

SOCIAL STUDIES 11

IMPORTANT COMMAND VERBS FOR FINAL EXAM ESSAY QUESTIONS

Understanding factual information is important; however, in order to compose a solid essay, students must understand what they are expected to do or to demonstrate using the factual information that they have gathered throughout the course. This is why it is critical to pay close attention to the “**command verb(s)**” that WILL be contained in the description of what students are asked to write. The **command verbs** (listed below) will clearly state what students are supposed to **do** with the information they have learned. Basic knowledge of facts is not acceptable in this course. Students must be able to connect ideas, offer well-supported opinions, demonstrate consideration of multiple viewpoints surrounding controversial issues, or note similarities and differences. Below are basic definitions of some of the command verbs commonly used on Social Studies 11 Essay questions.

ASSESS	<p>If you are asked to “assess” something, you are being asked to state facts about the topic AND offer your opinion of how those facts contribute to the topic’s value to you, by stating what you value, and how the facts work with or against your values.</p> <p>e.g. – Assess the strength of Mackenzie-King’s leadership during the great depression. <i>One would need to decide what qualities in a leader are important (their personal values), then use factual information (courses of action taken by King during the depression) to state the value of his leadership (how strong / weak a leader was he?)</i></p>
COMPARE	<p>Again, sound knowledge of the facts is critical, but not all that is necessary. When asked to “compare”, you must have sound knowledge of a topic, and describe how its qualities are <u>similar</u> to those of a second topic.</p> <p>e.g. – Compare how Canada and the United States are similar (taking into consideration: death penalty, gun control, health care, military, popular entertainment & civil rights. <i>One would have to have sound factual knowledge (relevant to this course) about Canada, AND about the US, and highlight the important similarities between the two.</i></p>
CONTRAST	<p>Again, sound knowledge of the facts is critical, but not all that is necessary. When asked to “contrast”, you must have sound knowledge of a topic, and describe how its qualities are <u>different</u> from those of a second topic.</p> <p>e.g. – Contrast Canada and the United States (taking into consideration: death penalty, gun control, health care, military, popular entertainment & civil rights. <i>One would have to have sound factual knowledge (relevant to this course) about Canada, AND about the US, and highlight the important differences between the two.</i></p>
DESCRIBE	<p>When asked to “describe”, one must have detailed knowledge of the facts, and include a high level of detail when providing an account of a specific topic.</p> <p>e.g. – Describe various social changes that took place in Canada during the interwar period. <i>One would need detailed factual knowledge of Canadian society during World War 1, and detailed factual knowledge of various social changes that took place from the end of WW1 to the beginning of the Second World War (including causes and effects of the changes).</i></p>

<p>DISCUSS</p>	<p>When asked to “discuss”, students are being asked to consider multiple points of view regarding a controversial or debatable issue. To discuss is to share your knowledge, and to demonstrate the ability to consider valid points that exist outside of one’s own set of values and opinions.</p> <p>e.g. - Discuss the issue of Conscription and the impact it had on Canada during the First World War.</p> <p><i>One would need to share various points of view regarding mandatory military enlistment, and without bias, state how these points of view impacted decisions, and the effects associated with multiple points of view.</i></p>
<p>EVALUATE</p>	<p>When asked to “evaluate”, students are asked to offer their own opinions around actions or positions taken by others with the purpose being highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of that particular person’s approach.</p> <p>e.g. – Evaluate Prime Minister Diefenbaker’s approach to aiding the US during the Cuban Missile Crisis.</p> <p><i>Obviously, one would have to know the facts surrounding this event (events leading up to it, effects, etc), and would have to be aware of Diefenbaker’s chosen course of action, and the factors that led to his decision. With this knowledge, one could look at their own values, and provide an appraisal of the benefits, drawbacks, strengths and weaknesses of Diefenbaker’s approach.</i></p>
<p>EXPLAIN</p>	<p>When asked to “explain”, one is basically providing a detailed account of <u>how or why</u> something happened (again using factual information to support). This could be a matter of opinion, but an opinion of how or why something happened must be backed by factual information.</p> <p>e.g. – Explain how industrial and technological development can affect the environment.</p> <p><i>One would have to be aware of facts and findings surrounding the environmental impact of industry and some forms of technology, and formulate a strong argument that they are indeed the cause of whatever outcome you believe to be accurate.</i></p>
<p>TO WHAT EXTENT</p>	<p>When a question contains the phrase “to what extent”, it is basically asking “<i>how much</i>” or “<i>how far</i>”. Often you will be provided a statement, and asked how much you agree / disagree. Based on the nature of what is being asked, your response must state this (by offering an amount such as – totally agree, partly agree, agree somewhat, totally disagree, etc.</p> <p>e.g. – “The average Canadian citizen has the opportunity to have a significant influence over the actions and decisions made by their government” To what extent to you agree with this statement?</p> <p><i>One would first have to decide based on their factual knowledge of how citizens can influence their government, and the potential impact these can have. Once all of their facts are considered, the writer must provide a value or amount (mostly agree, disagree strongly, etc) before supporting their stance with facts, and their relevance.</i></p>