

Creating an argument

First steps

- ▶ Read the question/passage/object/assignment carefully
- ▶ Identify what it is about
- ▶ Identify the relevant primary and secondary sources
- ▶ Identify the relevant modern scholarship

The most important thing is to *answer the question*. Do not include material which is *irrelevant* to the question.

What is this question asking?

- ▶ Why did Spartan tactics in the Peloponnesian War change so drastically between 428 and 408 BCE?

Why did Spartan tactics in the Peloponnesian War change so drastically between 428 and 408 BCE?

1. Did Spartan tactics really change in this period?
2. Why is the period so specific?
3. If Spartan tactics changed, then how did they change?
4. If Spartan tactics change, then why did they change?

What is this question asking for?

- ▶ Were helots slaves?

Were helots slaves?

1. What is a helot?
2. What is a slave?
3. What are the differences between the two?
4. What are the similarities?

A logical structure

- ▶ When you have thought about which main general points you wish to make in response to the essay question, consider whether they are arranged in the best order to present your argument coherently; rearrange them if they are not. Aim to *progress logically* through the essay.
- ▶ Logically grouped ideas should go into paragraphs; each paragraph should have its own thesis and conclusion (though they may be small). Be sure to make their connection to the main thesis clear.

A logical structure: Were helots slaves?

1. INTRODUCTION: What is the question? What will be the main parts of the essay?
2. MAIN PART 1: Problems of the sources / Scholarly debates
3. MAIN PART 2:
 1. Definition of helot
 2. Definition of slave
 3. Similarities
 4. Differences
4. CONCLUSION: Quick summary of finding + clearly presented answer to the question

Read and think

- ▶ Start reading and thinking.
- ▶ Are there any disagreements among scholars?
- ▶ Are there different opinions/viewpoints in scholarship or the sources?
- ▶ YOUR OWN VIEW: as you read and learn more, you will start getting your own view of the matter. This is an essential part of the whole process.

The power of the introduction

Writing Successful Introductory Paragraphs

- ▶ In the most abstract sense, the function of an introductory paragraph is to move the reader from the world of daily life into the textual and analytical space of an essay. In a more concrete sense, an introduction performs three essential functions:
- ▶ 1) it clearly and specifically states the topic or question that you will address in your essay
- ▶ 2) it motivates topic or question that the essay will examine
- ▶ 3) it states, clearly and directly, your position on this topic or question (i.e. your thesis).

Structural Components

The details you use to orient your reader with your topic should be woven throughout the structural components of your introduction:

- ▶ Opening
- ▶ Topic or Purpose
- ▶ Motive
- ▶ Thesis Statement
- ▶ Roadmap