World History

Unit 1: Ancient Civilizations

Skill: Persuasive Writing

**The Neolithic Revolution: The Diamond Thesis**

*What is Jared Diamond arguing in “Guns, Germs, and Steel?”*

All historical writing is persuasive, or tries to convince the audience to agree to one interpretation of facts/evidence. Historians begin their writing by stating their conclusions in what is known as a **THESIS**.

A Thesis Statement:

1. Clearly and specifically states your argument, or what you are trying to prove.
2. Briefly states the conclusions you’ve reached *before* showing how you reached it.
3. Fully addresses a prompt or question.
4. Previews the evidence you will present to prove your thesis correct.
5. Appears in the introduction of your writing.
6. Is contestable (other historians might disagree).

A Thesis Statement is NOT:

1. A statement of fact(s), which does not require a persuasive argument.
2. A re-statement of the prompt.
3. A personal opinion (must be proven with evidence).

Thesis statements always provide an answer to a question, even if the question isn’t provided. In our case, we were provided with Yali’s Question: “Why are some people so much richer than others?”

Jared Diamond interpreted this question as a historical one: “Why did some humans develop advanced civilizations why others did not?”

His one-word answer: **“Geography”**

Follow the steps below to help you progress as a thesis-writer. To help you, there are example thesis statements in the boxes on the right.

Step 1: Writing a *Basic* Thesis

To write a satisfactory thesis statement, turn Diamond’s one-word answer above into a full sentence that states the argument.

Write your *basic* thesis in the space below:

Sample *Basic* Thesis:

“Students have benefitted from studying history and working hard in their social studies classes.”

Step 2: Writing a *Proficient* Thesis

To move from *basic* to *proficient*, a thesis must preview the major points you will make to prove your thesis correct.

Sample *Points of Evidence*:

1. They become better readers.
2. They become better writers.
3. They become better public speakers.

What are THREE of Diamond’s major points of evidence?

1.
2.

1.

Now, add those points above to the beginning or end of the *basic* thesis you wrote. Write your *proficient* thesis in the space below:

Sample *Proficient* Thesis:

“Students have benefitted from studying history and working hard in their social studies classes because they develop reading, writing, and public speaking skills.”

Step 3: Writing an *Advanced* Thesis

To move from *proficient* to *advanced*, you need to enhance your argument with historical context and an elevated vocabulary. You can do this by:

* Adding important historical facts that situate the argument in the correct time period.
* Add a contrasting element (a counter-argument).
* Rank-order the evidence, or state which point it most significant to the thesis as a whole.
* Adds significance to your argument.

This may expand your thesis to two sentences, and that is OK! Write your *advanced* thesis in the space below:

Sample *Advanced* Thesis:

“Students at SHS have benefitted from studying history and working hard in their social studies classes because they develop reading, writing, and public speaking skills. Most importantly, those skills help them to become better-informed citizens and better-prepared working professionals.”