

WRITING DEVELOPMENT

RULE #1: If anything I say on this page conflicts with what your teachers have told you, I am wrong, and they are right.

Why did the Homesteaders Move West

15. Explaining III – multiple explanations

When we last looked at ‘explaining’, we looked at ‘simple explanations’ – an explanation ‘pathway’ with a single idea as to how the cause led to the effect.

Thus, if I were to attempt the question: “How did government actions affect the lives of Homesteaders?” a simple explanation pathway would go:

GOVERNMENT ACTION	→ EXPLANATION OF HOW →	= EFFECT ON THE HOMESTEADERS
-------------------	-------------------------------	------------------------------

And I might plan to write:

→ THE HOMESTEAD ACT	\$12 FEE & 5 YEARS’ WORK FOR FREE LAND	= ENCOURAGED THEM TO GO WEST
---------------------	--	------------------------------

Multiple Explanations

However, with a little more thought I can do better than that. Most things in history have multiple explanations.

For instance, the Homestead Act did not only offer free land for 5 years’ work (though it did, and that was very attractive to poor people). It also had a useful short-cut, inasmuch as, after 6 months, you could ‘prove up’ by paying \$200 (which was attractive to wealthier people). So, I can write that the government’s action worked in TWO ways to help homesteaders when it passed the Homestead Act:

→ HOMESTEAD ACT	→ IF POOR → \$12 & 5 YEARS’ WORK	= OWNED A FARM!
	→ IF WEALTHIER → PAY \$200	

And, if you start thinking about what you know about the Homesteaders, you will remember that there were other things the government to encourage the homesteaders – eg the Timber Culture & Desert Land Acts, the railroads, defeating the Indigenous Peoples, and law and order.

So, suddenly, I can write an essay plan which looks like this:

→ HOMESTEAD ACT	→ IF POOR → \$12 & 5 YRS	= OWNED THEIR OWN FARM!
	→ IF SOME MONEY → \$12	
→ TIMBER/DESERT ACTS	→ OFFERED LARGER PLOTS	= GOT THEM THERE ‘READY TO GO’
→ RAILROADS	→ FAST, SAFE, TRANSCONTINENTAL	
→ ARMY	→ BROUGHT GOODS & SERVICES	= COULD BUY WHAT THEY NEEDED
→ LAW & ORDER	→ STOPPED RENEGADES	= SAFE PLOTS/ COMMUNITIES
	→ MARSHALLS & COURTS	

- Using \$3 of the webpage: ‘The Railroads’, develop a grid plan with multiple pathways like the one above for: “How did the Railroads encourage homesteaders to move west?”

→ SOMETHING THE RAILROAD DID	→ EXPLANATION OF HOW →	= ENCOURAGED THEM TO GO WEST
	→ EXPLANATION OF HOW →	

- Using \$2 of the webpage, do the same for:

“In what ways were the lives of Homesteaders affected by the Civil War?”
 (‘Turned round’ wording, but the same kind of essay.)