

Common Writing Errors – 2nd Quarter Research Papers

To review Thursday, January 3, 2008 & Friday, January 4, 2008

- AP: Analysis! If the topic objective is to analyze the change in the role of the federal government, key evidence must be tied to how the events illustrate (or do not illustrate) a change in the role of the federal government.
 - Also, it is very important when studying history at this level of analysis to understand and interpret change. This is also extremely important for achieving success on the AP exam. For example, do the events that you presented in your paper represent a fundamental change in the role of the federal government, or “business as usual”?
- HONORS: One of the common errors I found was missing analysis. If you covered an event that illustrates some form of political compromise in the period 1820-1861, you also needed to tell how and why that event represents effective or ineffective political compromise. The key here is to make an argument. Was political compromise truly effective? How did it become ineffective?
- Tense use (AP & Honors)
- SVA – Subject-verb agreement
- Formatting – even though this paper is submitted online, it should still be formatted in proper MLA format (college professors take this seriously)
- Do not write as you speak – “Avoid clichés like the plague”
- Avoid posing questions in your writing. There are times where this can be an effective writing technique; however, posing too many questions may leave the reader questioning whether or not you understand the material.
- Cover the entire time period:
 - AP – The time period of your paper was 1861-1877 (Civil War and Reconstruction). Many papers covered only Civil War events for the economic development and westward expansion categories... be thorough
 - Honors – 1820 to 1860 is a large time period, be thorough... if you plan to make a 30-year jump between paragraphs, have a good transition that indicates a knowledge of what took place during that “generation”
- There should not be significant spelling errors in formal papers. (Especially in this age of expanding technology)
- In historical writing, it is important to give reference and respect to time wherever possible. You should be able to do this easily in a research paper. Also, it is usually advised to deal with major events in chronological order unless you are making a specific topical argument.
- Same old writing errors... NEVER use contractions in formal writing. Always write in third person for historical essays, do not use I, you, we, us, our, etc.
- Proofread! Proofread! Proofread!