

Lesson 7 — Writing and Linking Support Paragraphs

Exercise 1 Using Transitional Phrases

This exercise will help you see how important “transitional words and phrases” and other linking words can be in connecting sentences within a paragraph. First read the definition of “transitional phrases” in the box and study the examples there. Then read the paragraph below the box. This paragraph is about Manifest Destiny. But its sentences are out of order. In the space below it, copy these sentences in the correct order so that the paragraph makes sense. Then, underline all the transitional phrases or other connecting words that helped you figure out the correct order.

Transitional Phrases: Words or phrases that link one sentence or paragraph to the next in some way, or that show the connection between a sentence or paragraph and the one just before it. Here are a few common transitional words or phrases:

In general ... For example ... But on the other hand ...

I began ... That fall ... Then in winter ...

Most importantly ... Next in importance ...

At first, I was informed ... Then on the contrary I was told ...

One group ... Another group ... Finally ...

Transitions help the reader follow your reasoning or your argument. When speaking, you help your listener do this by your gestures or tone of voice. When you write, you need to work much harder to show clearly how each idea connects to the next idea. In addition to transitional words such as “however,” “but,” “next,” “after that,” etc., pronouns also act as important linking words. That is, words such as “he,” “she,” or “they” always refer back to people named or identified earlier. In this way, they link the ideas in one sentence to those in previous sentences.

Sample Paragraph: Jumbled Order

But at first, he viewed South Africa’s mistreatment of Indians as simply a flaw in a system that was mainly good. Then, during World War I, he did the same for the British themselves, raising an ambulance corps among Indians living in London. It actually all began, he tells us, in 1893, in another British-ruled country, South Africa. He started criticizing that system’s faults, but without seeking to overthrow it entirely. How did Mohandas Gandhi finally become active in efforts to end British imperial rule in India? Later in fact, during the Boer War in 1899, he even helped raised a volunteer ambulance corps for the British-ruled colony. It was only after World War I, that he became convinced that British rule in India must in time end completely. As an Indian in that troubled land, he says he soon learned he had no rights.

Sample Paragraph: Correct Order

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Exercise 2 Types of Transitional Links

The way you link ideas within a paragraph depends in part on the kind of question you are answering. For example, if the question asks you to compare and contrast two developments or trends, you will use transitional phrases that point out similarities and differences. A question about when various trends or events occurred calls for transitional phrases linking events over time.

For this two-page lesson you will work with four separate paragraphs. The paragraphs are not related to one another. Each paragraph links its ideas in a different way, identified as, “Chronological,” “Cause and Effect,” “Order of Importance” or “Compare and Contrast.” These terms are explained in each box below, along with some typical transitional phrases of that type. Each sample paragraph has blank spaces where transitional words or phrases should go. Complete these paragraphs. As a class, discuss how transitional words help make clear the different kinds of reasoning in each paragraph.

1. Chronological

Having to do with the order of events over time. Use a chronological organization when you need to describe changes over time carefully.

Examples: *At first, ... Next, ... Then last ...*
 For years, ... After that And then...
 Beginning with ... Then came ... This finally led to ...

Complete the Transitions in the Sample Paragraph Below: You may use the transitional phrases in this box, alter them or use any others that seem to work.

Sample Paragraph 1 (Chronological)

_____ World War I shattered the faith and weakened the will of the European powers to hold onto their huge colonial empires. _____ a new generation of nationalist leaders appeared calling for greater independence for the colonies. _____ World War II again left Europe in ruins. It was this great upheaval that truly marked the beginning of the end of the colonial era.

2. Cause and Effect

When you want to focus on the factors explaining an event or trend, especially with “explain why” or “assess the validity” questions.

Examples: *One factor explaining ... Then there was ... Also ...*
 To begin with ... Also ... Together, all these factors ...
 At first ... Adding to this factor was ... Finally ...

Complete the Transitions in the Sample Paragraph Below: You may use the transitional phrases in this box, alter them or use any others that seem to work.

Sample Paragraph 2 (Cause and Effect)

_____ the collapse of the colonial empires in the two decades after World War II. _____ was the rise of a new generation of nationalist leaders in the colonies — men such as Nehru, Nkrumah, Ho Chi Minh, Jomo Kenyatta and others who inspired masses of people. _____ the fact that the European powers were exhausted and drastically weakened by two devastating world wars in the space of 30 years. _____ the Cold War, which locked the West into a long confrontation with the Soviet Union. This enabled the new generation of nationalist leaders in the colonies to play off one side against another and gain leverage over both.

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Exercise 2 (Continued) Types of Transitional Links

3. Order of Importance

From the most to the least important factors that explain something (or the least to the most important factors). Most useful with “explain why” question types.

Examples: *The most important factor ... Also significant ... Then finally...
First of all ... Another factor Also ... As a result, ...
For one thing ... More importantly ... But most of all ...*

Complete the Transitions in the Sample Paragraph Below: You may use the transitional phrases in this box, alter them or use any others that seem to work.

Sample Paragraph 3 (Order of Importance)

Decolonization in Africa did not lead smoothly to the creation of stable democratic nations, as many hoped it would. Why not? _____ was the lack of any real sense of national identity within many of the new nations. Tribal rivalries created enormous tensions in them from the start. _____ tiny educated elites from each tribal group were the only ones able to understand and use the instruments of political power. Most Africans had little idea of how to make their political will known. _____ was the rise of powerful armies and the lack of strong political or legal institutions to restrain them. _____ by the 1970s, one-party governments and military coups had become an all-too common feature of life in Africa.

4. Compare and Contrast

Use this organization to describe similarities and differences in two separate historical events or trends. It can also be useful with “assess the validity” questions when you agree partly with the DBQ statement but also want to make some qualifications.

Examples: *On the one hand ... On the other hand ...
For one thing ... Moreover ... However ... Finally ...
It is true that But nevertheless ... Also ...*

Complete the Transitions in the Sample Paragraph: You may use the transitional phrases in this box, alter them or use any others that seem to work.

Sample Paragraph 4 (Compare and Contrast)

Europe’s colonial empires collapsed rapidly after World War II. Then, in the 1980s, the huge Soviet empire also fell apart. In what ways were these two great historical changes alike and not alike? _____ they were alike in that rulers of one nationality took control of entirely different nationalities. _____ this control took a form in which the colonized people lacked independent political power. _____ in both forms of empire, collapse came after the rulers themselves had lost confidence in their right or ability to rule. This fueled growing protests that in time could not be held in check. _____ the differences between the Soviet communist empire and those of Western Europe are at least as great as their similarities. In the Western empires, traditions of parliamentary democracy and civil liberties in time did give colonized people a growing voice in their own destiny. This was never really so in Eastern Europe. _____ communist ideas and practices differed drastically from Western notions of cultural superiority and faith in private economic markets. Both systems kept colonized people down. But the communist systems were much more thorough in their oppressiveness and harder to oppose, at least for a while.

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Exercise 3

Dealing with Primary Source Documents

The first two exercises in this lesson could apply equally to a DBQ essay or to any other kind of history essay. What is unique about a DBQ essay is the need to use primary sources. But what exactly is the best way of using or referring to these sources?

The right way: First, focus on the question and think about how the primary sources are related to it. Then decide on your thesis. Use your own history knowledge and the primary sources to support your argument or thesis. Use as many sources as you can. You don't need to mention every source. It is more important that you **always use the sources you do mention to back up your thesis**.

The wrong way: A common mistake in writing a DBQ essay is to list primary sources without really connecting them to the thesis. This is referred to as a “laundry list” approach to the sources. Use the sources to prove your thesis, not simply to show that you can list them all.

Below are two paragraphs responding to the same question. Each mentions some of the primary sources for this lesson. Read the paragraphs, answer the questions below them and discuss your answers in class.

Question:

Compare and contrast world opinion regarding the end of the West's colonial empires with world opinion regarding the collapse of the Soviet Union's empire in Eastern Europe.

Sample Paragraph 1

As Harold Macmillan said in 1960, the “winds of change” were sweeping across Africa in the years after World War II. These winds soon brought a swift end to colonial empires in most of the continent. Nationalist leaders like Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana or Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya became heroes to their own people. In Document 6, Kenyatta is seen with Thurgood Marshall, who later became the first black U.S. Supreme Court Justice. Gandhi and Nehru, in Documents 1 and 2, were widely admired by much of the world. Gandhi preached non-violence. But other independence struggles were not so peaceful — such as the one Patrice Lumumba led for a time in the Congo (see Document 8) or France's struggle to hold onto its colony in Vietnam (Document 9).

Sample Paragraph 2

The end of empire in Africa and Asia came swiftly after World War II. Moreover, it actually met with widespread approval in the West itself. The best example of this is Mohandas Gandhi and the non-violent movement he inspired in India. India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, was also greatly admired as a man of peace — though his faith in the “path of nonalignment” (as he puts it here) and socialist planning did disturb some. Many African nationalist leaders also inspired hope in the West, as is suggested by the source here showing U.S. civil rights leader Thurgood Marshall embracing Kenya's first president Jomo Kenyatta. One of the clearest expressions of Western support for decolonization was British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan's famous “winds of change” speech in 1960.

Paragraph _____ uses
the primary sources
effectively because

Paragraph _____ uses
the primary sources
poorly because

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Exercise 4 Keep the Essay Simple and Direct

There is no one formula for writing an effective DBQ essay. However, there are some useful guidelines. Your introductory paragraph restates the topic and presents your thesis. The paragraphs that follow support that thesis as directly as possible. Usually, each paragraph develops one main idea. All details, examples, primary sources and explanations follow logically so as to back up the paragraph's main idea and the thesis. Finally, transitions or other phrases clearly connect each paragraph to the next one.

Along the left column below and on the next page is one framework designed to guide you in writing this kind of a DBQ essay. It is again based on the **Main Idea-Details-Explanations** scheme. A DBQ and is provided. Your task is to write an introductory paragraph, three internal paragraphs and a brief conclusion. Try to follow the guidelines on the left for each paragraph. (But notice that you have some leeway as to how many supporting details and explanations you must include.)

Instructions: Document-Based Essay

This question is based on the eleven documents for this lesson. As you analyze the documents, take into account both the source of each document and any point of view presented in it. Using information from the documents, and your knowledge of United States history, write a well-organized essay answering the following DBQ.

The Question

"The factors bringing about the end of the West's colonial empires differed from those that brought down the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe." Assess the validity of this statement.

Introductory Paragraph

Internal Paragraph 1

Transition and Main Idea

1. Detail, fact or reference to primary source document.

Explanation of the importance of this detail, fact or source to the paragraph's main idea or the overall thesis.

2. Transition plus possible additional details, facts or references to primary source documents.

Explanation of the importance of the details, facts or sources to the paragraph's main idea or the overall thesis.

(Continue writing on next page)

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Exercise 4 (Continued) Keep the Essay Simple and Direct

Internal Paragraph 2

Transition and Main Idea

1. Detail, fact or reference to primary source document.

Explanation of the importance of this detail, fact or source to the paragraph's main idea or the overall thesis.

2. Transition plus possible additional details, facts or references to primary source documents.

Explanation of the importance of the details, facts or sources to the paragraph's main idea or the overall thesis.

Internal Paragraph 3

Transition and Main Idea

1. Detail, fact or reference to primary source document.

Explanation of the importance of this detail, fact or source to the paragraph's main idea or the overall thesis.

2. Transition plus possible additional details, facts or references to primary source documents.

Explanation of the importance of the details, facts or sources to the paragraph's main idea or the overall thesis.

Brief Conclusion
