**England’s an island?**

And other surprises

(A comprehensive guide to cramming for the AP Euro test.)

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Mr. Anderson,

So, I was thinking I should write some study tips for your classes!  (Or just for you to laugh at, because, looking back on it, it’s a wonder that I got above a 1 on that test.) I promise my writing is significantly better than the mediocre vocabulary and improper grammar that awaits you in the upcoming pages.

Going into the test, I knew I was horrible at memorizing dates/people/specific details.  I knew that if I wanted a 5, I was going to have to get it through writing good essays. According to the “ appass.com” test calculator, if I had gotten a 9 on every essay I wrote, I only would have needed to get 28 of the 80 multiple choice right to get a 5. Hoping that information was correct, I just learned enough generalizations about each time period to write good essays and have a basic idea of what was happening to help me guess my way through multiple choice. I guess “appass.com” was pretty accurate, because I got a 5 and there’s absolutely no way it was because of multiple choice.

Anyway, I hope this is helpful and that you can get a laugh out of how pathetic my knowledge of European History really was.

Top Ten Generalizations You Can (Almost) Always Make

1. France lost that war.
2. That French revolution failed.
3. Versailles = rich people benefits = French debt
4. Germany was part of that war. (Mostly because of its geography.)
5. All of the European geography you need on test day:
6. Women were restricted and thought of as subordinate to men. They had limited educational and political opportunities, which caused them to not be taken seriously.
7. Russia = backwards
8. Basically anything to ever happen in European History can be explained and analyzed with the idea that everybody in Europe thought they were better than everyone else. (A few examples of things that can be explained by this: fascism, imperialism, the general constant fighting with other nations, “White Man’s Burden”, social darwinism, racism, capitalism, Versailles, Napoleon, etc., etc...)
9. The middle working class is literally never happy with the government.
10. The Netherlands = banking and luxury goods

9 Steps to a 9 on Every Essay You Write

1. Your best friend on the essay is the word “**because**”. If you use it, it’s almost like forcing yourself to analyze. USE IT ALL THE TIME.
2. “**Circa**” is your lesser best friend that you don’t really use as much but will always get you out of sticky situations. I couldn’t tell you the specific dates for anything in European history. But I could tell you ‘circa’ when they happened. (ex. Emancipation for serfs in Russia = circa 1860)
3. On the day of the test, DO NOT write any conclusions for any of your essays until you’ve finished writing all of them. Go for more analysis (aka the word because) over conclusions. If you do have time to go back and write them, just write your thesis again with different vocab.
4. You can’t be wrong. (As long as you stay within the scope of the essay.) There is no wrong position. As long as you can prove it, it’s correct. Write your essay with that mindset and it will automatically be much stronger than if you write it thinking “oh my god I don’t know this at all!”
5. Go into the essay as if it were a checklist. Literally check off the parts of the directions you’ve completed as you write them in your essay.
6. For the free response questions, always use four pieces of evidence. Then, if one is wrong, you still have adequate information. If all four end up being right, then it seems like you really know what you’re doing (even if you don’t).
7. For the DBQ, try not to reuse any documents in groups. Use a document once and then be done. This will force you to use more of the documents. (try to use them all, or at most only exclude one (MAYBE two) on test day)
8. On the day of the test, once you’ve picked out which free response questions you’re going to use, start writing. Don’t plan out any specific arguments-just immediately start writing the introduction. There isn’t enough time to plan out your specific arguments; just pick the four general points you’re going to use to prove your point and form your arguments as you write.
9. Nobody cares about your opinion or your voice. Don’t use the word ‘I’ and don’t ask rhetorical questions.

Everything You Need to Know on Test Day:

OK, here is basically all of the knowledge I had on test day (maybe a little bit less because I am writing this all from memory a year later):

**Medieval times**: Feudalism all over Europe. Serfs were basically slaves. People had self-sufficient manors. All anybody cared about was land. People all had their own self-sufficient properties and so really had no reason to be trading with other people all that often, and therefore had no real reason to be obsessed with material goods.

**The Renaissance**: The Renaissance is basically Italy’s fifteen minutes of fame because after the Renaissance, nothing that great really happened (that I can remember) there, and Mussolini didn’t really do anything for Italy because he was just overshadowed by Hitler. So, the Renaissance was all about people being perfect. They had this idea of the “all-around man” or the “Renaissance Man” who was good at everything. In the North, people incorporated religion more into Renaissance work, which caused the distinct difference between the Renaissances of the time. Since the Renaissance was about creating people who could do a little bit of everything, specialization wasn’t too big. Also during this time, Spain and Portugal were in their prime. They were big maritime powers and really rich. Feudalism starts coming to an end (EXCEPT FOR RUSSIA BECAUSE THEY ARE BACKWARDS). Then the Protestant Revolution happened.

**Protestant Revolution**:  (Martin Luther + John Calvin) With religions other than Christianity becoming popular, people weren’t as terrified to identify with something other than Catholicism. However, Spain starting kicking out everybody who identified with anything other than Christianity. That was the end of Spain and Portugal being the two cool, rich countries. Also during this time, pretty much every ruler of every country was related to each other somehow. It’s weird. I don’t remember any of it except Ferdinand and Isabella were from Spain, there were like fifty people named “Charles”, fifty people named “Henry”, and a billion and one kings named “Louis”.

**Catholic Counter-Reformation**: The Catholic Church was extremely corrupt (selling of indulgences, etc.) and was not about the let protestants take any catholics (aka people the church wanted to take advantage of) away without a fight. So they had this counter-reformation where they basically just told everyone they were still right about everything they were obviously wrong about. I think they might have made (maybe) five changes, but for the most part this counter-reformation wasn’t all that great. Maybe they were actually successful. I don’t know.

**Wars**: So this is where my memory totally fails. I didn’t know that many details about wars when I actually took the course, and I really don’t remember much now. Wars happened...Germany was pretty much involved in all of them because of its geography- it is literally in the middle of everything. England never really bothered with the petty problems of European wars because it was too busy fighting the American Revolution or invading every other nation in the world or something. (Actual fact I looked up: there are only 22 countries IN THE WORLD that England never invaded) The Netherlands don’t really do much fighting either. Anyway, there are a lot of wars happening between 1500-1800 that I have absolutely no memory of. England had a Glorious Revolution at some point...everybody else usually just fought over land. Oh! And if there are any rulers of nations with “The Great” after their name, they were probably a strong military leader.

**Napoleon**: Ruled France from 1804-1814 (?) and then got kicked out of France but tried to come back in 1815 until he was exiled to an island where he died. He was doing pretty well until he made the stupid decision to try to invade Russia. It all went downhill from there.

**The Failure Named France**: France has about a thousand revolutions and governments throughout history. All I remember about France is that it lost almost every war it’s a part of, all of its revolutions essentially backfired, and it’s just an all-around mess. There’s Napoleon, and all of those guys named Louis, and the psycho Robespierre who just beheaded everyone, and probably thirty more I’m forgetting. Basically, France is a mess. In defense of France, Russia still had feudalism at this point. On the other hand, maybe if France still had the feudal system they wouldn’t be such a mess….

**Europe Realizes They Can Fight Over More Land And Imperialize Africa**: Berlin Conference,1885

**World War I:** Tensions rise over a long period of time until Archduke Franz Ferdinand is assassinated and war breaks out. Fighting happens. Russia is having their revolution and Bolsheviks (?) take over. The Soviet Union starts up, communism starts to become a threat to people. (BONUS: Make connections! Russia was a crazy backwards nation in the 1800’s when they still had serfdom, Russia is STILL a crazy backwards nation when a communist regime takes over.)

**Post-War Depression**: Europe is a mess. They had to look to America for help (but we were a mess too.) Germany was blamed for the whole war because no one likes them. Hitler wasn’t ok with that.

**World War II**: Dear Hitler, DIDN’T YOU REALIZE INVADING RUSSIA WAS STUPID? Then again, it’s a good thing the Nazi party lost that war… (Fun fact! You will not need this for the test AT ALL. I’m just really good at writing review books so I included fun facts. I only found this out this year but it’s really interesting! During WWII, Japan had a war unit called ‘Unit 731’. They planned to launch a biological attack on the United States to decimate the population. Their plan was to send submarines across the Pacific to a densely populated area in California, where the submarines would release planes containing tons of plague-infested fleas. They wanted to release these in California (I think they planned to start the attack in San Diego) and hoped the fleas would infest the entirety of our population and essentially kill us off. The projected date of the project was September 22nd, 1945. Unit 731’s plan was never enacted due to the fact that we dropped an atomic bomb only one month prior.)

**Cold War/Russia needs to calm down**: The Soviet Union is in full swing and is terrifying everyone with communism. The Berlin Wall divides Germany (as if they didn’t already have enough issues), and there’s a really big communist vs. capitalist fight happening. Since communism just doesn’t work in reality, the Soviet Union eventually crumbles from the inside out. (USA! USA! USA!)

Now you are ready to get a 5 on the AP Euro exam!!