

**Assignment 7: Writing a History Essay**

History essays require students to both investigate a topic and defend a thesis. History essays are different than expository essays, in that, in an expository essay there is no need to defend an argument; however, in a history essay the writer must introduce a central idea and defend it by using different types of history related evidence and information.

**Assignment Objective:** write an essay based on the prescribed topic below. Prescribed topics are teacher generated ones.

**Prescribed Topic:** Which single absolute monarch studied during Unit 6—Phillip II of Spain, Louis XIV of France, Frederick William of Prussia or Peter the Great—was the most *effective* and why?

**What is an absolute monarch?**

An absolute monarch is a king (or queen) who is not limited by any laws or a legislative body (like a Parliament). Instead, their power is complete, total, absolute and unlimited.

**How can effectiveness be measured?**

There are different ways to measure effectiveness (or success). For example, you can measure it by analysing:

- How effectively the monarch prevented anybody from placing any limits on their personal power
- How effectively the monarch increased their personal power at the expense of others
- How effectively the monarch improved their kingdom's political, economic, social and cultural life

**Note:** a good strategy would be to compare your absolute monarch to one or more of the other monarchs covered in the unit. Comparisons are useful for demonstrating how *effective* your king is and how comparatively *ineffective* the others were.

**Read and follow all instructions exactly. Do not wing it.**

## Essay Standards

The following minimum standards must be met. This formal essay must:

- Have an introductory paragraph, three body paragraphs, and a concluding paragraph
  - The introduction must contain an identifiable thesis (or argument)
- Have a title page and bibliography page formatted in Chicago style
- Be a minimum 500 words in length (but no longer than 700)
- Use Arial font (size 11)
- Be free of any logical, grammatical, chronological or spelling errors
- Not use *any* personal pronouns whatsoever, e.g. I, me, you, us, we, me
- Incorporate a minimum of one direct quotation from a paper source (or non-website) formatted according to Chicago style
  - Books published digitally (e.g. PDFs) qualify as paper sources
  - There is no limit to the number of websites that can be used
    - Do not use Wikipedia, Quora or Yahoo Answers

## Evaluation

- The essay is evaluated on the basis of a rubric
- Marks are earned both for the process (e.g. the steps taken to create the essay) and the product (e.g. the finished product)
- Use *Google* Docs to create your essay and share it with [rdelainey@lcbi.sk.ca](mailto:rdelainey@lcbi.sk.ca)
  - Give your teacher full editing privileges

**STEP 1. Decide on an absolute monarch to defend.** Ideally, you formed an opinion based on your reading of Chapter 16: The Age of National Monarchs.

**STEP 2. Create a working thesis statement.** Since reading Chapter 16 you are ready to create a working thesis. Having a working thesis focuses your research and the overall writing process.

If you like, use the following template, e.g. **Louis XIV was the most effective absolute monarch because...**

Refine (improve) the thesis later.

**STEP 3. Conduct research.** Although you cannot literally use *Wikipedia* to write your essay, i.e. take sentences from it and place them (even paraphrased) into your writing, etc. you can use a reference site like this to conduct research. Specifically, if a student is not yet an expert on their topic, sites like *Wikipedia* or *Encyclopedia Britannica* help students gain a better overall understanding. Reference materials like encyclopedias are designed to help readers become overall more acquainted with a topic.

**Note:** you might find *Google Scholar* ([scholar.google.ca](http://scholar.google.ca)) useful; it helps student researchers conduct more specific searches for potentially useful books (digitally published) and websites.

### **How do I know if either a book or website is useable?**

Stick to using scholarly journals, books, and websites published by institutions like universities. Avoid using blogs or sites like *Yahoo Answers* or *Quora*. Personal websites are potentially useful provided they are created by genuine experts, i.e. you will need to investigate whether or not the author is a legitimate. This means trying to find where they are employed, books they have published, and what their education is. When in doubt get your teacher to help you vet (check) the author, book or website.

### **What is the first thing I should do with the information I find?**

In the beginning, do not worry about writing paragraphs or conclusions. Your focus for now is to find *relevant* information to include in your essay. This means finding and organizing the information you find into categories. Since you are writing about absolute

monarchs it makes sense organize your information into the following: **politics, economics, war, religion and culture**. Ensure you keep track of the sources, page numbers, and so on, you gathered the info from. You must include this information into your footnotes (see citations below).

Common practice is to copy and place this research into a separate document. Once you are satisfied you have enough info, start the writing process.

**STEP 4. Plan the essay.** Create and organize the paragraphs for the FIRST DRAFT of the essay. There are three sections to the essay you are writing: a). Introduction, b). Three body paragraphs and c). The Conclusion.

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.

#### **a). Introduction**

Open with your thesis statement. For example: *Catherine the Great was not only a great absolute ruler in Russia, she was the most effective absolute monarch in the history of Europe.*

Keep the following in mind when developing your thesis: absolute monarchs are defined as kings (queens) who enjoy unlimited power and are not limited by any laws.

Now introduce your absolute monarch to the reader. See example paragraph below.

*Catherine 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 possess is not 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 accomplishment because the Russian nobility viewed Catherine as an outsider (she was born in Germany) and many nobles desired to become czars themselves.*

**b). The Three Body Paragraphs**

The purpose of the essay's body is to introduce and discuss evidence in support of your thesis. Assumedly, you organized your research into categories as discussed in STEP 2. Insert and organize this research into three body paragraphs (one category per paragraph). It is possible to combine categories with one another; however, when combining categories you run the risk of writing something confused or irrelevant.

**c). The Conclusion**

The conclusion brings the essay to a close by answering a question raised by the thesis statement. For example, the raised in the example thesis about Catherine is: Why was Catherine the Great the most effective absolute monarch? Successfully answering the question raised helps you achieve something called thesis-conclusion agreement. This means a reader should be able to read the introduction and then jump right to the conclusion and everything will make sense.

When it comes to young writers there is a tendency to write conclusions that are too short. Ultimately, the conclusion should arguably be your longest paragraph because you not only remind the reader of the evidence you revealed in the essay's body but you also draw conclusions about that evidence.

**Note:** never introduce new evidence or information in the conclusion.

Do not move on to the **SECOND DRAFT** until you get the teacher's approval. The teacher will ensure you are on the right track.

During the **SECOND DRAFT** refine the quality of your writing and arguments by strengthening the essay's transitions and segues.

During the **FINAL DRAFT** refine the quality of your paragraphs by deleting un-necessary words and sentences; ensuring your essay is error free; and spending time ensuring your introduction and conclusion agree. Be sure to complete your title and bibliography pages.<sup>1</sup> Get another student to peer edit your work (and hopefully catch any errors—small or large—you might have made).

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<sup>1</sup> Templates for both the title and bibliography pages are found on pages 8 and 9 of this handout. Bibliographies are different from works cited pages, in that, in a works cited page you only cite the sources you used information from. For bibliographies you actually include a reference to every single book or website, etc. you looked at through the course of researching your essay.

Submit your essay to [rdelainey@lcbi.sk.ca](mailto:rdelainey@lcbi.sk.ca) by deadline. Late submissions will be penalized (see rubric).

### **Formatting Quotations Using Chicago Style**

**1). Short In-Text Quotations.** Quotes are pieces of text literally drawn from books or websites. Writers include quotes from books to enhance the scholarly quality of their compositions. Place the footnote number after the closing quotation mark of the quote. Footnotes appear at the bottom of the page. Use the Citation Machine<sup>2</sup> to help you format your 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. 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."<sup>3</sup>

Shorter quotes sometimes require segues (linking phrases); however, in the above example the quote was literally made part of an existing sentence.

**2). Long In-Text Quotation.** Longer quotes are defined as anything 30 words in length or longer. **They require special formatting.** In the example below, you can see the quotation is indented five spaces from the left margin. Also, a paragraph break is inserted at both the top and bottom of the quotation.

**Long quotes also require segues.** Segues literally link the quotation to the source (the writer) of the quote itself, e.g. see green bolded text in the example below. Longer quotations are used to directly incorporate expert opinion into an essay. Place the footnote immediately after the period of the paragraph's final sentence. 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,

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.citationmachine.net/#>

<sup>3</sup> Streeter, Michael. *Catherine the Great*. (London: Haus, 2007), 47.

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.<sup>4</sup>

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).

**3). Direct Reference.** Use footnotes to also tell readers where you found an important idea you incorporated into your essay. You will certainly come up with your own ideas when writing an essay; however, you will also come across exciting and interesting arguments put forth by experts in books. Use footnotes to indicate to give credit to these experts when you include their ideas your own written work. You must do this to avoid charges of plagiarism and academic dishonesty. Place the footnote after the expert's argument. 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.<sup>5</sup> 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.

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<sup>4</sup> Streeter, *Catherine the Great*, 47. (If you use the same source twice in a row, simplify it to this.)

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 45-46. (*Ibid* in Latin literally means "in the same source.")

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**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.