

**Description:**

This project is designed to help students improve their writing through practice, instruction, and constructive feedback. This will be implemented in both sections of 9<sup>th</sup> grade World History I classes. The students have begun to write on tests and a bit for homework this semester already, but they have not received much direct instruction in historical writing. I want to see if there will be any further improvement of student writing by combining instruction with practice, and of course good feedback.

The students are new to writing in history classes as of this school year, so I have chosen to focus on a few basic writing skills. As seen in my rubric (below), I will be focusing on supporting their answers with evidence and examples. Many of the students have had difficulty with expanding on their ideas, so focusing on using evidence as support should help them to develop that ability. I will also look at organization, which is important in constructing a good essay. Finally, the rubric includes the thesis statement and accuracy. I chose to use this type of rubric over holistic because it is very organized and clear. This rubric should help students to see if they are doing what I have asked of them as they write the essay in a clear and easy way.

There will continue to be short answer or essay questions on tests. The rubric for those will be less formal. Tests will focus much less on thesis and organization, but will still emphasize accuracy and use of evidence/examples.

**Lessons:**

For my first lesson related to writing, I will give students the prompt and the rubric. We will go over the rubric and what it means. Then I will show them good and bad examples of an essay. We will apply the rubric to those examples together, so that students will be able to see clearly what I am asking of them and how they will be assessed. They will complete the prompt for homework. The content will have already been covered in class and through readings.

Subsequent lessons will be designed after I review the first essay. I do have another good and bad example ready in case we need to do that lesson again. There will be one take-home essay for each unit, and one essay (or a couple of short answers) on each unit test.

**Feedback:**

Students will receive more extensive feedback on the take-home essay than on the test essays due to time. The feedback for take-home essays will stick to the areas I wish to focus on (see the rubric). It will be constructive and helpful. There will be sincere positive remarks as well. Overall, feedback will be to the point and not overwhelming. The point is for the students to know how they can do better next time.

**Calendar / Timeline:**

Lauren Peterson – Graduate Project Implementation Plan

- Middle Ages – late Feb. to mid-March
  - There will be at least one instructional lesson on writing. In this first lesson we will go over the rubric, and we will go over a good and bad of an essay. The students will have to answer the first prompt for homework.
  - Students will answer a second prompt on the unit test.
- Asia, Africa, and Americas – the rest of March
  - There will be one instructional lesson during this unit. The form of this lesson will depend on how students due with the previous writing assignments. If they need to see another good example, I have that ready to do.
  - Students will write on the unit test. (Question not developed yet)
- The Renaissance – April
  - There will be one instructional lesson during this unit. We will go over any issues that seem to be prevalent. We will look at art during this unit, so students will have seen how to connect the Renaissance ideas with the art of the time.
  - Students will write on the unit test. (Question not developed yet)

**Rubric:**

|                               | <b>4</b>  | <b>3</b>   | <b>2</b>   | <b>1</b>  | <b>0</b>            |
|-------------------------------|---|--|--|---|---------------------|
| <b>Thesis Statement(s)</b>    | The thesis statement names the topic of the essay and outlines the main points to be discussed.   | The thesis statement names the topic of the essay, but not the main points.  | The thesis statement outlines some or all of the main points to be discussed but does not name the topic.  | The thesis statement does not name the topic AND does not preview what will be discussed. | No essay turned in. |
| <b>Evidence and Examples</b>  | All of the evidence and examples are specific, relevant and explanations are given that show how each piece of evidence supports the author's position. | Most of the evidence and examples are specific, relevant and explanations are given that show how each piece of evidence supports the author's position. | At least one of the pieces of evidence and examples is relevant and has an explanation that shows how that piece of evidence supports the author's position. | Evidence and examples are NOT relevant AND/OR are not explained.                          | No essay turned in. |
| <b>Accuracy</b>               | All supportive facts and statistics are reported accurately.  | Almost all supportive facts and statistics are reported accurately.  | Most supportive facts and statistics are reported accurately.  | Most supportive facts and statistics were inaccurately reported.                          | No essay turned in. |
| <b>Organization / Clarity</b> | Information is well organized with well-constructed paragraph(s).   | Information is organized with well-constructed paragraph(s). Minor changes should be made to enhance understanding.                                      | Information is organized, but paragraph(s) are not well-constructed. Difficult to follow and understand.   | The information appears to be disorganized. Difficult to follow and understand.           | No essay turned in. |

Spelling and grammar will not be graded, but when written feedback is given, errors will be marked and suggestions for improvement in this area will be included. However, if grammar is bad enough to make the writing unclear and difficult to understand, that DOES fall into the clarity category in the rubric.

**Grading Note:** For writing assignments in this class, my cooperating teacher will reduce the denominator of the grade by one point. This gives the students a chance to have extra points and/or make a small mistake with no penalty. There are 16 points in the rubric, but students will receive a grade out of 15 points. So the highest possible score is 16 out of 15 or 107%.

### **Good Essay Examples for first lesson:**

Describe feudalism and the manor system. Describe the position of each class within that system (lords, vassals, knights, and peasants) in the manor system. How did invasions (like those by the Vikings) influence this system? Use evidence and examples to support your answer.

Good:

During the middle ages, feudalism was the most common political system in Europe. The Manor system was the heart of the economy within the feudal system. This system prevailed for a long period of time and was actually reinforced by invasions from outside groups of peoples.

Feudalism was a decentralized and loosely organized political system. Powerful lords divided their lands among lesser lords in exchange for a pledge of military service and loyalty. These lesser lords were known as vassals, and the piece of land they received was known as a fief. The manor system grew out of this exchange. Knights would be allowed to live on the land in nice housing in exchange for military service and defense. Peasants, or serfs, were obligated to work the land and to give their lord some of their products such as grain or eggs. In exchange for this, they were granted protection from raids and war by their lord. Serfs were also allowed to farm some land for their own use. Despite the protection and land, serfs led a very harsh life because they worked long hours and were at risk of experiencing hunger and disease. Few peasants lived past age 35.

Europe saw many invasions during the middle ages by several groups including the Angles, Saxons, Magyars, and Vikings. These invasions made travel more difficult which disrupted trade and caused large towns to decline. This led to the strengthening of the feudal system as more manors arose because they were self-sufficient and protected by lords. Manors with castles were especially protected from invasion due to their high walls, towers, and moats. Manorialism would continue for years to come.

**Example for later lesson** (if needed – this example is NOT the question they will have to answer):

How did Chinese people during the Tang and Song dynasties live? Describe each class level of society as well as the position of women. Use examples to support your answer.

Good:

During the Tang and Song dynasties, Chinese people lived a life of order within society. This structure was based on Confucianism which emphasized social order based on duty, rank, and proper behavior. There were the upper-class gentry, the lower-class peasants, and the lowest merchants. Women had a higher status during this time than earlier, but boys were still more valued than girls.

Scholars came from the gentry class because only they could afford to spend years studying Confucianism. These scholars could go on to become government officials if they passed the difficult civil service exam. The peasants worked the land and lived on the food they were able to produce. Some families produced goods such as baskets, which they could sell for additional income. Peasants lived in small villages and relied on each other instead of the emperor and the government. They could move up in society through education and government service, although this was not easy. Slavery did not play a large role in early China, but those who were slaves would not have opportunities to move up in society. Merchants had the lowest status in early Chinese society because Confucian tradition puts them lower since they obtain their wealth from the labor of others. The government would often restrict or heavily control trade due to this belief.

Women ran the family affairs by managing the servants and family finances. However, they were still subordinate to men and could never remarry. It is during this time that foot binding emerged. Tiny feet were considered a sign of nobility and beauty. The process was extremely painful, and it would cause women to need help to walk. This reinforced the Confucian tradition that women should remain in the home. Only peasant girls who were needed in the field did not have their feet bound, but even those families worried about being able to marry off a girl with large feet.