

Examples of Thesis Statements and Introductory Paragraphs DBQ #1

QUESTION: Explain why entirely different economic and social systems evolved within the three colonial regions of British North America even though the preponderance of settlers was of English origin.

Use two of the following colonies to compare and contrast as you develop your answer:

- Massachusetts Bay
- Virginia
- Pennsylvania

Remember that a thesis must be clear, it must address all issues of the question, and it must be supported by the facts that follow in your essay. It is important to break down the components of the question before you develop your thesis statement. A good thesis statement is an intangible part of the introduction, usually comes at the end of the introduction, and is supported by the ideas presented in that starting paragraph. Remember these characteristics as you examine the sample thesis statements given below.

Inadequate, Underdeveloped Thesis Statements and Introductory Paragraphs:

Thesis Example #1

Most people are different from each other. Virginia and Pennsylvania were also very different from each other. Different kinds of people and ways of life were found in each colony. Even though both Virginia and Pennsylvania were settled by Englishmen, they had different economic and social systems.

Thesis Example #2

Massachusetts Bay and Virginia were both settled by English colonists, but they had different economic systems and different social systems.

EVALUATION: Neither thesis above addresses the important issue of colonial regions; these students have not clearly broken down and understood the question. Simply presenting a rephrasing of the question as a thesis compounds the errors here. Although the restatement of a question is a technical thesis, in this kind of essay it is a poor or weak thesis at best. Finally, the authors of these two thesis statements provide no supporting information to indicate what they plan to prove in their essays. Each thesis should be supported in the introduction with brief statements that indicate what the student plans to prove or discuss relative to the thesis statement.

Adequate Thesis Statements and Introductory Paragraphs which Address Most of the Issues of the Question:

Thesis Example #3

Located in a warm-weather, moist, fertile area, colonists in Virginia could grow just about any crop, but settlers in Massachusetts Bay faced long, cold winters and rocky soil if they wished to support themselves with farming. Virginia and Massachusetts Bay were both settled by English colonists, but because of their different religious beliefs and the kinds of environment that enveloped the settlers, the economic and social structures of each colony were radically different.

Thesis Example #4

Pennsylvania was settled by tolerant Quakers who found a territory filled with rich soil, tall forests, and navigable rivers that pushed deep into the backcountry. The Puritans of Massachusetts Bay found a territory with thin, rocky soil where hard-pressed farmers had to seek additional occupations to support themselves, but where the difficulties of maintaining life matched the serious and dour attitudes of their religion. These two factors, religion and the nature of the agricultural environment, would lead to the development of completely different social and political systems in the colonies of Pennsylvania and Massachusetts.

EVALUATION: These two thesis statements and their supporting introductory paragraphs have clearly addressed major issues of the question. Both have isolated and identified two major factors which created different social and economic systems, but neither seems to realize that they need to deal with regional differences using the identified colonies as illustrations. The depth and detail of the introductions and thesis statements in these two examples set them apart from the first two examples and identify them as strong statements addressing most of the issues of the question. It is also true, however, that detail and depth set them apart from the most sophisticated examples which follow and provide more of those qualities.

Sophisticated Thesis Statements and Introductory Paragraphs:

Thesis Example #5

New England and the Middle Colonies were both settled by English colonists. The people who settled Pennsylvania were varied in ethnic and religious origins and came with the intention of seeking personal prosperity. The people who settled Massachusetts Bay were strict Puritans sought a place to establish a religious community. While New England possessed stony, infertile soil that forced farmers to seek alternative ways of supporting themselves, the Middle Colonies possessed fertile lands pierced by broad, navigable rivers where farmers could grow prosperous raising grain. Although located adjacent to each other, the colonial regions of New England represented by Massachusetts and the Middle Colonies as characterized by Pennsylvania, developed significant differences in their economic and social structure

because of differences in the religious orientation of the settlers in each colony, variations in the environment of the two colonial regions, and distinctions in the ethnic diversity of the colonists who settled each region.

Thesis Example #6

Even though English settlers colonized both Massachusetts Bay and Virginia, the unique economic and social systems that evolved in each colony took on regional differences. The kinds of settlers who arrived in Virginia were significantly different in their religious orientation from those who settled Massachusetts. The environment in which each group of settlers found themselves forced differences in how each colony found economic prosperity. Finally, the personal purposes for which each group of settlers immigrated to the New World would have a profound impact upon the kinds of societies which evolved in each colony. Religion, environment, and the individual goals of each settler would create different economic and social systems within each colonial region represented by Massachusetts and Virginia.

EVALUATION: The authors of these two examples have provided in their introductions and thesis statements a virtual outline of the essays that would follow. They clearly address the issue of regional differences and each identify three different factors which they suggest led to those differences and have associated each of those factors to the two colonies they selected. To achieve superior essays, the authors of these two examples need only to fill in the outside facts and facts from the documents which prove their positions.