**Drafting Your History Day Thesis**

You will write the thesis near the end of the research process, as you begin to create your project. This is the heart of your project! It states what you are proving and connects your topic to the theme. Additionally, the thesis should include important effects on people or groups over time, and even in our world today. All your practice writing essays will help you succeed with this important step in the process. You will revise your thesis more than once as your thoughts develop. The thesis is very prominent in your project!

**A strong history thesis…**

1. States a **claim** that

*provokes disagreement or surprise  
 AND clarifies* ***cause and effect;*** *AND perhaps also:*

* *Contrasts* ***continuity*** *versus* ***change;***
* *Contrasts* ***perspectives*** *of different historical positions; or*
* *Justifies (or rejects) an* ***ethical position*** *about long-ago events.*

1. Connects to the theme:***Triumph and Tragedy in History****.*
2. Is proven in your project
3. Is the main idea of the project
4. Mentions 3 areas of focus
5. Has enough information but not too much. In one or two sentences and no more than about 60 words, it includes the five W’s plus H: (*who, what, where, when, why, and how).*

*Conjunctions are central in joining ideas:*

Cause-and-effect Conjunctions Under Conditions

For Since Until

So Because Unless

After In order If

When Due to

Contrasting Conjunctions Comparing Conjunctions

But Although And

Yet While Nor

**Analyzing History Day Thesis Statements**

1. During the winter of 1777-1778, when George Washington and the Continental Army bivouacked at Valley Forge, disease, cold weather, and insufficient food took the lives of many soldiers. Despite these conditions, Washington’s iron will and commitment, plus Baron Von Steuben's skill in training military troops, pulled a *triumph* from this *tragedy*, so the Army that emerged the spring was stronger than the group who made camp in the winter.

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| ***Context:*** |  | ***Causes:*** |  | ***Consequences****:*  *Triumph?*  *or Tragedy?* |

***Look for argument and organization:***

1. Underline words that convey interpretation. Does the thesis state a provocative claim? \_\_\_\_\_\_
2. Highlight words that relate to the theme, “*Triumph and Tragedy in History*.”
3. Complete the chart to determine how *the triumph* and *the tragedy* created *consequences*.
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7. Is there any *contrast? \_\_\_\_\_\_* Is the *contrast* in the *cause* or the *effect* or somewhere else*? \_\_\_\_\_   
     
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9. Are there three areas of focus? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Number and highlight them. Are the three areas of focus *balanced,* or will one be more dominant? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
10. Is the length satisfactory (one-to-two sentences and fewer than 75 words)? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

***Look for the 5 W’s plus H:***

Who: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

What: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_   
Where: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
When: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
Why: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
How: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

2. When Henry Wilson and other Radical Republicans negotiated the 15th Amendment in 1870, regional political demands created loopholes that prevented a *triumph* of unrestricted suffrage for all citizens and left long-lasting *tragic* consequences: Literacy tests and poll taxes suppressed many black voters; women were excluded and withdrew their support from the ongoing fight for black civil rights; and within a few years, white supremacy returned to the south.

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When: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
Why: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

How: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

3. When Thomas Wentworth Higginson and other Boston abolitionists failed in 1854 to free fugitive slave Anthony Burns from the clutches of federal marshals enforcing the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, many citizens marked his return to the South as a *tragedy,* hanging mourning cloth from their windows. Nevertheless, northern black and white citizens together *triumphed* by renewing their commitment to ending slavery, speeding the onset of war but ushering in a new age of freedom.

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When: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
Why: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

How: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

4. *Build a thesis from parts*: The Donner Party

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| ***Context****:*  In 1846, when the Donner Party traveled from Missouri to California |  | ***Causes****:*  bad travel advice and an early snow storm which trapped 87 people in a winter camp with insufficient food  the relentless efforts of rescuers who risked their own lives to save others |  | ***Consequences****:*  *Tragedy****?***  Many perished  *Triumph?*  some survived  building new communities in the new territory |

***Draft the thesis here:  
  
\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
  
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When: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
  
Why: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

How: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

5. *Build a thesis from parts*: Photographer Edward Curtis

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| ***Context****:*  By 1906, the *tragic*  loss of Native American culture in a changing world was inevitable |  | ***Causes****:*  Photographer Edward Curtis began to document the lives and customs of the remaining tribes of the West |  | ***Consequences****:*  consumed decades of his life; cost him his livelihood and his marriage  produced a *triumph* of ethnography*,* the twenty-volume *North American Indian,* which still bears witness to the rich heritage of the continent’s indigenous peoples. |

***Draft the thesis here:  
  
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Why: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

How: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

6. *Build a thesis from parts:*  Alice Paul

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| ***Context****:*  mastered radical political strategies to achieve a major *triumph*  gaining the right to vote for women under the 19th Amendment, |  | ***Causes****:*  unable to persuade many of her original supporters that women could prosper without special workplace protections  these fears led to the |  | ***Consequences****:*  *Tragedy?*  *tragic* failure of the Equal Rights Amendment.  *or?*  leaving future generations the task of achieving true parity among men and women. |

***Draft the thesis here:***\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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How: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_