Intro to AP World History Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Ms. Carr Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Block: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

The Comparison Essay

The first AP-style essay we are going to be discussing in this class is the Comparison Essay, where you are asked to identify the similarities and differences between two major themes or concepts in World History. To be clear, comparison means BOTH similarities and differences. For this reason, you will often hear me call this the “compare/contrast” essay to remind you to include both.

The Components:

* Contextualization: Your essay will begin with 3-4 sentences on contextualization. In these sentences, you will describe the “big picture” of the unit or time period we have been discussing.
* Thesis: At the end of the paragraph on contextualization (your introductory paragraph) you will write your thesis. This needs to follow a particular structure, which is described below.
* Body Paragraphs: The rest of your essay will include the actual historical content that you are including to answer the question asked of you. The requirements for this section are included in more detail below.

***Answering the Question:***

In order to be successful in a compare/contrast essay, you need to ensure that you are answering the question. Below is a sample essay question and an explanation of how it can be broken down to ensure you are answering. Remember, if you are not answering the question you cannot receive credit for your essay.

A. Compare and Contrast means that you must use the historical thinking skill of comparison. To do this, you must include both similarities and differences. Follow the 2:1 Rule described below.

**Compare and contrast** the Neolithic and Paleolithic Eras in terms of *characteristics, causes, and impacts.*

C. Here are my three body paragraphs! I will be discussing the characteristics, the causes, and the impacts of these Eras.

B. If I don’t discuss both of these, or I discuss something other than the Paleolithic or Neolithic eras, would I be answering the question? Would a discussion of the Bronze Age answer the question?

***Part 1: Contextualization – The “Big Picture”***

* 3-4 sentences
* Identifies the “big picture” of the time period
* Must identify time and place
	+ You cannot study history without knowing where you are in time and space. Therefore, your Contextualization paragraph **must** include a date. Below are some questions for you to consider:
		- When is your essay taking place?
		- What general dates have we discussed in this unit?
		- What era are we in? What are the dates of that era?
	+ You must also identify space (i.e. place). Below are some questions for you to consider:
		- Where in the world am I?
		- What are some of the general trends that exist between the places I am discussing? (i.e. river valley civilizations all grew around rivers)
* Discuss relevant historical developments from this unit that relate to the topic of the prompt.

***Part 2: The Thesis***

* Your thesis **must** follow the structure that is identified below.
* Your thesis is the introduction of your argument. The rest of your essay must follow the argument that you have presented to the reader in your thesis statement.
* The 2:1 Rule: Your thesis must follow the 2:1 Rule. In other words, you must identify:
	+ 2 similarities and 1 difference
	+ 2 differences in 1 similarity
* Your thesis must answer the question that you have been asked.

Thesis Structure:

**Although** (whatever you are comparing) are different/similar in the area of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, they **nevertheless** have significant differences/similarities with regard to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. **Therefore**… state whether the two things you are comparing are more similar or more different.

***For example:***

*Essay Question:* Compare and contrast the early river valley civilizations of Mesopotamia and Indus in terms of environment/geography and two of the following:

* Science and Technology
* Society and Economics
* Politics and Government
* Religion and Philosophy

*Thesis:* Although Mesopotamia and Indus were similar in terms of society and economics, they nevertheless had many geographic and political differences that gave rise to unique cultures. Therefore, Mesopotamian and Harrapan civilizations were more different than similar.

Think about your introductory paragraph, in other words your contextualization sentences and thesis statement, in terms of a funnel.

Start broad with contextualizaton. Discuss the time and space and general trends of the unit and topic.

After contextualizing the unit and essay prompt, move towards the two topics you are actually comparing. In other words, which river valleys will you be discussing with the above prompt?

Finish with your thesis.

***Part 3: Body Paragraphs – The “Meat” of Your Essay***

* The body paragraphs are where you will discuss the civilizations and topics that you have mentioned in your thesis.
* Make sure you have a topic sentence that is copy and pasted from your thesis.
* The evidence you are providing needs to support the argument that you presented in your thesis.
	+ For example: If you said that you were going to discuss the geographic differences between Mesopotamia and Indus, your body paragraph on geography needs to do this. If the evidence you present identifies similarities in their geography, you are not supporting the argument you told the reader you were going to make.
* The order of presentation in the introduction must be paralleled in your body paragraphs.
	+ Based on the example thesis above, I would discuss similarities in society and economy first. Then I would discuss differences in geography. I would finish with differences in politics.
* You must make a decision here: Do you start with an area in which the two civilizations are more similar and then describe differences OR do you start with an area of difference and then describe similarities? It will depend on how you follow the 2:1 Rule.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Which Approach?** | **Paragraph 1** | **Paragraph 2** | **Paragraph 3** | **Paragraph 4** |
| Approach 1 | Contextualization and Thesis | Area of Similarity | Area of Difference | Area of Difference |
| Approach 2 | Contextualization and Thesis | Area of Difference | Area of Similarity | Area of Similarity |

*When deciding how to structure your essay, think about the final statement in your thesis – were the two topics you are comparing more similar or more different? How would this effect your order of discussion?*

* You must include SPECIFIC pieces of evidence in your essay. Don’t be vague, and do not include every single thing you know.
	+ Just because you know something about the technology of Mesopotamia and Indus, are those details necessary in your paragraph about politics? NO.
* You also need to ANALYZE in these paragraphs.
	+ Why do these similarities/differences exist?
	+ What is the significance of the details you are presenting?
	+ What is the significance of the similarities/differences you are presenting?
* You should aim to analyze in every single body paragraph.
* Finally, your essay must demonstrate complex understanding. What does this mean?
	+ Focusing on the prompt, you must use evidence to corroborate, qualify, or modify your argument. You can do this in a number of ways:
		- Explaining nuance by analyzing multiple variables
		- Explaining relevant and insightful connections within and across periods
		- Confirming the validity of an argument by corroborating multiple perspectives across themes
		- Qualifying or modifying an argument by considering diverse or alternative views or evidence

Overall: How well have your supported your argument? How well have you shown that you have a deep, insightful knowledge of this topic or question? What have you done to show that your knowledge is full of depth and understanding?

*Corroborate:* Confirm or give support to

*Qualify:* Limitation on the scope or precision of your claim, often expressing degrees of confidence or probability

*Modify:* Use evidence to address a point of view that might slightly oppose the argument that you’ve made.