

- Have you supported your thesis with six of the documents explicitly, individually, and correctly? —**2 points**
- Have you critically analyzed the source in at least three of the documents? —**1 point**
- Have you supported your thesis with at least one piece of specific evidence from outside the documents? —**1 point**
- Have you used your evidence to corroborate, qualify, or modify your argument? —**1 point**

A Note About Historical Complexity

“It’s complicated, Dad.” I hear this almost every day when talking with my 15-year-old daughter, Mia.

“How was school today?” I ask, believing the answer to be pretty straightforward.

“It’s complicated, Dad.”

“Is everything ok with your friends?”

“It’s complicated, Dad.”

“Any new boys in your life?”

“It’s complicated, Dad.”

Are there no easy answers? As a matter of fact, in life, as in history, there actually are no easy answers. If you find an easy answer, it’s likely that you misunderstood the question.

Historical complexity is simply the recognition that there are no easy answers. In any historical argument, there will be evidence that corroborates, evidence that qualifies, and evidence that modifies the argument. Great essays account for and explain these corroborations, qualifications, and modifications. Here’s an example from the French Revolution:

The Point: Women in the French Revolution achieved a high level of equality with men.

Corroborating Evidence:

- Condorcet argued for complete civil equality for women in 1789
- Women joined the Cercle Social to discuss women's rights in 1790
- Olympe de Gouges published Declaration of the Rights of Women in 1790
- Women formed the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women in 1793
- The French Republic referred to men and women as "citizens"

Qualifying Evidence:

- Women's clubs primarily focused on equality in marriage and education
- Most women participated in the revolution by supporting the efforts of their husbands
- The French words used for "citizen" are gender specific

Contradicting Evidence:

- Rousseau's writing, on which much of the revolution was based, specifically argued against women in the political sphere
- The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, a seminal work of the revolution, made no mention of women (a fact that motivated Olympe de Gouges to publish her declaration in 1790)
- Women's clubs were outlawed in 1793
- Olympe de Gouges was guillotined in 1793

- French women never gained the right to vote or hold office until 1944

It should be clear from this example that history is not black and white. Most historical arguments try to make sense of various shades of gray. That is the essence of historical complexity.