

State Building in the Americas

Directions

Using the outline below, add one “specific and relevant” example to each body paragraph.

Long Essay Question

1. From c. 1200 to 1450, complex civilizations developed in the Americas in difficult geographic terrain.

Develop an argument that evaluates the extent to which pre-Columbian American civilizations used or adapted their natural environment to bring about political or social order.

Introduction

Sample thesis statement:

Throughout the Incan Empire, the Aztec Empire, and the Mayan Empire, the act of living within one's complicated natural environments provided a means of consolidating political order because the leaders in each community had to orchestrate programs for building, defense, and communication across the terrain.

Body Paragraph 1

Sample topic sentence:

The natural geography of the Andean mountains provided an opportunity for Incan leaders to consolidate their political authority through infrastructure projects that connected the communities across the peaks, led to more effective defense, and increased communication among isolated parts of the empire.

Add one “specific and relevant” example to support this paragraph.

Write or type your response in this area.

Describe how your choice is “specific” to the argument made in the thesis statement and topic sentence.

Write or type your response in this area.

Describe how your choice is “relevant” to the argument made in the thesis statement and topic sentence.

Write or type your response in this area.

Body Paragraph 2

Sample topic sentence:

The Aztec Empire had a complicated relationship with the natural environment, as seen in their choice to build their political center at Tenochtitlan in the center of Lake Texcoco. The construction and maintenance of the city with its floating islands required a large investment in infrastructure but benefited the empire by creating impressive natural defenses.

Add one “specific and relevant” example to support this paragraph.

Write or type your response in this area.

Describe how your choice is “specific” to the argument made in the thesis statement and topic sentence.

Write or type your response in this area.

Describe how your choice is “relevant” to the argument made in the thesis statement and topic sentence.

Write or type your response in this area.

Body Paragraph 3

Sample topic sentence:

In contrast to the Inca and the Aztecs, the Mayan Empire was a much more loosely defined confederation of communities that ranged over a wide geographic area. These communities were united on a political level through state-developed infrastructure projects like road systems that allowed people from different areas to communicate easily.

Add one “specific and relevant” example to support this paragraph.

Write or type your response in this area.

Describe how your choice is “specific” to the argument made in the thesis statement and topic sentence.

Write or type your response in this area.

Describe how your choice is “relevant” to the argument made in the thesis statement and topic sentence.

Write or type your response in this area.

STUDENT HANDOUT

How would you improve this thesis statement? Rewrite it here.

Answers will vary.

Body Paragraph 1

What is the main argument of this topic sentence? Rewrite it in your own words.

Students should note that this paragraph is about how the state directed the projects to promote political stability.

Choose one the following examples of evidence to support your argument.

B) The various communities of the Incan Empire were connected by a series of rope bridges suspended between mountain peaks, which were vital thoroughfares for people and livestock. The Incan government ensured that these bridges remained safe by requiring villagers to replace them annually as part of their required public service obligations.

Describe how your choice is “specific” to the argument made in the thesis statement and topic sentence.

This example is specific because it narrows in on the question of political power to manage the environment.

Describe how your choice is “relevant” to the argument made in the thesis statement and topic sentence.

This example is relevant because it provides a concrete detail of how political authority was expressed (the required public service) and an example of managing the environment (the bridges) to demonstrate how state power was used to promote stability.

Body Paragraph 2

What is the main argument of this topic sentence? Rewrite it in your own words.

Students should identify that this topic sentence addresses how the state utilized its authority to harness the defense capability of the environment.

Choose one the following examples of evidence to support your argument.

C) The city of Tenochtitlan, where the political center of the Aztec Empire was located, could only be reached on foot through four causeways with bridges. As part of the planning for the city, the emperor had decreed that the bridges in each causeway were required to be moveable so that they could be retracted in case of invasion.

Describe how your choice is “specific” to the argument made in the thesis statement and topic sentence.

This example is specific because it narrows in on the question of political power to manage the environment.

Describe how your choice is “relevant” to the argument made in the thesis statement and topic sentence.

This example is relevant because it provides a concrete detail of how political authority was expressed (the construction of bridges) and an example of managing the environment (the lake) to demonstrate how state power was used to promote stability and security.

Body Paragraph 3

What is the main argument of this topic sentence? Rewrite it in your own words.

Students should be able to identify that this topic sentence is about how creating things that unite all different types of terrain was an expression of political power.

Choose one the following examples of evidence to support your argument.

B) The Mayan government orchestrated the creation of paved roads, called “sacbeob,” throughout the Mayan Empire to ensure that all people could easily reach a temple to perform the religious rituals that were thought necessary to the continuation of the state.

Describe how your choice is “specific” to the argument made in the thesis statement and topic sentence.

This example is specific because it narrows in on the question of political power to manage the environment.

Describe how your choice is “relevant” to the argument made in the thesis statement and topic sentence.

This example is relevant because it provides a concrete detail of how political authority was expressed (the construction of roads to promote rituals) and an example of managing the environment (creating roads throughout all terrains) to demonstrate how state power was used to promote stability.