History Paper Outline

I. Introduction:

A. Hook/first sentence: This is where you want to grab your reader’s attention. What is interesting about this topic?

B. Give background information: The reader may need a brief overview of the topic to understand what exactly you will be writing about. It is important to keep it brief but descriptive. Try to focus on key points like who, what, and when of the topic. This will also give context for your thesis statement.

C. Thesis statement: A thesis statement for a history paper does not involve simply restating the assignment or writing down what you know on the subject. A thesis statement is your take on the subject which involves your perspective and explanation. How was your topic significant? Why is it important? What is your interpretation of it?

II. Body paragraphs (usually 3, but it can be more or less, depending on the assignment):

A. Topic/opening sentence: what part of your topic are you going to explore here? This will set up the rest of your paragraph.

B. What happened?: this is where you want to give background information on this part of your topic. This will often involve a brief summary of the events. Remember to be precise so the reader does not have to fill in any blanks about who, what, when of the topic. It is important to keep in mind to keep this section short.

C. Analyze: This is where you want to answer the how, why, and to what significance this has to the overall topic. Historical analysis involves evaluating sources, assigning significance to causes, and weighing
competing explanations. What is your interpretations of these events? Analyzing should make up the bulk of your body paragraphs.

D. **Link back to the thesis:** Read your thesis again and link it to the event and your analysis of it. How does the topic of this paper support your argument/point?

E. **Transition:** lead your reader to the next topic with a transition sentence.

III. **Conclusion:**

A. **Restate your thesis:** in your first sentence of your conclusion you should repeat your thesis statement. Make sure you reword your thesis instead of copying it word for word.

B. **Synthesize ideas:** take the main ideas you explored through your body paragraphs and discuss them again briefly. Emphasize why each is important and how they relate to your thesis.

C. **Ending:** it is important to make sure that the end of your conclusion wraps up the paper appropriately. A strong conclusion will have the reader thinking about the larger implications of your thesis.