

WORKSHOP: HOW TO WRITE A DYNAMITE COMPARE AND CONTRAST AP ESSAY

Remember :

1. Introduction should be no longer than 2-3 sentences.
2. Thesis must be clear, analytical (i.e., complex - arguable, tenable and comprehensive (i.e., thesis must incorporate all parts of the prompt question) A good thesis “lights the way” and provides a travel direction for the rest of the essay.
3. Essay must show similarities **AND** differences in three different areas (3 body paragraphs) **AND** you must analyze the reason for the similarity and/or difference
4. Essay must address all parts of the question **EVENLY**.
5. Essay must include appropriate historical evidence (i.e give significant and compelling examples to substantiate what you say)
6. Essay must provide 2 (at least) **relevant comparisons** between the societies/regions. Your comparisons can be chronological, cause and effect, thematic, etc. etc.)
7. Essay must provide a **local to global** connection. How is this prompt question relevant to other parts of the world at the time? What other things are going on that might be the same and/or different in other parts of the globe. Conclusion is often a good place for this connection.
8. **Conclusion** must restate thesis in an interesting way. Your conclusion paragraph should answer the question: “SO WHAT!” Do not simply regurgitate the essay. In other words, provide **implications**. A good conclusion is about 3 sentences long:
 - Sentence 1 Restate thesis
 - Sentence 2 Provide implications
 - Sentence 3 Make local to global connection

HOW TO WRITE THE ESSAY

Prompt: Hinduism, Confucianism and Buddhism are three of the world's great belief systems. Compare and contrast their impact on the societies they embraced.

Paragraph 1.

While Hinduism is a much older belief system than either Confucianism or Buddhism, each greatly impacted the social, political and religious life of their respective founding countries, as well as the countries to which they spread. **While all three belief systems were very important to the cultural and social life of their respective countries, both Hinduism and Confucianism were decidedly “state religions” with significant political impact, while Buddhism remained purely a religion of salvation with minimal political impact.**

What do you notice about the first paragraph ? ? ?

1. Intro is just 2 sentences
2. Thesis is arguable & complex (i.e., it shows similarities (Hinduism and Confucianism have significant political impact on their societies in terms of imposing social order) **AND** it shows differences (i.e. Buddhism remained religious in nature, and was not as easily co-opted by the state for political purposes)

Now..... How would you complete the essay? Address political, social/cultural and religious similarities and differences of each – **analyze the similarities and differences.** (Use **SPRITE** when the prompt is general rather than specific)

Paragraph 2

Arriving Aryans brought some elements of Hindu beliefs with them, but quickly segregated indigenous Dravidians according to *varna* or color of skin. Early Aryan rulers used this caste system to impose social order. This social order provided the basis for a stratified society where everyone followed their *dharmā*. Confucian beliefs also served the Chinese state well. The emphasis on filial piety and propriety was co-opted by the dynastic rulers and used to impose complete obedience to all superiors. Since the family was an extension of the state, respect for elder family members was

easily transferred to obedience to a centralized state. Buddhist practitioners, on the other hand, did not believe in the caste system, so it did not become as popular in India – nor was it co-opted by the state, since it did not serve a political purpose. (This is the analysis part of the answer)

Paragraph 3

Socially, Hinduism and Confucianism also supported patriarchal societies where women were seen as subservient. According to the Lawbook of Manu, women were to be obedient to husbands, fathers, even sons. Wealthy women were encouraged to practice suttee on the death of their husband. Confucianism supported the dominant role of the male member of the family and complete obedience and obeisance would be owed to him. Ancestor worship and reverence for the past further married this belief system to the state. Buddhism, however, did not endorse a patriarchal society. Buddhism encouraged families to offer their sons and daughters to religious service. While the great Ashoka became a Buddhist, other classical period Indian rulers reverted to Hinduism as a state religion. Both philosophies/religions were state supported and therefore impacted life to a significant degree. (This is the analysis part of the answer)

Paragraph 4

While all three belief systems were culturally important in their founding countries, only Hinduism and Buddhism could be viewed as “religions of salvation.” Both Hinduism and Buddhism promised eternal life in some form of a “hereafter” if dharma (Hinduism) or the Eightfold Noble Path (Buddhism) were followed. Proper attention to dharma could eventually lead to Nirvana. Each had a temple structure with priests and religious services. Confucianism, on the other hand, was more of a philosophy or way of life. While its junzi or scholar bureaucrats and the civil service exam system did provide the framework for a strongly centralized state, it did not support temples or a priesthood, as did Buddhism and Hinduism in India. (This is the analysis part of the answer)

Paragraph 5

Restate thesis in an interesting – but different way. Provide implications: did one belief system spread more easily than the others; did any encourage innovation, create chaos, disorder? (another place to note similarities and differences!) And FINALLY: provide a local to global connection. Did these religions have an impact in other areas of the globe? What was the impact there? What about the role of Christianity in maintaining order? What about the role of Greek gods and goddesses? Egyptian pharaohs?

Now you have a DYNAMITE ESSAY !