

Prompt for Paragraph #6 | Avoiding Contractions

Let us continue with triad paragraphs. There are six (*six!*) below, all based on the first four sections of Unit 5. Choose one on which to write. Recall that the basic goal of your paragraph is to identify and explore the historical relationship(s) among the three items of the triad. Focus above all on *the connections*, rather than addressing each item in isolation. Of critical importance is the deployment of evidence from the readings, with primary source material being especially important. Be sure not to ignore evidence that is obviously relevant to the issues you discuss.

Joseph Stalin Nikita Khrushchev Mikhail Gorbachev	<i>kulaks</i> collectivization Lev Kopelev	NATO “iron curtain” European Economic Community
Italian Fascism Nazism Soviet communism	Milovan Djilas Zbigniew Brzezinski fall of communism	Modernism Reason Fascism

The key skill or attribute for this paragraph is **avoiding contractions**. On occasion in formal writing contractions can be useful for conveying a particular tone. But for the most part good authors avoid them in formal writing precisely because they have an informal and “chatty” feel. Thus while recognizing that contractions may appear in good writing, let us set the goal in this last paragraph—as a matter of discipline, if nothing else—to exclude them entirely. So where you may have initially written *can’t* or *wouldn’t* in the first draft, change those to *cannot* and *would not* as you proofread and create the final version. Any paragraph #6 that includes a contraction will be returned to the author as if she or he had not actually done the assignment.

The same basic rules and advice continue to apply.

- Previous skills and attributes—title, topic sentence, evidence, and avoiding passive—are as important for this paragraph as for previous ones.
- Your text should consist of just one paragraph.
- Underline or **make bold** the three items of your triad in the first sentence.
- The best triad-paragraphs are the ones in which the author includes **all three items in the first sentence**, which becomes the thesis.
- Evidence from sources should take the form mostly of paraphrasing, with only limited direct citation. *Large* quotations will undermine your paper (and its grade).
- On the matter of citation, simply use this system: (Hirst, 25) or (Reader, 7) or (Lecture 2/13). You can also just name the author from the reader, for example (Hitler, 254).
- In terms of length, three-quarters to one full page = the Goldilocks zone. A paragraph of ½ page or less will prejudice the reader against it.
- Be sure to give yourself time to write *and then revise* the paragraph. Without revision, the paragraph will be rubbish.
- Avoid the word “led,” which usually explains connections only very weakly and thus raises more questions than it answers.