Explain or Argue?

Sort historical theses by their purpose

USH.P.4.1 "Summarize and paraphrase, integrate evidence, and cite sources to create written products, research projects, and presentations for multiple purposes related to social studies content. Compose informative essays and written products..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

INFORMATIVE THESIS

An informative thesis states a main idea you can explain with evidence. It does not ask the reader to accept a debatable judgment.

The Erie Canal connected inland farms with coastal markets and lowered transport costs in the 1800s.

ARGUMENTATIVE CLAIM

An argumentative claim takes a position someone could reasonably challenge. It gives the writer a position to defend with evidence.

The federal government should have granted the Philippines independence immediately after the Spanish-American War because its residents deserved self-rule.

1 SORT

8 items

Circle EXPLAIN or ARGUE for each statement, then choose two items and explain what makes each fit its category.

1.	The New Deal expanded the federal government's role in banking and employment programs.	EXPLAIN ARGUE
2.	The 19th Amendment was the most important voting reform of the early 1900s because it expanded the electorate nationwide.	EXPLAIN ARGUE
3.	The U.S. government should have compensated Japanese Americans immediately after World War II because incarceration caused lasting losses.	EXPLAIN ARGUE
4.	During World War II, forced removal and incarceration uprooted many Japanese American families from the West Coast.	EXPLAIN ARGUE
5.	The 19th Amendment barred states from denying the vote on the basis of sex, although other voting barriers remained.	EXPLAIN ARGUE
6.	The New Deal's job programs were a better long-term response to unemployment than direct relief because they built public infrastructure.	EXPLAIN ARGUE
7.	The Great Migration reshaped northern cities through population growth and new cultural communities.	EXPLAIN ARGUE
8.	After the Triangle Shirtwaist fire, New York's new safety laws changed how factories were inspected and operated.	EXPLAIN ARGUE

2 PROVE IT

Explain your thinking

Pick two items from Part 1. For each one, tell how you knew where it belonged.

ITEM # _____ **HOW I KNEW** _____

ITEM # _____ **HOW I KNEW** _____

3 MAKE YOUR OWN

One of each

Write one new informative thesis about U.S. history and one new argumentative claim about U.S. history.

EXPLAIN _____

ARGUE _____

CHALLENGE

Choose one U.S. history topic. Write an informative thesis and an argumentative claim about it, then name one primary source that could provide evidence for your claim.

ANSWER KEY

Explain or Argue?

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PART 1 · SORT

#	ITEM	CATEGORY	WHY
1	The New Deal expanded the federal government's role in banking and employment programs.	**EXPLAIN**	States a historical development without making a debatable judgment.
2	The 19th Amendment was the most important voting reform of the early 1900s because it expanded the electorate nationwide.	**ARGUE**	Ranks the amendment against other reforms and gives a reason for that debatable judgment.
3	The U.S. government should have compensated Japanese Americans immediately after World War II because incarceration caused lasting losses.	**ARGUE**	Takes a debatable position about when compensation should have occurred.
4	During World War II, forced removal and incarceration uprooted many Japanese American families from the West Coast.	**EXPLAIN**	Describes a historical effect without arguing for a position.
5	The 19th Amendment barred states from denying the vote on the basis of sex, although other voting barriers remained.	**EXPLAIN**	Explains the amendment's scope and a limitation without ranking or recommending anything.
6	The New Deal's job programs were a better long-term response to unemployment than direct relief because they built public infrastructure.	**ARGUE**	Makes a debatable comparison and gives a reason for it.
7	The Great Migration reshaped northern cities through population growth and new cultural communities.	**EXPLAIN**	States historical changes that a writer could explain with evidence.
8	After the Triangle Shirtwaist fire, New York's new safety laws changed how factories were inspected and operated.	**EXPLAIN**	States a historical change without judging whether it was sufficient.

PART 2 · PROVE IT

Accept any explanation that names the deciding feature from the rule box for the chosen item.

PART 3 · MAKE YOUR OWN (SAMPLE ANSWERS)

- **EXPLAIN**: The Interstate Highway System connected regions of the United States and changed travel and commerce.
- **ARGUE**: Congress should have invested more in passenger rail than highways in the 1950s because rail could have served travelers while using less land.

Challenge: The Brown v. Board of Education decision declared state-mandated racial segregation in public schools unconstitutional. The decision was a turning point because it gave civil rights lawyers a stronger basis to challenge segregated schools. A later NAACP court brief could show how lawyers used the decision.

For Part 2, accept explanations that identify whether a statement explains a historical idea or defends a debatable position. For example, item 2 ranks one reform above others, while item 5 explains what the amendment prohibited.