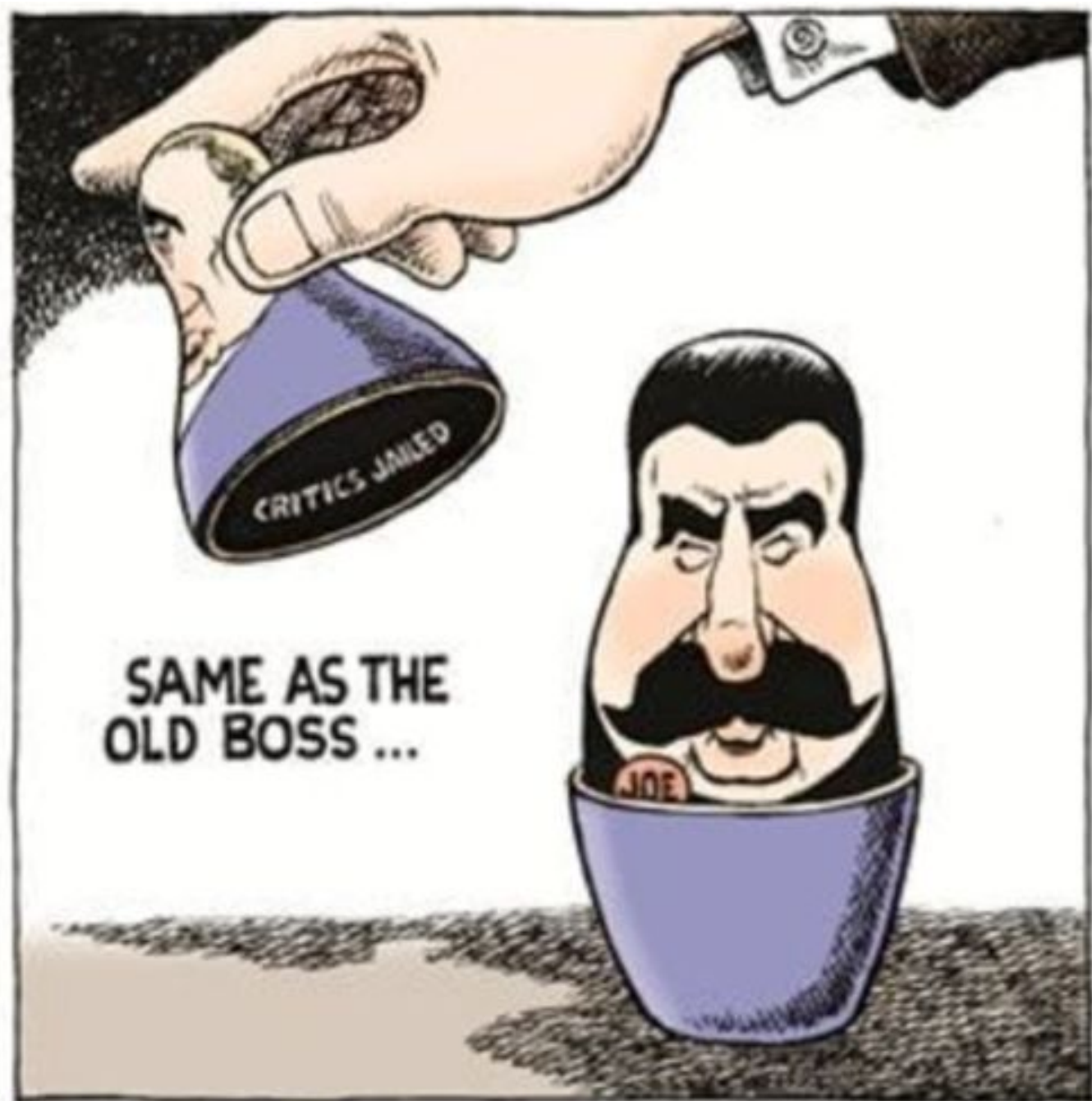
What does/will this look like in your classroom?





Demonstrating Complexity

Complexity is something students
can master and demonstrate on AP
exams.



Making Connections



Why Make Connections

- It helps students understand **continuities and developments** across periods, events and places.
- It helps students understand **how the past shapes the present** – it helps them understand their modern world.
- It is **one of the paths to complexity** in the LEQ and DBQ history rubrics.
- **Exam questions** are often written connecting events and periods.

Which AP History subject stresses connections the most?

About the AP World History: Modern Course

In AP World History: Modern, students investigate significant events, individuals, developments, and processes from 1200 to the present. Students develop and use the same skills, practices, and methods employed by historians: analyzing primary and secondary sources; developing historical arguments; making historical **connections**; and utilizing reasoning about comparison, causation, and continuity and change over time. The course provides six themes that students explore throughout the course in order to make **connections** among historical developments in different times and places: humans and the environment, cultural developments and interactions, governance, economic systems, social interactions and organization, and technology and innovation.

About the AP U.S. History Course

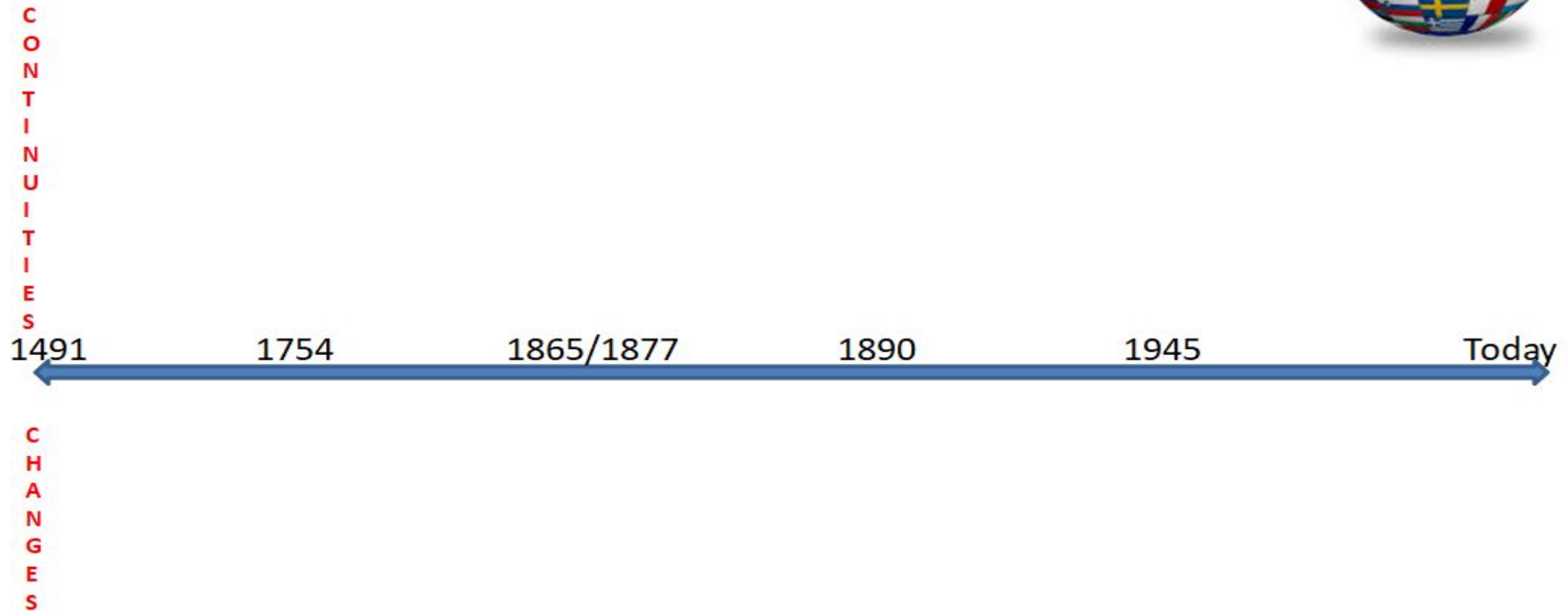
In AP U.S. History, students investigate significant events, individuals, developments, and processes in nine historical periods from approximately 1491 to the present. Students develop and use the same skills and methods employed by historians: analyzing primary and secondary sources; developing historical arguments; making historical **connections** and utilizing reasoning about comparison, causation, and continuity and change. The course also provides eight themes that students explore throughout the course in order to make **connections** among historical developments in different times and places: American and national identity; work, exchange, and technology; geography and the environment; migration and settlement; politics and power; America in the world; American and regional culture; and social structures.

About the AP World History: Modern Course

About the AP U.S. History Course

THEME 6: AMERICA IN THE WORLD (WOR)

This theme focuses on the interactions between **nations that affected North American history in the colonial period** and on the **influence of the United States on world affairs**.



(Students add developments/events for Continuities and Changes, color coded line for each area. Add brief explanations)

Effect of European nations

Effect of US on Europe

Effect of US on World

How do you create opportunities for students to connect current content to past or current events?

KC-6.2.BLA.11

The redrawing of political boundaries in some cases led to conflict as well as population displacement and/or resettlements, including those related to the Partition of India and the creation of the state of **Israel**.

PARALLEL HISTORIES



Palestinians leaving the Galilee during the Nakba, Oct-Nov 1948, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem* by Benny Morris, Cambridge University Press 1989.

Ongoing Violence In the 21st century, the peace process became more complicated when the Palestinians split into two factions. The **Fatah** faction controlled the West Bank. The **Hamas** faction controlled Gaza. Security concerns led the Israeli government to implement tighter border controls on the West Bank and on Gaza. These controls, amounting to economic sanctions, severely restricted normal activity for hundreds of thousands of Palestinians and fomented anger. Israel further angered Palestinians by approving new settlements on lands it had occupied during previous wars, lands Palestinians considered theirs.

Without a peace process, violence continued. Between 2000 and 2014, over 7,000 Palestinian and over 1,000 Israelis were killed. Many countries in the Middle East remained hostile to United States over its support of Israel.

**1947
UN PLAN OF DIVISION FOR
PALESTINE**



**2018
ISRAELI AND PALESTINIAN
LANDS**



Cambodia Gains Independence and Survives Wars

After World War II, Vietnam's neighbor Cambodia pressured France for independence in 1953. Cambodia's royal family continued to govern and tried to maintain its status as a non-aligned nation for the first two decades of the Cold War. However, Cambodia was eventually pulled into the Vietnam War.

Following the Vietnam War, a communist guerrilla organization, the **Khmer Rouge**, under the leadership of Pol Pot, overthrew the right-wing government of Cambodia. Once in power, Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge imposed a ruthless form of communism, following the Chinese model of "cultural revolution" that targeted intellectuals and dissenters. The slaughter



PARALLEL HISTORIES



OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

Guided Discussion

Students compare Henry **Kissinger**'s memo about Salvador Allende to the CIA memo about Mohammad Mossaddegh to describe similarities and differences and explain patterns in U.S. foreign policy during the Cold War.

TOPIC 8.7

America as a
World Power

Henry A. Kissinger

1923 – 2023



Topic 8.7

America as

*America was prone to its own
independence movements
the Amer*

Learning Objective: Explain various
to international developments over

Decolonization, or the collapse of
important developments of the era
fighting for independence look to the
inspiration or to the anticolonial id

Unrest in the "Third World"

Between 1947 and 1960, 37 new nations
and the Middle East. Most were from
Britain, France, and the Netherlands
nations in 1947, and the Dutch East
Indonesia in 1949. In Africa, Ghana
a host of other nations followed. The
World" (in contrast to the industrial
Communist bloc) often lacked stable
need for foreign aid from either the
made them into pawns of the Cold

Foreign Aid The primary tool
developing nations to its side during
most of U.S. foreign aid went to Europe
to Third World nations. Some foreign
attached. Often, though, the aid came
with restrictions, which poorer
foreign aid many recipients, such as
the Cold War and followed a policy

The Middle East

In the Middle East, the United States
with the oil-rich Arab states while

MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS

Questions 1–3 refer to the excerpt below.

"The leaders of the independence movements were a different type than America's Founding Fathers. . . . The vast majority of them governed in an authoritarian manner. Many were Marxists. . . . However much America might dissociate from European colonialism, American leaders, to their chagrin, found themselves perceived in developing countries as useful auxiliaries from the imperialist camp rather than as genuine partners. . . . Above all, populist leaders like Nasser saw no future in being identified with the West. . . . Nonalignment was for them as much a domestic necessity as a foreign policy choice."

Henry **Kissinger**, *Secretary of State (1973–1977)*, *Diplomacy*, 1994

- One claim that could be used to refute **Kissinger**'s statement that "the leaders of the independence movements were a different type than America's Founding Fathers" would be that both groups
 - opposed efforts to protect civil liberties such as freedom of the press
 - wanted to avoid conflicts that involved more powerful countries
 - distrusted wealthy and highly educated individuals as political leaders
 - recognized the benefits of imperialism for small, weak countries
- Which of the following best reflects **Kissinger**'s criticism of the leaders of the developing countries?
 - The leaders were not as skilled as American political leaders.
 - Most leaders were not committed to democratic values.
 - Governments were auxiliaries of the imperialist camp.
 - Nonalignment was important for internal political reasons.
- Which of the following best reflects the perspective of nations according to **Kissinger**?
 - Former colonies did not want to join in alliance nations.
 - Nonaligned nations had deeply held religious
 - People in these nations wanted to ally with the
their governments did not.
 - Governments were not stable enough to cooperate with Western democracies.

AP® United States
History, 4th Edition
pp. 489, 595, 626, 633,
640, 642



Results from the 2025 AP European History Exam



July 17, 2025 10:00 AM-11:00 AM ET

 Share session

Development Co...

BCEC Level 2 | 208

In this session, the course lead and chief reader will review the 2025 AP® European History Exam, including an in-depth look at student performance on the released free-response questions. They'll also share details about the 2026 AP Exams, offer tips for planning instruction for the year, and give strategies to help students strengthen their responses.



Clark Hultquist
Professor of European History
University of Montevallo



Jeremy Neill
Director II, Curriculum and As...
College Board

“It is strongly recommended for teachers not to leave the teaching of Unit 9 to the very last moment in their pacing guide. Planning in a week or two of AP exam review at the end of the course just before the exam allows for some leeway to use a few of those days to cover fully Unit 9. AP exam review can perhaps be either asynchronous or after school/another possible time to readjust for late schedule changes. **Another option is to include Unit 9 topics early and throughout the academic year.** Students have an awareness of modern issues in society today and the later parts of Unit 9 concern a Europe and world similar to their own. **Connecting therefore from earlier historical periods and units to Unit 9 in a meaningful way allows later content to be introduced earlier in the course.** In addition encouraging students to examine connections between periods in European History and similarities and differences in historical developments, such as women’s roles and rights, is an excellent way to build those essential historical thinking skills. **Connections is also of course one of the pathways to complexity in the LEQ and DBQ to introducing Unit 9 earlier into the course not only helps build the skill of demonstrating a complex understanding the historical developments, but it brings home to student the relevance of the course to their own times and lives.**

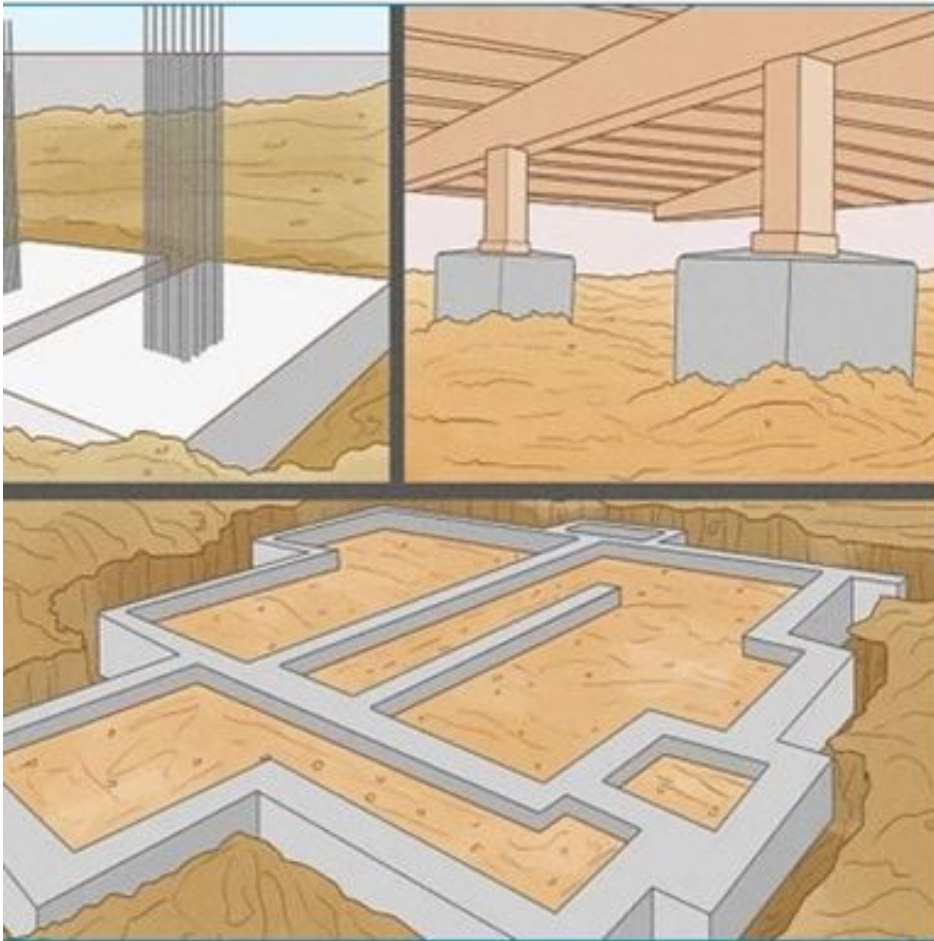
CED and Scaffolding Skills



CED and Scaffolding Skills



Scaffolding Skills in the DBQ



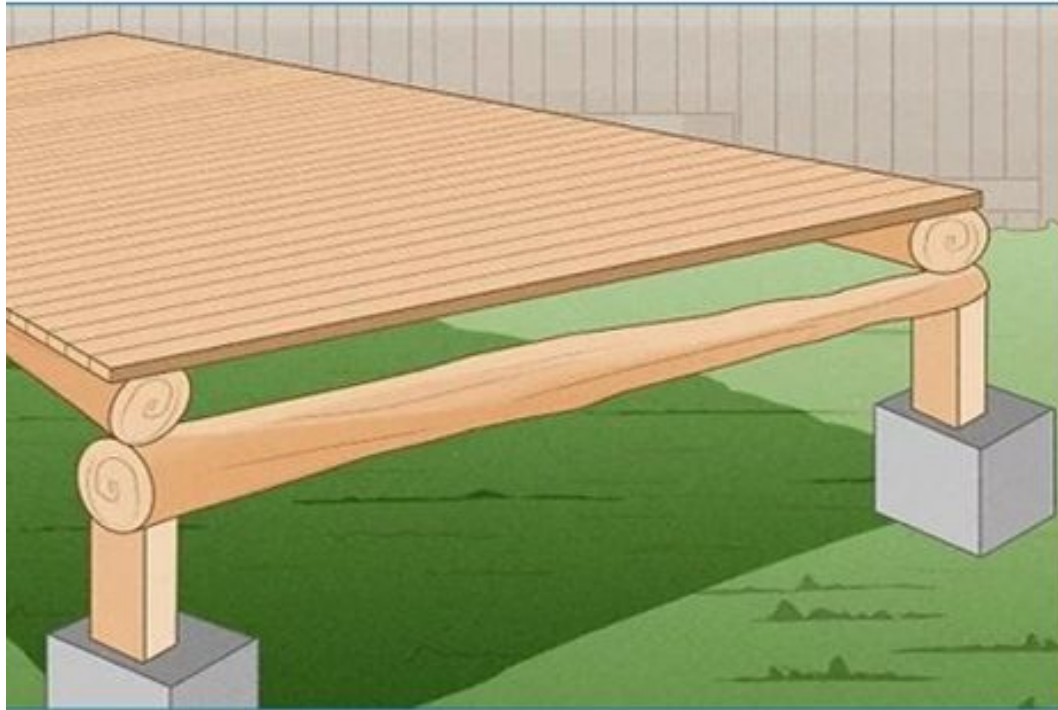
First Semester: Students write their DBQs at home, gradually reducing their time and increasing their skills.



DBQ 1 *Exposure*

- Simplify the rubric after Context and Thesis are established with some LEQs
- Sourcing
- Do not grade for complexity
- Preview any complex docs
- Give unlimited time
- Provide detailed feedback

Scaffolding Skills in the DBQ



First Semester: Students write their DBQs at home, gradually reducing their time and increasing their skills.

Document 2

See The Americans During the Civil War, 1776



Document 1

See The Americans During the Civil War, 1776

Document 3

See The Americans During the Civil War, 1776

Period 3 Review
pp. 159-162 for AP US History
pp. 137-140 for AP World: Modern

DBQ 2 Sourcing

- Increase Text Difficulty
- Focus on Sourcing
- Allow one type of Complexity (*Explain Both/Counter-argument*)
- Score Generously
- 2 Hour Maximum
- Provide detailed sourcing feedback



Thinking about Writing

History How To's



What is 'Because, But & So'?

This is a simple writing exercise that teaches students to think analytically. It also gets them to work with basic conjunctions



But, Because and So

What does the research say?

This activity was designed by Hochman and Wexler for The Writing Revolution as a sentence expansion activity to build both literacy and skills

One of the benefits is that the rigour of the activity is driven by the content you use. It can be easily applied in a KS2 or KS5 lesson.

This activity is powerful because it forces students to expand their thinking with precision and detail

It also encourages students to think in different ways they might develop the same sentence stem, forcing them to engage with the content, and think historically. Indeed, the task itself also escalates in difficulty as you complete it.

Further Reading

Hochman and Wexler; The Writing Revolution

Lemov: Teach like a Champion

Because, But and So

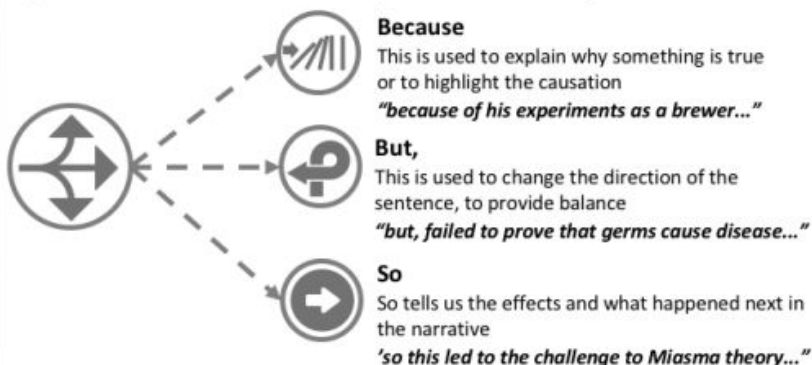
Greg Thornton
@mrthorntonteach



Using Because, But and So

Give students a sentence stem (beginning of a sentence) that allows *because*, *but* and *so* to be applied and expanded on.

E.g. "In 1861, Louis Pasteur developed the Germ Theory..."



In the History Classroom

Below are some examples of how you could use because, but and so within the history classroom.

Analysis

Because, But & So is most powerful when used to **analyse events, results or changes**
For example:

- From 1924, Stresemann secured the recovery of Germany.....
- Between May and June 1940, 338,226 British troops were evacuated at Dunkirk...
- After the Black Death, English society was changed...



Scholarship

It can be used to **engage with scholarship** by explain in why interpretations are made and also challenging them.

For example, this add because, but and so to the end of this extract below

Simon Schama claims "Change arrived in a violent rush, decisive, bloody, traumatic; as a truck-load of trouble.....wiping out everything that gives a culture its bearings"



New Vocabulary

Use it as a method to **embed and apply new vocabulary**, either Tier 2 or Tier 3
For example:

- People **migrated** to Britain...
- The **Homestead Act** was a 1862 that offered cheap land to settlers...
- In 1865, De Montfort called the first **parliament**, the Great Council,....



Do's and Don'ts

To really maximise your use of because, but so, follow this guidance on do's and don'ts



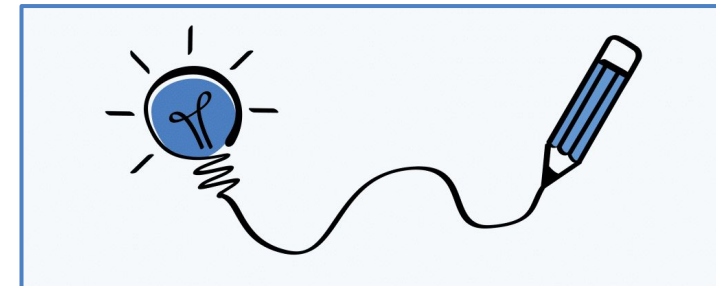
- Make sure the content can support using Because, But and So
- Get weaker students, to practice it orally first
- You can start with one conjunction at first, for example *because*
- Try to anticipate student answers

- Don't force the activity onto content that does not provide a clear opportunity to use it
- Don't change the sentence stem, keep the same for each one
- Don't let students use *Because, But, and So* at the start of sentences

Teacher Toolbox for Writing and Thinking



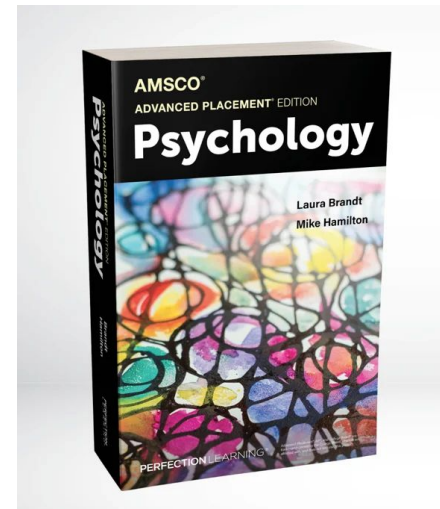
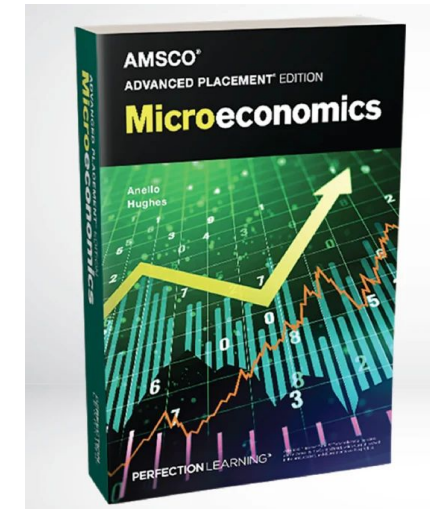
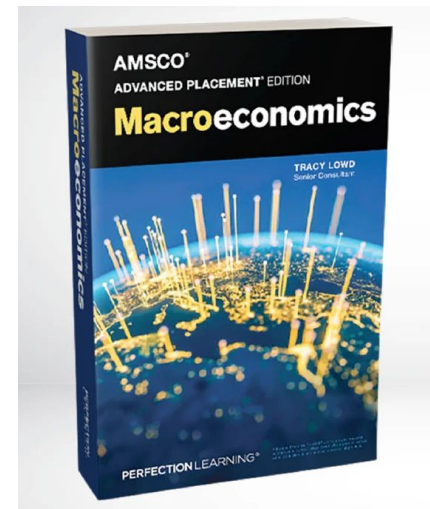
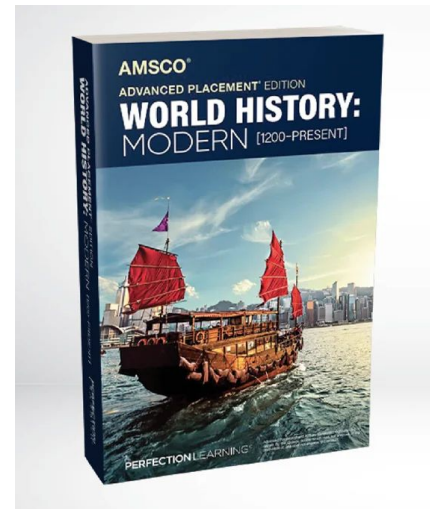
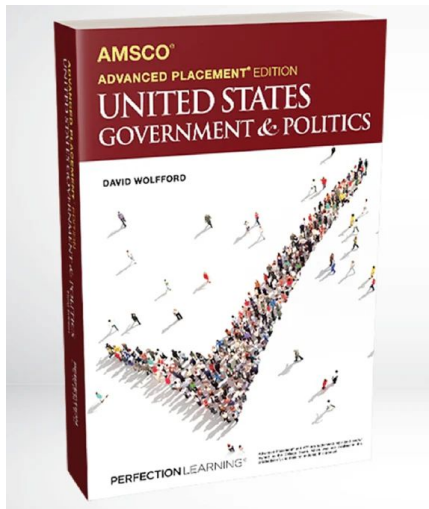
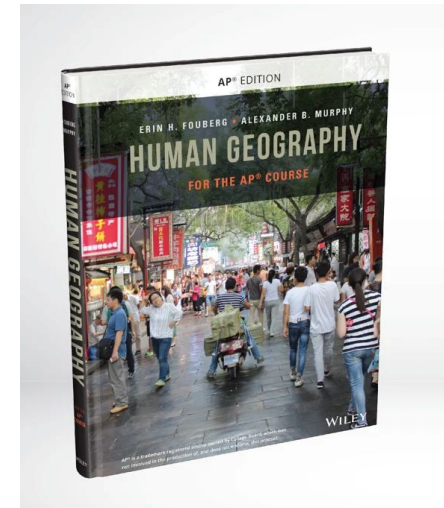
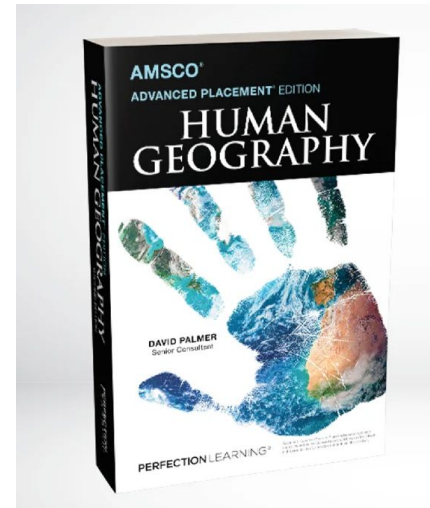
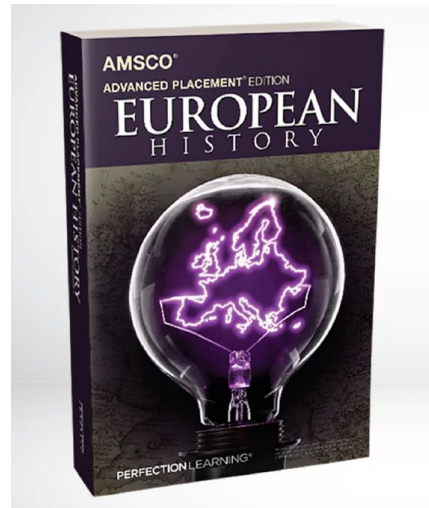
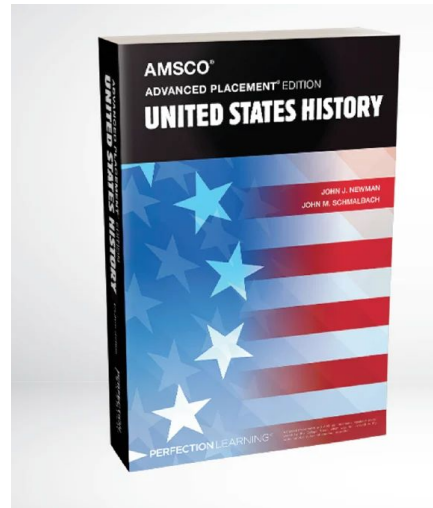
1. Writing Across the Curriculum
2. Stylistic Moves Toward Sophistication
3. 10 Ways to Start a Sentence
4. Subordinate Clauses
5. Combining Clauses & Sentence Combining



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