

## U.S. History Regents: Essays

### Following Directions

Before you start writing an essay, underline, *circle* or **highlight** all the question's **directive words** and look at them as you first plan and then write the essay.

U.S. History Regents Exam essays (Thematic, 15 points and DBQ Parts A and B, 30 points) ask you to perform specific tasks depending on which word is used. Some common direction words are, **analyze**, **assess**, **compare**, **contrast**, **describe**, **discuss**, **evaluate** or **explain**.

Sometimes essay directions actually use one of these words, while in other essays, the directive word is not stated but **implied** -- e.g. in a DBQ essay: "Did imperialism do more harm than good?", the student is expected to **evaluate** pros and cons.

Each word has a somewhat different meaning and requires you to use a particular approach as you write the answer to that particular essay question:

- **analyze**: break down into component parts, examine critically
- **assess**: judge the value or truth of
- **compare**: examine the similarities and differences in
- **contrast**: note only the differences in
- **describe**: give a full account of, tell about, depict
- **discuss**: write about in argument, talk about, argue the faults and merits of
- **evaluate**: fully consider pros and cons
- **explain**: make plain or clear in detail, give reasons for, state the cause or purpose of

**Homework Assignment**: Pick a current national news story you are interested in and write a set of essay directions for it using **two** of the directive words listed above. Use your practice Regents Essay questions as a model.



**Following Directions: Sample Essay Tasks**  
**Document: Excerpts from Thomas Paine's The Crisis No.1, 1776**

- 1) **Analyze** the author's goals. What things does he hope to achieve by publishing The Crisis?
  
- 2) Paine calls King George III, "*a common murderer, a highwayman (mugger), or a house-breaker.*" **Assess** the truth of this claim based on your knowledge of the conflict between Britain and the 13 colonies prior to 1776.
  
- 3) **Compare** Paine's goals as seen in The Crisis to the goals to those of another important revolution, such as the French, Russian or South American Revolutions.
  
- 4) **Contrast** the arguments and appeals Paine uses in The Crisis with those put forth by President Bush in justifying the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003.
  
- 5) **Describe** at least three ways that Paine appeals to the *reader's emotions*.
  
- 6) **Discuss** the role of *religion and family* in Paine's arguments from The Crisis.
  
- 7) Based on The Crisis, **evaluate** whether or not Paine deserves to be remembered as a "master of persuasion."
  
- 8) **Explain** the connection between Paine's arguments in The Crisis to the principles and political ideas expressed during the *Age of Enlightenment* by philosophers such as Locke, Voltaire, Burke, etc.

