

Instructions: Write a persuasive historical essay following the instructions below.

Topic: Was Reconstruction a success, a failure or both?

1

Choose your topic or issue. If this has not been assigned for you by your teacher, look for topics that have typically been controversial throughout history, such as civil rights, welfare, religion, foreign policy or even economics. Choose a topic that you can reasonably take a position on, but one that is controversial enough that there will be significant scholarly literature written about it.

2

Research your subject thoroughly. In order for your essay to be persuasive, it needs to be presented based on solid research. If you leave a gaping hole in your argument because you did not thoroughly research one aspect of the debate on the issue, it could adversely affect the grade you receive on your paper. Use scholarly historical journals and websites that are maintained by colleges and universities, along with books. Avoid websites that have the ".com" or ".net" suffix because they may not be reputable.

3

Write a definitive position in the introduction of your paper. This is your thesis statement. The thesis statement indicates to the reader what argument you are making and what they can expect throughout the duration of your paper. The introduction should be no more than a paragraph, and your thesis statement should ideally come toward the end of the paragraph. The opening words of the paragraph should simply introduce the topic.

4

Provide reasons to support your claim. The purpose of the persuasive essay is to persuade your reader that your position is the right one to take. For historical persuasive essays, one of the most effective ways to do this is to simply provide several examples throughout history that support your assertion. For example, if you are arguing that participation of women in the political arena is still limited despite the strides that have been made since 1920, you would compare the gender composition of Congress and other political offices today with those in previous decade to show that the increase in participation has been only gradual and remains minimal. Statistics to support your claims would provide solid support for your position.

5

Anticipate objections and answer them throughout your essay. This is how you silence the voice of opposition as you make your argument. In order to do this effectively, you must research your position from both sides of the argument.

6

Write a conclusion that summarizes the essential facts once again. The conclusion represents the culmination of your argument. Here you are telling the reader that you are correct because all of the data that you have provided adds up or points to one definitive conclusion.