

## Lesson 3 — Analyzing the Question

### Exercise 1 Questioning the Documents — 1

Every DBQ asks you to write an essay using your own knowledge of history and your ideas about a group of primary source documents. Some DBQs also first ask you to answer questions about EACH source in turn. This helps you to think more clearly about what the sources actually say or show before you use them in a longer essay. It also helps you to **think carefully about the questions themselves, how they are worded, and what they really ask**. This is a very important skill to develop in dealing with DBQs. It's not always as easy as you may think to fully understand what a question is asking.

In this exercise, you need to decide which of the primary source documents for this lesson best matches each of the six questions below. Choose just ONE document for each question and write its number in the space provided. Then write a single-sentence answer to the question itself. (It may help to read ALL six questions before answering any of them.)

1. Many Enlightenment thinkers wanted to understand human beings as natural objects. How does this document illustrate that fact, yet also suggest the concern some felt to understand the mind and soul as well?

Doc. \_\_\_ Answer: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Why were some Enlightenment thinkers so harsh in their attitudes about Europe's past, especially its history in the 1500s and 1600s?

Doc. \_\_\_ Answer: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. In the Middle Ages, most people held a rather comforting view of the universe. This view made them feel that the entire universe was created with them in mind above all. How does this document make that comforting view clear?

Doc. \_\_\_ Answer: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. The so-called Scientific Revolution of the 1500s and 1600s led to a firm belief that ideas should be based on evidence provided by the senses and careful observation of nature. Which of these documents most clearly expresses this belief?

Doc. \_\_\_ Answer: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. Many Enlightenment thinkers wanted government to have no role in enforcing religious beliefs or practices of any sort. How does this document show that this was not entirely true of one famous Enlightenment thinker?

Doc. \_\_\_ Answer: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. Enlightenment thinkers expressed a strong faith in reason. But this document suggests that one of them thought reason alone was not enough to give man hope or a sense of meaning in the universe. Explain how it suggests this.

Doc. \_\_\_ Answer: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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### Exercise 2 Questioning the Documents — 2

Most DBQs ask you to write about seven, eight or more primary source documents. However, these documents will not always agree with one another. They may not even be closely related — though they will all be about one broad topic. **Before answering a DBQ, try to see which documents are connected most closely.** This can make it easier for you to plan your use of the documents in answering the DBQ.

This exercise should help you see the value of doing this. The exercise asks you to link TWO primary source documents to a single question. This will give you practice in thinking about how one document connects up with another. Choose the two documents for this lesson that you think would best help to answer each of the following questions. Then write a one-sentence or two-sentence answer to each question. As a class, discuss your answers for Exercises 1 and 2.

1. The Enlightenment raised the question of how we can arrive at certain knowledge of what is true. But it answered that question in very different ways. Explain some of these key differences.

Docs. \_\_\_ & \_\_\_ These documents help show that \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. A new view of the nature of the universe took hold from the 1500s on. Why did so many people find this new view astounding, confusing, even frightening?

Docs. \_\_\_ & \_\_\_ These documents help show that \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. Compare and contrast differing Enlightenment views about religious tolerance and the role of the government in controlling or influencing religious belief and practice.

Docs. \_\_\_ & \_\_\_ These documents help show that \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. "Some Enlightenment thinkers were full of hope about science and reason as guides to a better future for all of humanity. Others had deep doubts about this." Evaluate and explain this statement.

Docs. \_\_\_ & \_\_\_ These documents help show that \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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### Exercise 3 Types of DBQs

In answering a DBQ, one of the most common mistakes is failing to read the question carefully. **It is not unusual for a student to give a good answer to a question that was NOT even asked!** Below are descriptions of four typical DBQ question formats. These describe some of the most common types of DBQ. Of course, all DBQs have a great deal in common. All require you to state a clear thesis, or answer, to a question. All also require you to back up your thesis using primary sources AND your background history knowledge. Moreover, no matter what the question format, you must always **pay close attention to each phrase and ALL parts of the question.** Never start to write until you have done this thoroughly.

Read the descriptions the question formats shown here. Then complete the exercise on the next page.

#### Question Format 1

##### “Assess the Validity”

As in this question: *“The colonists could not have won the Revolutionary War without the leadership of General Washington.” Assess the validity of this statement.*

This question usually calls on you to respond to a firm conclusion about an historical event, problem, trend, group or personality. You do not have to agree with that conclusion. What is important is that you state clearly your own opinion about it and that you back that opinion up with your own history knowledge and with comments about the documents. In your answer, use the primary sources to support your view. However, also try to account for sources that seem to go against your view.

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#### Question Format 2

##### “Compare and Contrast”

As in: *Compare and contrast the strengths and weaknesses of the colonists and the British in the American Revolution.*

Questions of this type ask you to describe similarities and differences between two trends or sets of events in the same historical time period or in two different time periods. Try to group the documents into those that clarify one of the two things being compared and those that clarify the other thing being compared. The goal is to describe a broad pattern, but usually you will have to try to explain it as well.

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#### Question Format 3

##### “Explain Why” or

##### “Explain to what extent”

As in: *Explain why the colonists won the Revolution in spite of Great Britain’s superior numbers and military strength.*

This type of question asks you to come up with your own explanation for some historical trend, development or event. Your focus will usually be on causes and effects. Complicated historical events almost always have many causes. A handful of primary sources will not be enough to prove your explanation completely. Look to the sources only for partial proof of your thesis. State your case clearly but cautiously. A variation on this question type singles out one factor and asks you to decide “**to what extent**” it was important as compared with other possible factors. Again, be cautious about making sweeping claims either for or against the importance of the factor singled out.

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#### Question Format 4

##### “Describe the Changes,” or

##### “Describe and Explain”

As in: *Describe how colonial attitudes toward the British shifted from 1763 to 1776, and explain why these changes took place.*

Here the emphasis seems to be on description more than explanation. But don’t describe just anything and everything. You probably ARE also supposed to explain something — by suggesting what factors caused some trend or historical pattern. In describing a process of change, pay attention to chronology, the flow of events over time. Notice carefully what the dates of primary sources tell you about how events unfolded.

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### Exercise 3 (Continued) Types of DBQs

Below are four DBQs that could be used with the primary sources for this lesson. Read these DBQs and re-read the four question formats described on the previous page. For each DBQ below, write the number of its correct question format in the space labeled "Question Format." Then, under the DBQ itself, write all the words and phrases in it that are key to understand it fully. Finally, choose the three primary source documents you would most want to use in answering each DBQ. As a class, discuss the choices you have made.

**Question Format** \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Describe some key breakthroughs of the Scientific Revolution of the 1500s and 1600s. Then explain how these breakthroughs affected European ideas about the universe, human nature, and the role of religion in society.

**Key phrases to know in this DBQ** \_\_\_\_\_

**The 3 best documents to use are** \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, & \_\_\_\_\_.

**Question Format** \_\_\_\_\_ 2. "There really was no single 'Enlightenment' in the 1700s. Instead, there were many different reactions to scientific and cultural change — that is, there were many different Enlightenments." Explain why you agree or disagree with this statement.

**Key phrases to know in this DBQ** \_\_\_\_\_

**The 3 best documents to use are** \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, & \_\_\_\_\_.

**Question Format** \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Compare and contrast the views of Locke, Voltaire, Pascal and Rousseau on religion and the idea of religious toleration. Explain why each was a typical figure of the Enlightenment.

**Key phrases to know in this DBQ** \_\_\_\_\_

**The 3 best documents to use are** \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, & \_\_\_\_\_.

**Question Format** \_\_\_\_\_ 4. The Enlightenment came after two centuries of bitter religious conflict in Europe. It also came after the rise of science as a powerful method of gaining knowledge. To what extent did each of these two factors help bring about the Enlightenment?

**Key phrases to know in this DBQ** \_\_\_\_\_

**The 3 best documents to use are** \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, & \_\_\_\_\_.

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### Exercise 4 Choosing DBQs

The four DBQs in Exercise 3 may not necessarily all be good ones to use with the primary sources for this lesson. Which DBQs do you think are the best? Which are the worst? This exercise asks you to decide this as if you were a teacher making up your mind about which DBQ to assign. The goal of the exercise is to help you think further about the nature of the question and how a question's format can affect the way you use the primary sources.

Of the four DBQs listed on the previous page, choose the two you think would be best to use with this lesson's primary source documents. In the spaces provided below, identify these two questions and explain your choices. Then choose the two DBQs you would least want to use with this lesson's documents. Identify them and explain your choices.

The Two BEST DBQs Are \_\_\_\_\_

Explain your choices

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The Two WORST DBQs Are \_\_\_\_\_

Explain your choices

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### Exercise 5 Answering a DBQ

In the last exercise, you chose what you felt were the two best DBQs out of the four presented in Exercise 3. Now pick one of those two DBQs and write an answer to it on this page. Usually a DBQ is presented with introductory comments such as those in the box below. After those comments, write in the DBQ you have chosen. Then on the rest of this page, write a brief essay answering that DBQ.

**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 world history, write a well-organized essay answering the following DBQ.

**The DBQ You Have Chosen**

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