

DR. M. KUEFLER -- ESSAY WORKSHEET  
(Maybe better done in pencil than in pen.)

**First, describe your topic by completing this sentence:**

In this essay, I intend to talk about \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Then, describe your thesis (main argument), that is, what are you going to try to prove about your topic? It must be an arguable point, so try to write it by completing the following sentence. Remember that you must try to state your thesis in one sentence, and that it should be detailed enough to inform anyone who reads it what your topic is as well as your thesis. But don't try to mention all of your points in the thesis: just give the overall argument you are attempting to make.**

In this essay, I intend to prove that \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**(Feel free to use this sentence as your thesis in your essay. But if you do that, remember to omit the opening "In this essay, I intend to prove that" from your actual essay, since it will be clear if your thesis is strong enough that it is something you are intending to prove.)**

**Now, give the reasons why you believe the thesis that you do. Give at least five points for holding the opinion you do, in the lefthand column of what follows. Feel free to add another point or two, if you have them. (You can always use these extra points to "fluff up" an essay that is too short.) Don't use specific examples from the historical source or sources you are using for these points. Instead, these points should be the patterns that emerge from the specific examples:**

I believe my thesis for the following reasons:

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_.

4) \_\_\_\_\_.

5) \_\_\_\_\_.

**Okay, now jot down the specific examples that support each of your points. In other words, what are the examples from the historical source or sources you are using that makes the patterns you described in the points of the previous section clear? Include at least three different and specific examples for each of the points you mentioned above. Feel free to add a fourth or fifth example, if you have them, since you can easily use some of these to “fluff up” an essay that is too short.) Make sure that the examples you note below provide actual evidence for the specific points you made in the previous section. (To help you keep your organization clear, I’ve numbered these examples as 1a, 1b, and 1c, etc., that is, there should be three examples that provide support for your first point, etc.)**

**Here is also the best time to jot down a brief description of the example as well as the source (if you are using more than one source in your essay) and the page number from that source, so do that on the righthand side of each example. These will later be turned into your footnotes or endnotes.**

1a) \_\_\_\_\_ Source/Page \_\_\_\_\_

1b) \_\_\_\_\_ Source/Page \_\_\_\_\_

1c) \_\_\_\_\_ Source/Page \_\_\_\_\_

2a) \_\_\_\_\_ Source/Page \_\_\_\_\_

2b) \_\_\_\_\_ Source/Page \_\_\_\_\_

2c) \_\_\_\_\_ Source/Page \_\_\_\_\_

3a) \_\_\_\_\_ Source/Page \_\_\_\_\_

3b) \_\_\_\_\_ Source/Page \_\_\_\_\_

3c) \_\_\_\_\_ Source/Page \_\_\_\_\_

4a) \_\_\_\_\_ Source/Page \_\_\_\_\_

4b) \_\_\_\_\_ Source/Page \_\_\_\_\_

4c) \_\_\_\_\_ Source/Page \_\_\_\_\_

5a) \_\_\_\_\_ Source/Page \_\_\_\_\_

5b) \_\_\_\_\_ Source/Page \_\_\_\_\_

5c) \_\_\_\_\_ Source/Page \_\_\_\_\_

***Now that you've got these examples listed, go back and have another look at your points. Do you need to make adjustments? Maybe you need to consolidate a couple of points, if you couldn't find enough examples, or maybe you found a lot of examples for some points and want to think about ways of splitting them up into more than one point. Make any notes about these changes here:***

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***Okay, now have another look at your thesis. Does it need to be changed because of your points or examples? It's perfectly fine—in fact, it's a good idea—to make adjustments to your thesis after you've thought through your points and examples. Write the new thesis here:***

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**The good news is that at this point you really have what you need to write your essay.**

**Your thesis will be the last sentence of your introductory paragraph and the first sentence of your concluding paragraph. In the introduction, leading up to the thesis sentence, you'll need only to write two or three sentences that describe your topic and the sources you'll be using. In the conclusion, you'll start off with a restatement of the thesis, and then add a couple of sentences speculating about the larger significance of what you've just proved.**

**The points you've made earlier in the worksheet will become the topic sentences to each of the paragraphs in your essay in between the introduction and conclusion. A topic sentence should be the first sentence of each paragraph, that describes what the point that you are making in the paragraph and how it relates to or helps to prove the thesis or overall argument of your essay. You can then follow that topic sentence with the three examples you've found from the source or sources that supports that point. Use the source and page information for these examples to provide a footnote or endnote for each example mentioned, to show where it came from. (Don't let your paragraphs get too long, though: if they stretch out to a page or more, you'll need to find a way of abbreviating your description of the examples or of splitting the examples into two or more related points, each with its own paragraph and topic sentence.)**

**There's one final thing you should do (and if you're getting credit for filling out this essay worksheet, you'll have to do this part). It called the counterpoint or paragraph of concession. What you are doing, in essence, is not only listing the reasons why you believe the thesis that you do, but also giving reasons why the opposite point of view is wrong.**

**Begin by stating what might be thesis of someone who disagreed with your thesis:**

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**Now find at least two examples that someone who believed in this opposing thesis might use to support that counterargument:**

1) \_\_\_\_\_ Source/Page: \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_ Source/Page: \_\_\_\_\_

***If you start thinking of a lot of good examples that support this opposite point of view, you probably need to rethink your thesis: are you trying to argue something that is opposed rather than supported by the evidence of the source or sources? Do you need to change your thesis?***

***If you are content with these few counterexamples, then it is important to think of reasons why these examples don't really count, why they are exceptions to the rules you've been demonstrating. Briefly list your response or rebuttal to each of these points here:***

1) \_\_\_\_\_.

2) \_\_\_\_\_.

***Okay, now you can put these last elements together into a paragraph of concession. You'll begin the paragraph with the opposing thesis (but make sure to make it clear that this is not your point of view by beginning it with "Some might say that" or "Someone might argue that" or something like that). Then give the examples that might be used to oppose your own thesis, as listed above (and with footnotes or endnotes). In the same paragraph, and following these examples, finish by giving your reasons for discounting them.***

***It is probably best to place this paragraph of concession immediately before your conclusion, that is, after having made a series of points in favor of your own thesis, you finish by giving a couple of reasons why the opposing thesis is wrong. But if you are arguing a thesis that you think will come as a surprise to most who would read it, it would be better to place this paragraph of concession immediately following the introduction, so that you'll be addressing the opposition to your own ideas right from the start. Don't place the paragraph of concession in the middle of your essay, though. And never make it more than a paragraph: otherwise you might confuse your reader.***

***The paragraph of concession isn't essential to a good essay, but it can help put the final touches to your argument (and it can also add length to an essay that is otherwise too short).***

***If you follow the steps in this essay worksheet, you'll find that writing your essays will become a lot easier, and you'll likely get better grades for them.***