

Assignment 7: Writing a Historical Argumentative Essay

Argumentative essays require students to investigate a topic; collect, generate, and evaluate evidence; and establish a position on the topic in a concise manner.

Argumentative essays are not the same as expository essays. Specifically, expository essays do not require students to make original arguments; rather, they are a simple retelling or narrative of something that has happened. Argumentative essays, however, require students to identify an argument and then defend it by appealing to a combination of evidence and logic.

Students will be guided through the process by receiving a series of steps as outlined in a *Google Docs* they will receive from the classroom teacher through email. Follow the instructions on this handout and the online document carefully.

Objective: compose an argumentative essay based on the prescribed topic (see below) and defend it by appealing to historical, literary, or logical evidence.

Prescribed Topic: based on the absolute monarchs studied during unit 6, e.g. Philip II of Spain, Louis XIV of France, Frederick William of Prussia, Peter the Great of Russia, etc. which one of them was the most *effective* absolute monarch and why?

Note 1: an absolute monarch is defined as a king (or queen) who is not limited by laws or a legislative body (Parliament). Instead, their power is complete, absolute and unlimited.

Note 2: there are different ways to measure success or effectiveness. You can measure it:

- By how effective the monarch prevented outside interference or limits to their power
- By how effectively the monarch increased their personal power
- By how effectively the monarch used their personal influence to improve their kingdom's political, economic, social and cultural strength

Note 3: in this essay students can compare the different monarchs to one another or just focus on discussing one monarch in isolation.

Essay Criteria

The following minimum standards must be met:

- An introductory paragraph; three body paragraphs; and a concluding paragraph
- A minimum 500 words in length (and no longer than 800)
- Use Calibri, Verdana, Arial or Times New Roman fonts (size 12)
- Free from all logical, grammatical, and spelling errors
- This is a formal essay therefore no personal pronouns, e.g. I, you, me, etc. can be used
- Reference and cite a minimum of three valid sources in the essay using Chicago citation style
 - One of the three sources must be print while the others can be electronic
 - Students are encouraged to make use of reference materials like Wikipedia (or any other type of encyclopedia); however, reference works do not qualify or count towards the source count
 - Specifically, reference materials give students a “big picture” of what is going on but you should not incorporate this information into your essay.
 - These reference works are also useful, in that, at the bottom of reference pages you can find citations leading you to other sources, e.g. books, websites, journals, etc. that can potentially be used as a source.
 - Students are encouraged to insert direct quotes into their essays where appropriate using Chicago citation style, i.e. see Chicago Style Handout for information on how to format the title page, in-text quotations and the bibliography

Evaluation

- The essay will be evaluated on the basis of the attached rubric and must be completed in full by deadline (as set down by the teacher)
- Marks are earned not only for completing the assignment but also for going through all the required steps, e.g. research, planning, first draft, second, etc.
- The essay should be written in *Google* docs and shared with the classroom teacher at rdelaine@lcbi.sk.ca

Step 1. Decide on which absolute monarch you are going to defend. This is important because doing so will focus your reading and research.

Students who lack experience writing essays frequently just past research and just begin writing. You cannot skip the research stage. In particular, it is not possible to write effectively about a topic without first possessing genuine knowledge about that topic in the first place. Therefore, complete *all* of your research *before* beginning the first draft.

Conduct Research

a). Consult relevant reference materials like *Wikipedia*. Reference materials like these have a list of sources at the bottom of the page. These sources are useful for conducting further research. Remember you need to use three different sources and one of those sources must be from print (a book). *Google Scholar* is also useful for finding potential research to incorporate into your essay.

Note: obviously it is impossible to remember every relevant piece of research you uncover; therefore, you should keep track of everything you find in a separate document. Also, keep in mind you are looking for *quality* and *trustworthy* resources. Therefore, stick to using the following types of resources: scholarly journals, books, websites from educational institutions, or sites produced by professional historians. When in doubt ask your teacher for guidance on how to test the reliability, values and limitations of a potential source.

For example, I found the following *relevant* information on Catherine the Great's qualities as an absolute monarch from a book written by Isabel de Madariaga (found on Stetson University's site). Isabel was a professor and expert on Russian history:

-Catherine was not a revolutionary like Peter I, who forced his policies on a reluctant society without counting the human cost. She paid attention to public opinion; as she said to Diderot, "what I despair of overthrowing I undermine." Her absolute authority rested, as she well knew, on her sensitivity to the possible.

Make sure to not only copy/paste (or paraphrase) the research as was done above but also keep track of the book and page number or the website, e.g.

<http://www2.stetson.edu/~psteeves/classes/catherinedemadariaga.html>.

Eventually, the research will be incorporated into the body of your essay.

Step 2. Plan the essay. Create and organize the paragraphs of the First Draft.

Students are encouraged to present their research in the form of a standard five paragraph essay, e.g. thesis paragraph, three body paragraphs, and a concluding paragraph. During the first draft stage do not overly worry about grammar, spelling, etc. Your main focus is simply organizing information into a functional and effective framework.

Developing the Thesis Paragraph

a). Create a thesis statement based precisely on the prescribed topic, e.g. based on the absolute monarchs studied during unit 6, e.g. Philip II of Spain, Louis XIV of France, Frederick William of Prussia, Peter the Great of Russia, etc. which one of them was the most *effective* absolute monarch and why?

For example, a thesis statement on Catherine the Great might read like the following: *Catherine was not only a great absolute ruler in Russia, she was the most effective absolute monarch in the history of Europe.*

Use the whole thesis paragraph to build a full context for the essay. You'll notice that the thesis statement appears at the beginning. This isn't necessary but some argue the best way to open an essay is with the thesis statement. Nonetheless, the thesis paragraph as a whole is an opportunity to set the tone for the reader.

Catherine was not only a great absolute ruler in Russia, she was the most effective absolute monarch in the history of Europe. Absolute monarchs do not share power with others. Instead, the power and influence they wield is not meaningfully limited in any way. Catherine was one such capable absolute ruler. She managed at one and the same time to both control the nobility of Russia while expanding Russia's borders. This is no small feat because the Russian nobility viewed Catherine as an outsider--because she was born in Germany--and many of them desired to become czars themselves.

Keep the following three things in mind when developing your thesis: firstly, an absolute monarch is defined as a king (or queen) who is not limited by laws or a legislative body (Parliament). Instead, their power is complete, absolute and unlimited; secondly, there are different ways to measure success or effectiveness. You can measure it by: a). How effective the monarch prevented outside interference or limits to their power;

b). Increased their personal power; and c). how effectively they used their personal influence to improve their kingdom's political, economic, social and cultural strength. Students could also consider comparing and contrasting different absolute monarchs with one another or just focus discussing one monarch in isolation.

Organizing the Essay's Three Body Paragraphs

b). The main purpose of the essay's body is to introduce arguments to the reader that support your thesis. Incorporate your research into the essay's body. Each body paragraph should entail or complement with the next.

Compose the Concluding Paragraph

c). Compose the concluding paragraph. The purpose of the conclusion is to bring the essay to a close by answering a question raised (implied) by the thesis statement. For example, the implied question in the example thesis was something: Why was Catherine the Great the most effective absolute monarch? Successfully answering the implied question will help you achieve something important—thesis-conclusion agreement, i.e. you should be able to read the thesis statement and conclusion by themselves (ignoring the body) and they will still “make sense” together. Use the conclusion to remind the reader of the evidence/research in the essay's body.

Note: never introduce new evidence or information in the conclusion. This does not mean you cannot make arguments in the conclusion. Do not move on to the second draft stage until first getting the classroom teacher's approval, i.e. the teacher will ensure you are on the right track, etc.

Formatting Quotations & References Using Chicago Style

There are three situations when students will have to reference their sources and quotations.

1). **Direct Reference.** Any time you include a non-original idea—which happens whenever you paraphrase and include research—you must indicate the original source and author using footnotes. See exemplar below:

Catherine the Great was not born in Russia; however, she had every intention of ruling Russia in her own right as an absolute monarch.¹ The problem she faced was getting the Russian nobility to go along with her plan. She used a combination of intimidation, bribery and flattery to ensure her influence was complete.

The superscripted ¹ indicates the source where the information is found. Citations are used to maintain the highest possible academic and scholarly standards. You do not have to cite absolutely *every* single piece of information you uncover; when in doubt ask the classroom teacher for guidance; however, whenever you are referencing something that passes for an *argument* you must *always* cite it.

2). **Short In-Text Quotation.** Short quotations are pieces of text from books and/or websites that essayists include to help support their arguments. Short quotations are defined as 29 words or shorter and are incorporated directly into the essayist's paragraphs. See exemplar below:

Catherine the Great was not born in Russia; however, she had every intention of ruling Russia in her own right as an absolute monarch. The problem she faced was getting the Russian nobility to go along with her plan. She used a combination of intimidation, bribery and flattery to ensure her influence was complete. Catherine also used her dead husband's connections and through her contacts "she set out to develop her own theories of governing through her reading and correspondence".²

3). **Long In-Text Quotation.** Long quotations are defined as anything 30 words or longer. Longer quotations require some special formatting. Longer quotations are useful mainly as a form of evidence to quickly and efficiently develop an argument. The essay is given

¹ Michael Streeter, *Catherine the Great*, pg. 45-46.

² Michael Streeter, *Catherine the Great*, pg. 47.

greater authenticity whenever a relevant expert's opinion is incorporated into the work. See exemplar below:

Catherine the Great was not born in Russia; however, she had every intention of ruling Russia in her own right as an absolute monarch. The problem she faced was getting the Russian nobility to go along with her plan. She used a combination of intimidation, bribery and flattery to ensure her influence was complete. Michael Streeter, an authority on Catherine's rise to prominence observed:

[Catherine] read the works of Voltaire—with whom she would now correspond for many years—and Montesquieu and the *Encyclopedia* of the French philosopher Denis Diderot. Though she was no intellectual, Catherine was intelligent, well-read and genuinely interested in the theory of government. She had thought hard about the problems of ruling an empire as vast as Russia.³

Catherine was not a philosopher but one does not have to be an intellectual to be a first-rate absolute monarch.

In terms of formatting longer quotations, do the following: firstly, place the quote on its own by inserting paragraph breaks before and after; secondly, indent the quotation five spaces on the left and right; and thirdly, use an appropriate segue to introduce the quote (see example above).

Note: the citations appearing at the bottom of the previous page and this one are also part of Chicago style. The classroom teacher will show everyone how to insert them properly into the essay. The bibliography serves a different purpose than footnotes. The bibliography is where all the information for all sources, e.g. publisher, publication date, etc. are provided by the essay's writer.

³ Michael Streeter, *Catherine the Great*, pg.47.

Step 3. Second Draft Stage

Do the following:

- Polish your sentences (catch typos, spelling errors)
- Ensure quotations and references are properly cited/formatted
- Tighten up your arguments making sure sentences and paragraphs entail
- Strengthen the quality of your arguments, i.e. make sure you are connecting the dots between your arguments and research
- Catch and fix any problems or issues with logic or historical inaccuracies
- Get a fellow student to peer edit your work

Also, most importantly, consult the essay rubric making sure you have successfully met all the assignment's requirements.

Step 4. Final Draft Stage

Do the following:

- Create the title page and bibliography (see exemplars below)
 - Title of essay on title page is font sized 16 (everything else is size 14)
- Get another student to peer edit your entire essay, e.g. title page, essay, and bibliography
- Re-read the essay one last time looking for typographical errors, e.g. spelling errors, grammatical issues, formatting errors
- Submit the essay by deadline to rdelainey@lcbi.sk.ca

LCBI High School

Title of Essay

Your Name

History 10

Mr. Delainey

Paper Due Date

BIBLIOGRAPHY

De Madariaga, Isabella. "Catherine the Great." Catherine the Great. Accessed August 25, 2017. <http://www2.stetson.edu/~psteeves/classes/catherinedemadariaga.html>.

Marcuse, Herbert, *One-Dimensional Man*, Boston: Beacon Press Books, 1964.

Go to the Citation Machine at <http://www.citationmachine.net/chicago/cite-a-book>.

- Follow the site's instructions
- Arrange bibliographical entries alphabetically, e.g. Last names A to Z
- Insert one space between the title BIBLIOGRAPHY and the first reference entry

When in doubt about finding information to complete the bibliography feel free to ask for assistance from the classroom teacher.