History Essay: Writing a Conclusion

1. Summarize how the evidence in the body of the paper supports the thesis statement.

From the world’s ignoring of the Ten Commandments of the Hutu in 1990, to the Belgian withdrawal and the Clinton Administration’s refusal to send troops to Rwanda in the spring of 1994, to the UN’s failure to deploy forces in Rwanda until the summer of ’94, the international community permitted the Rwandan genocide to occur.

This sentence revisits four key pieces of evidence and then restates the thesis using slightly different words than those used in the thesis statement in the introduction.

2. Branch out: make a connection, a prediction, or a judgment.

Many different leaders and countries that played critical roles, or had the opportunity to play critical roles, have since stepped forward and apologized to Rwanda. General Dallaire has stated, “I’m fully responsible for [...] two million people becoming displaced and refugees, and about a million Rwandans being killed because the mission failed.” Recognizing a failure is the first step towards finding a solution. In the end, the United Nations and all countries should learn from their previous mistakes and work together to prevent another genocide.

The author branches out from her thesis (that the nations of the world backed down from their commitment to prevent genocide) to tell us what happened afterwards (some of those nations apologized) and to offer her own judgment about the events she has described (those events were “mistakes,” and the actors should act differently in the future).

DON’T just restate your thesis.

DON’T introduce any new evidence for your thesis.

DON’T ever use the conclusion to make general statements about history, society, or human nature. For example, Throughout history, societies have failed to intervene to stop human slaughter.

DO leave the reader thinking about your topic and its importance.


1 Philip Gourevitch, We wish to inform you that tomorrow we will be killed with our families: stories from Rwanda (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1998), 168.