

THESIS WRITING

“Good theses are the foundations of good arguments.” – Steve Heimler

Prompt:

“Evaluate the extent to which the Portuguese transformed maritime trade in the Indian Ocean in the sixteenth century.”

| Points | Rubric | Notes |
|------------------------------|---|--|
| A: Thesis/Claim (0-1) | <p>Responds to the prompt with a historically defensible thesis/claim that establishes a line of reasoning. (1 point)</p> <p><i>To earn this point, the thesis must make a claim that responds to the prompt rather than restating or rephrasing the prompt. The thesis must consist of one or more sentences located in one place, either in the introduction or the conclusion.</i></p> | <p>The thesis must take a position on the extent to which the Portuguese transformed maritime trade in the Indian Ocean in the sixteenth century and indicate some reason for taking that position.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Although the arrival of the Portuguese was a very important change in Indian Ocean maritime trade in the sixteenth century, it did not completely transform the trade, as the Portuguese never extended their control beyond a few ports and had to compete with Indian merchants and regional states such as the Ottoman Empire and the Sultanate of Aceh.” <i>(Responds to the prompt with an evaluative claim that establishes a line of reasoning.)</i> • “The Portuguese transformed maritime trade in Indian Ocean in the sixteenth century by taxing non-Portuguese ships that traded in the region.” <i>(Responds to the prompt with a minimally acceptable claim that establishes a line of reasoning.)</i> |

Their thesis is only **historically defensible** if someone can disagree with it

It must establish a line of reasoning

- Specific historical vocabulary which previews the categories of argumentation

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Scoring Notes

Introductory notes:

- Except where otherwise noted, each point of these rubrics is earned independently, e.g., a student could earn a point for evidence without earning a point for thesis/claim.
- **Accuracy:** The components of this rubric require that students demonstrate historically defensible content knowledge. Given the timed nature of the exam, the essay may contain errors that do not detract from the overall quality, as long as the historical content used to advance the argument is accurate.
- **Clarity:** Exam essays should be considered first drafts and thus may contain grammatical errors. Those errors will not be counted against a student unless they obscure the successful demonstration of the content knowledge, skills, and practices described below.
- Student samples (when available) are quoted verbatim and may contain grammatical errors.

A. Thesis/Claim (0-1 point)

Responses earn 1 point by responding to the prompt with a historically defensible thesis that establishes a line of reasoning about the topic. To earn this point, the thesis must make a claim that responds to the prompt rather than simply restating or rephrasing the prompt. The thesis must suggest at least one main line of argument development or establish the analytic categories of the argument.

The thesis must consist of one or more sentences located in one place, either in the introduction or the conclusion.

The thesis must take a position on the extent to which the Portuguese transformed maritime trade in the Indian Ocean in the sixteenth century and indicate some reason for taking that position.

Examples of acceptable theses:

- “Although the arrival of the Portuguese was a very important change in Indian Ocean maritime trade in the sixteenth century, it did not completely transform the trade, as the Portuguese never extended their control beyond a few ports and had to compete with Indian merchants and regional states such as the Ottoman Empire and the Sultanate of Aceh.” (*Responds to the prompt with an evaluative claim that establishes a line of reasoning.*)
- “The Portuguese brought a few changes to the Indian Ocean trading networks but most Indian goods, including spices, continued to be traded locally, or to Middle Eastern and Chinese markets, as they had been for centuries before.” (*Responds to the prompt with an evaluative claim that establishes a line of reasoning.*)
- “The Portuguese transformed maritime trade in Indian Ocean in the sixteenth century by taxing non-Portuguese ships that traded in the region.” (*Responds to the prompt with a minimally acceptable claim that establishes a line of reasoning.*)

Example of unacceptable theses:

- “In the sixteenth century, the arrival of the Portuguese completely transformed maritime trade in the Indian Ocean region.” (*Merely repeats the wording of the prompt with a minor qualification, which does not amount to indicating a line of reasoning.*)
- “Portuguese merchants came to dominate Indian Ocean trade by organizing themselves into powerful joint-stock companies.” (*Not a historically defensible claim.*)
- “Despite its small size and population, Portugal used its location on the Atlantic Ocean to transform itself into a major maritime power” (*Does not respond to the prompt directly.*)

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Student Sample 1a:

In the sixteenth century, rising technological innovations led to an increase in trade and exploration. European countries struggled to rise in power and sought new trade routes to increase both their empirical power as well as improve their economy. As many Europeans did not have the proper geography to grow cash crops themselves (namely sugar and spices) they sought to acquire them for cheaper by removing the middle man in the middle east and create their own direct trading line. The Portuguese first found a way to achieve spices by travelling along the coast of Africa, around the Cape of Good Hope, and arriving at their trading posts. Despite the personal loyalty between established merchants and empires making ~~it~~ them deal unequally with portuguese traders, the Portuguese greatly transformed maritime trade in the Indian Ocean by removing trade from the 'traditional' Muslim merchants and by imparting trade regulations and restrictions on other empires.

1/1 "Good"

The response earned 1 point for thesis/claim because it identifies two different categories of transformation brought about by the Portuguese "removing trade from the 'traditional' Muslim merchants" and "imparting trade regulations and restrictions on other empires." This is preceded by a statement that acknowledges obstacles and ongoing resistance to Portuguese domination. The response also earned 1 point for

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Student Sample 1b:

Navigation technologies such as the compass and lateen sail encouraged marine trade after their popularization. With these technologies, Explorers such as Diaz rounded the Cape of Good Hope in Africa and introduced the Indian Ocean trade network to Europe. The Portuguese in particular took an interest in Asian spices resulting in many investments towards the spice trade. The Portuguese impacted the Indian Ocean trade network greatly by implementing persecutory restrictions in addition to piracy covered up as safety procedures. Furthermore, the Portuguese impacted Indian Ocean trade by involving European influence and commodity preference in India.

1/1 "Great"

The response earned 1 point for thesis/claim because it identifies several effects of the arrival of the Portuguese on Indian Ocean trade ("implementing persecutory restrictions," "piracy covered up as safety procedures," and "involving European influence and commodity preference in India.") The response also

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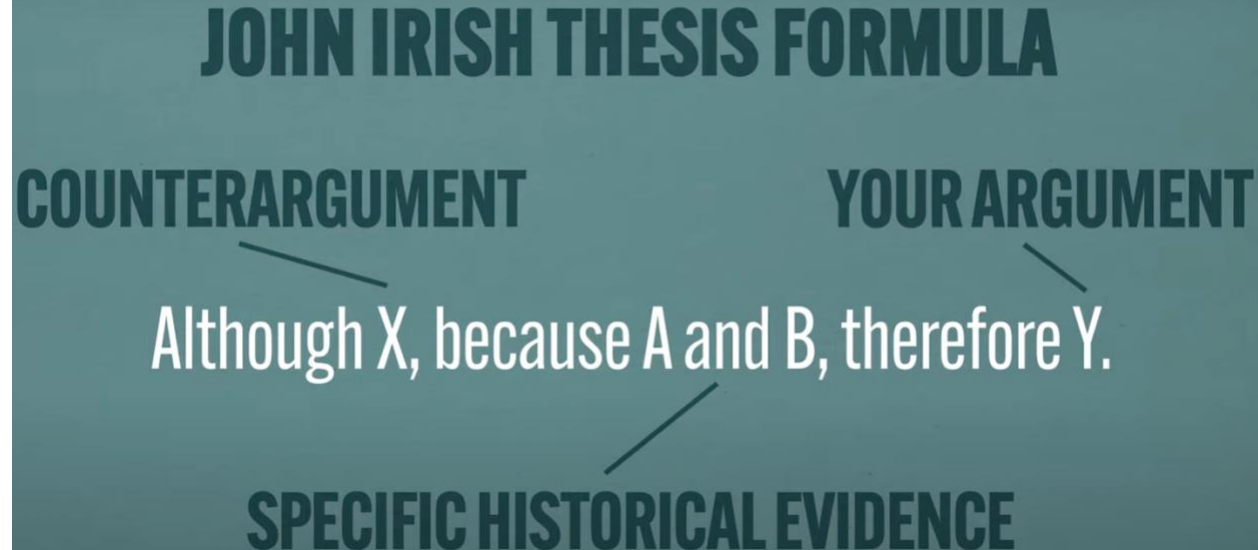
Student Sample 1c:

The Portuguese heavily transformed and influenced the Indian Ocean maritime trade system in the sixteenth century. The portuguese implimented their ideas by getting close with the Ruller of Calicut and when that didn't work they used force by sinking ships and charging fees to pass.

1/1 “Okay but almost bad”

The response earned 1 point for thesis/claim because it mentions two Portuguese approaches to influencing Indian Ocean trade — alliances with local rulers (“getting close with the Ruller of Calicut”) followed by the use of force “by sinking ships and charging fees to pass.” Although not well developed, that is a historically defensible claim that addresses the prompt. However, the response did not earn the point for contextualization

Complex:



Simplified:

