

9/21/05

I've read the Student Performance Q & A, and I hope some of our readers can clarify a point that [Chief Reader] Ken [Curtis] makes. RE: the COT essay, he writes that, ". . . many students attempted to divide the 1492-1750 time period into a beginning, a middle, and an end. This approach did not work well with this year's question."

What exactly does that mean? Were students using phrases like "in the beginning" w/o connecting them to dates? We've discussed at length on this list, that COT essays have to have a "middle" point and not be snap-shots of the beginning and end w/o showing how things changed. Can anyone clarify this for me?

Thanks,

Dave Clarke  
Nathan Hale H.S.  
West Allis, WI

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9/22/05

Dave,

Good question re: the COT essay structure. Here's MY interpretation of the Chief Reader's advice.

In the 1st few years of APWH, students had a lot of trouble with the COT essay. Too often their answers boiled down to "Here's what it was like at the beginning. Then at the end it had changed to this." It was just "Early vs. Late," or "Beginning and End" kinds of thinking. There was no analysis of HOW the beginning became/transformed/evolved/morphed over time.

Thus, the word came back from the readers in Lincoln, "Include a middle section, that shows more detail of this process." The listserv made it easy to spread this word, and hundreds of teachers across the country started to teach the COT with a generic template of "Beg, Mid, End" paragraph organization. This is what I myself stressed to my students in the 2002-2003 academic year.

This structure worked reasonably well for the 2003 & 2004 COTs (Impact of Islam 1000-1750, and Labor Systems, 1750-1914) because the factual

evidence relevant to those questions tends to fall into nice, neat "Beginning, Middle, End" categories. The problem is that it doesn't work for ALL types of COT questions. The 2005 COT (Atlantic World 1492-1750) does NOT lend itself naturally to the "Beginning, Middle, End" type of essay structure. I read the COT for 2005, one could easily tell that some students had been taught to force their response into a "Beg/Mid/End" structure. Their essays divided the 258 year period into three equal parts, 1492-1578, 1578-1664, and 1664-1750. There was no justification for this periodization, just an implicit awareness of the teacher's dictum, "Thou shalt have a Beginning, a Middle, and an End."

Teachers, we need to be stressing the SKILL of periodization. Does anyone out there have a good classroom exercise that teaches students HOW and WHY to periodize? I could definitely use one! My students are so prone to over-generalization ("Europeans settled EVERYWHERE in the Americas between 1492-1750." OR "Smallpox IMMEDIATELY killed 95% of the America's population.") Students should be able to describe the DEGREE of change, both chronologically and geographically. My goal this year is to require my students emphasize the PROCESS of change. This requires all the Habits of Mind, as well as reinforces the new rubric emphasis on Analysis. ("Analyzes the process of change over time and/or continuity.")

Hope this helps,

Bill Strickland  
East Grand Rapids HS  
East Grand Rapids, MI

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9/24/05

... I can suggest one method that I've used successfully to get kids to grasp [the COT], and to see that in creating a beginning/middle/end scenario (when appropriate) the middle is not the numerical middle. The first analogy involves the transformation of a tadpole into a frog. Draw the stages (tadpole, polywog and frog) and have students list how they are similar and how they are different. Then choose either sim/dif. and write a

thesis statement off of it. Obviously there is change - yet it's still the same organism.

However, since most kids don't know how much time is involved in this transformation (nor do I, for that matter) the next example illustrates that the "middle" is not likely to be the middle, so to speak. Have them imagine themselves as infants, and contrast or compare that child to who they are today? What major changes are there? (Language, gross motor, fine motor, bowel control - always a favorite, ability to function independently, and the list can go on). Here's the key: when did those things "change"? It wasn't at the mathematical middle (roughly 8, for my soph.'s) but more like age 3 or 4. Now put the infant in place of the tadpole, the preschooler in place of the polywog and the teen in place of the frog and it's clear how the prewriting should go, as well as seeing that the changes are not arbitrarily in the middle but require some thought to identify them and look for some chronological "landmarks" as to where they fall. If the kids get a grip on the periodization of APWH, they ought to be able to identify some of those landmarks and assess why and how things might've changed around those events too.

Dave Clarke  
 Nathan Hale H.S.  
 West Allis, WI

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 9/25/05

Perhaps, rather than "middle," the phrase "turning point" more aptly captures the concept we are looking for? Although even that is lacking, as some changes do not have a clear event that serves as a turning point. Sometimes the idea of a "tipping point," as conceived by Michael Gladwell (author of [The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference](#)), is more apt—a bunch of little things add up over time, and eventually the build-up leads to sudden change. At other times, there is no identifiable "turning" OR "tipping" point. Instead there is a simple, un-dramatic process of change over time. In many, or perhaps even most cases, this is the way in which change really occurs.

So in order to account for these three different models of change ("turning," "tipping," and "gradual shift") perhaps it would be better to teach COT as needing a:

1. Beginning Situation (start date)
2. Cause of Change
  - A. There might be a specific date of the cause, or "turning point,"
  - B. a specific date when the change is observable, or "tipping point," but the cause of the change was gradual with no specific date of onset, or
  - C. a series of factors leading to change, each with different onset dates or no clear onset date of all, which caused gradual change in an un-dramatic fashion.
3. Date by which Change is Observable (end date)
  - A. What were the changes in contrast with the Beginning Situation
  - B. What were the continuities from the Beginning Situation

These three items can be graphically organized in essay pre-writing using a three-bar parallel chart:  
 Beginning | Cause | Change

Does this sound like a method of teaching the COT essay that (a) students can grasp and (b) is flexible enough to fully satisfy any COT question ETS might throw at them?

Charles Ryder  
 Social Studies Department Chair  
 The North Hills School  
 Irving, TX

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 9/26/05

Along with the helpful model that David [offered], I am searching for something in the way of possible graphic organizers to help students visualize the various parts of a CCOT essay. This is particularly true for them learning how to write thesis statement. For the "CC" essay, we used something that looks like a "Y" where students think about a similarity and then also an area of difference. (This has helped them get away from "Chinese and Indian political development was somewhat alike and also had

some differences.” sort of bland statements.) Anyway, I am trying to come up with some graphic representation of the structure of a CCOT essay to help them. Not surprisingly, they are having a harder time getting their head around the CCOT essay and thesis as compared to the CC essay and thesis. Any thoughts would be greatly appreciated.

Thanks

Ben Kahrl  
Social Studies Dept. Chair  
Dartmouth High School  
Dartmouth MA

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9/26/05

Ben,

I usually draw two overlapping circles. Where they overlap is sim. and where they don't is dif. I believe the technical name for this is a Venn diagram.

Dave Clarke  
Nathan Hale H.S.  
West Allis, WI

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9/27/05

I do something very similar.

Body P 1: Describe Beginning stage

Body P 2: What is the change? Why did it cause the Change?

Body P 3: How is the change evident? What is the impact?

I too would like to know if this is an effective method of instruction for this essay.

Jennifer J.S. Parm  
World History Teacher  
Dr. Phillips High School  
Orlando, Florida

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9/27/05

The best advice I've gotten on how to teach thesis statements was from Mike McLaughlin in OK. He suggested teaching students to write “Although (a)

is true, (b) is more significant because...” That way students have a definitive goal in the essay and they recognize that there are two sides to the argument. My students last year found it very easy to use, even though some of them argued that the English teacher didn't think it was appropriate. I talked with the English teacher and she truly didn't have any problems with it.

The other thing I use that helps tremendously with essay writing is to use a 4-color set of highlighters. The students use a pink highlighter to mark the thesis statement. An orange for facts, green for analysis, and yellow for conclusion. It quickly becomes apparent to the students where they are lacking. I use samples of last year's students' work and released items from the AP exam at first. Then we move into marking up their own writing. It seems overly simplistic, but it really makes the difference.

I know the kids are prepped for the benchmark tests with “...these are some of the reasons why...” but it absolutely drives me crazy and it's a hard habit to break.

Marjorie Hunter  
West Memphis High School

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9/28/05

Maybe I missed something – I thought there was a C/C and a COT essay in addition to the DBQ on the Test. What is CCOT? Have we combined the C/c & COT now? Also, where does one pick up the new Acorn book with updated criteria (essay formats...) if we can't go to any workshops? I'd be happy to purchase one. Thanks

Tracy Murphy  
Sobrato High School  
Morgan Hill, CA

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9/29/05

Tracy asked about the differences between a C/C a COT and a CCOT.

C/C is comparison and contrast—similarities and

differences.

COT is change over time.

CCOT is the SAME as COT.

Some teachers label the change-over-time essay the **change-and-continuity-over-time** essay. Often the question has [explicitly] asked students to analyze the continuities as well as the changes that occurred over time (2003, 2004). Even if the question does not explicitly ask students to analyze the continuities (as in 2005), essays that do are often rewarded in the expanded core. Some teachers find that calling the essay CCOT reminds the students of the importance of continuities.

Members of the College Board test development committee, however, have made it very clear that the essay is called change over time (COT), not CCOT.

Patrick Whelan  
 Saint Stephen's Episcopal School  
 Bradenton Florida

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9/29/05

Tracy,

There's no difference between a COT and a CCOT essay. The official name of the essay is "Change Over Time", but since the rubric requires students to consider Continuities as well as Changes (and students often forget/overlook Continuities!) some teachers refer to the COT as a CCOT, so as to emphasize the point of including continuities.

As far as the new essay (generic) rubrics, go to [http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/repository/ap05\\_world\\_genericsg\\_46510.pdf](http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/repository/ap05_world_genericsg_46510.pdf)

Hope this helps,

Bill Strickland  
 East Grand Rapids HS  
 East Grand Rapids, MI

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9/30/05

A while back (I'm behind) there was some exchange on techniques for teaching COT. When there's time and an interesting topic, I have students story-board the topic. Yes, just like a Hollywood filmmaker. Its pretty straight-forward: 3 Acts, each consisting of three scenes. The progression forces them to focus on specific transitional occurrences. More importantly, it provides them a creative way to delve into the material, work it like 'Plato' and create interpretations. They draw their scenes to get vivid images... and share w/ the class their interpretations. It's up to the kids to figure out a way to make the history fit the schematic (that's what story writers do). So, once they got the format, you assign 1 night's homework, Storyboard a classical civilization's COT. Next day they show up w/ it... present to class. 3 or 4 versions of the three separate civilizations are covered. Voila--they are all qualified to write an interesting, accurate essay that incorporates several transitions. (OK..maybe I'm exaggerating a bit--but results are good).

Here's the structure:

Act One:

- Prior condition
- Trigger (of change)
- Goal

Act Two

- 1st Obstacle
- Solution
- Big Obstacle

Act Three

- New Approach (to achieve goal)
- Heroic Effort
- Outcome

Chris Cuddihy  
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