

Thesis Statement and Relating your Topic to the Theme

History Day 2007--08

Mrs. Wood

It is essential that your project has a clear thesis statement. Regardless of the format you choose, you must have a clear thesis statement. In addition, your thesis statement will remind you of your focus as you continue your research and ultimately share your project with others.

The thesis statement will clearly indicate your subject, the main point of your argument, and what you are trying to express in your project.

Keys to a successful thesis statement:

- Express one main idea
- Be as specific and clear as possible
- Express the conflict, compromise, or both

Here are examples of thesis statements. Are there any problems with these thesis statements?

1. The Constitution of the United States, written in 1789, by James Madison, with the help of members of the Constitutional Convention, in Philadelphia, was the result of months of conflict and compromise between states' rights advocates (called Anti-Federalists) and those in favor of a strong central government (called Federalists), who finally came to an agreement (by merging the Virginia and New Jersey plans) to adopt a Bill of Rights, which really appealed to Thomas Jefferson, and ratify the Constitution.
2. There were lots of things and stuff that were important in the creation of our Constitution that reflected the conflict and compromise of our new nation.
3. There are many reasons why the Constitution of the United States embodies the conflict and compromise of the colonial era. One of these conflicts includes the creation of a strong central government with an ability to tax, and the ultimate compromise is seen in the adoption of the Great Compromise, which outlines our current government.

In writing your thesis statement, you must clearly link your topic to the theme—Conflict and Compromise. The first step is to write 3-5 sentences or less that explains how your topic fits under the theme of "Conflict and Compromise." You need to be as specific as possible. You may need to fine tune or clarify your topic. Remember, the more specific the better.

Topic: Designing a New Government

Theme: Conflict and Compromise

The Constitution of the United States clearly shows the newly formed nation's desire to become a strong democratic nation. James Madison is called the Father of the Constitution, since his ideas for how government could be fairly designed to answer the needs of Americans were incorporated. There were many fears surrounding the creation of a central government such as recreating a powerful monarchy in the guise of a democracy and failing to protect the rights of individual citizens. However, through this conflict came rational compromise. Members of the Constitutional Convention and James Madison brought forth ideas of a 3-branch government with a system of checks and balances, a bicameral legislature which answered the needs of populous and small states, and a Bill of Rights which directly protects the rights of individuals. Therefore, through compromise, the Constitution of the United States has created a democratic government which has successfully answered the individual and collective needs of our country.

- This can now be re-written in one sentence that clearly relates my topic to the theme. **We shall call this a thesis statement.**

Though conflict over states' rights and a strong central government seemed to stall the creation of successful government in the newly formed United States, members of the Constitutional convention overcame difference through compromise and designed a government of the people, by the people, and for the people of the United States.

History Day Outline: Due Friday, November 16.

The purpose of this outline is to organize your notes and thoughts. If you try to jump from your notecards to your script, paper, exhibit, or documentary, you may find yourself confused and unable to clearly express your project. Take time to organize your project in the form of an outline—you'll be glad you did! Please note that you are not bound to your outline. You may add, change, and restructure your outline as your project progresses.

Start with your Thesis. This is what your project will explain or defend in great detail.

Thesis: Though conflict over states' rights and a strong central government seemed to stall the creation of successful government in the newly formed United States, members of the Constitutional convention overcame difference through compromise and designed a government of the people, by the people, and for the people of the United States.

Look at your note cards. What are the major pieces of your project? You should have between 3 and 5 main ideas that you will support with data and other information you have collected.

Example:

Topic: Creation of the Constitution

Thesis: (See above)

I. Brief History of the struggle for Independence

- A. Various reasons for settlement in colonial America
- B. Causes of Revolution

II. The Articles of Confederation

- A. Strengths
- B. Weaknesses
- C. Maryland Convention

III. Compromises

- A. Virginia Plan
- B. New Jersey Plan
- C. The Great Compromise

IV. Ratifying the Constitution

- A. Federalists
- B. Anti-Federalists
- C. Final Compromise: The Bill of Rights

V. The Aftermath: The Constitution in 2007

- A. Examples of the Living Document
- B. The Bill of Rights
- C. The Continuing conflict over personal liberties and a strong central government

Support your main ideas with relevant information. You will find this support from your note cards. Supporting details should be added to your outline.

I. Brief History of the struggle for Independence

- A. Causes of British colonial immigration to America
 - 1. Religious Persecution
 - 2. Joint-stock companies: A money making venture
- B. Causes of Revolution
 - 1. Taxation without representation
 - 2. Coercive Acts
 - 3. Age of Enlightenment

II. The Articles of Confederation (the first attempt at creating government in the newly formed United States)

- A. Weaknesses
 - 1. State governments stronger than national government
 - 2. Congress: No power to tax, no common defense