

1.0 Short Answer Questions & Building Synthesis

There are three steps to follow in order to compose more effective answers to short answer questions:

STEP 1: ACQUIRING KNOWLEDGE

We acquire knowledge through reading, completing assignments, discussing ideas with fellow students, contemplation, identifying and correcting errors in our own thinking or the thinking of others, and asking teachers clarifying questions.

STEP 2: UNDERSTANDING THE QUESTION

Read the question twice. The first time read just to put it in your mind. Read it a second time looking for specific keywords which reveal specifically what the question is asking you to do.

STEP 3: COMPOSING AN ANSWER

Every short answer (just like any well composed essay) must begin with a topic sentence. Open your answer with a simple and clearly worded topic sentence—tell the reader what you are going to be discussing and why it is important. Use your introduction to communicate the central idea to the reader. Many writers simply re-write the question into the form of a statement.

In the answer's body, make effective use of your understanding of the keywords to demonstrate your understanding of the question. There are many ways to do this. The easiest way is to discuss a couple of real world historical examples to support the argument you are building.

Using examples demonstrates you have a deeper understanding of the question. A further approach to take is to be logical and philosophical, i.e. you could discuss hypothetical situations, incorporate personal anecdotes, draw comparisons, or appeal to logic to prove a point. Good writers use a combination of examples and insight to compose their answers; it is also wise to bring you answer to a close with an appropriate concluding statement.

Note: *do not just throw facts at your reader or include irrelevant information at any time in your answer. This tells the teacher you do not understand or appreciate what the question is asking.*

Exemplar Question

Why is studying history important to society?

Studying history is important to society's health for several reasons. Firstly, history presents humankind with many lessons on what to do and what not to do. Nazi Germany, for example, shows us what can happen when people abandon democracy in favor of dictatorship. Many Germans were upset that they had lost to Britain and France in World War I. Adolf Hitler, the Nazi dictator, promised to restore Germany's place as a great European power. Hitler ended up making things worse by drawing Europe into a Second World War. Secondly, history helps us understand not only where we have been but also where we are going. We learn from a study of the past on how we can build upon the technological, social and cultural achievements of those who came before us. For example, if we had not first discovered the atom there's no way we could have split it to release all that energy which powers many cities today. Also, democracy did not just come out of nowhere fully intact. Democracy evolved gradually over time where societies like the ancient Athenians practice slavery but still had a broad number of citizens who could hold power and participate in elections. In the 21st century, democracies have empowered all sorts of minorities, gotten rid of slavery, and continue to expand the liberty and freedom of people. History's importance to humankind's survival is obvious. We must learn from the past to learn from our mistakes and avoid repeating them.

Synergetic Short Answer Questions

Learning Objective: students will apply their learning in new and novel ways to demonstrate critical thinking and reading comprehension skills.

Procedure

- 1). Complete the readings associated with the headings below.
- 2). Read carefully and then answer the **first two regular questions**.
- 3). Use the answers from the first two questions to answer the **third synergistic question**.
- 4). Meet, discuss, answer and share with the class your answer to the **final (group) question**.

READINGS: 1.0 and 1.1

Glossary Terms: vassal, liege lord, fief and feudal contract.

- 1). Describe how feudalism eventually developed in Western Europe (1.0).
- 2). According to the "feudal contract" what responsibilities did vassals and liege lords have (1.1)?
- 3). Different political systems develop at different times. In your opinion, why doesn't humankind just develop and keep one type of political system?
- 4). Land was the basis of power in the feudal system. Identify and explain what the basis of power is for a modern democratic system.

READINGS 1.2 and 1.3

Glossary Terms: William of Normandy, serfs, oath of fealty, dual fealty, submission.

- 1). Describe the process by which a person could become a bishop during the feudal period (1.2).
- 2). Although structured top-down like a ladder, feudalism was still potentially a messy political system. Explain (1.3).
- 3). Why would it be a problem for Church and king to each have their own legal and prison systems?
- 4). Why do democracies value keeping the authority of the church and state completely separate from one another?

READINGS: 1.5 and 1.6

Glossary Terms: middle class, de Medici, money economy, Battle of Hastings, *Magna Carta*, Henry II, King John, Parliament.

- 1). Why was the adoption of the Florin, or a standard currency, so important to economic growth in Europe (1.5)?
- 2). In what respect did Henry II's power increase when he introduced a civil service and circuit court system (1.6)?
- 3). When King John of England signed the *Magna Carta* he was essentially agreeing to have his power limited by a Great Council (Parliament). In your opinion, is it better to live in a system where the power of the king is limited or in a system where the power of the king is absolute? Explain.
- 4). Identify and explain the two most important roles played by any government.