

Writing an AP World History Document Based Question Essay

The Ten Commandments

Put on your "historian" hat to demonstrate your ability to analyze source materials and develop an essay based on those materials. Your goal: a unified essay that integrates your analysis of four to ten given documents with your treatment of the topic. Comparative topics on the major themes will provide one of the focuses of the DBQs, including comparative questions about different societies in situations of mutual contact. The DBQ begins with a mandatory 10-minute reading period. Then you'll have 40 minutes to write the essay.

The source materials are chosen for two reasons: the information they convey about the topic and the perspective they offer on other documents used in the section. There is no one perfect DBQ answer; a variety of approaches and responses are possible depending on your ability to understand the documents and, ultimately, judge their significance. Remember: You'll most fully understand some of the documents when you view them within the wider context of the entire series.

When writing the document-based essay, it's important to:

1. **HAVE A GREAT THESIS STATEMENT** based on the information in the prompt!
2. Classify and organize the documents by creating a prewriting graphic organizer.
3. Group or juxtapose documents in a variety of ways (e.g., according to their ideas or points of view); suggest reasons for similarities or differences in perspective among the documents; and identify possible biases or inconsistencies within documents. You may also have to discuss which points of view are missing from the given documents.
4. Refer to individual documents within the framework of the overall topic. Cite documents by naming the author and/or by naming the document number.
5. Explain the need for additional documents that would help you answer the question more completely. Since the DBQ focuses on historical skills within a world history framework, remember to place documents chronologically, culturally, and thematically.
6. Use all of the documents. There are no irrelevant or deliberately misleading documents.
7. Demonstrate your analysis of the facts, details, etc... with in the documents/materials in reference to the question — don't just summarize them.
8. Reread the prompt and your thesis statement after each paragraph you write in order to stay on track...be opinionated...use commentary after each concrete detail.
9. Remember to link your conclusion back to the prompt and your thesis statement.
10. Proof-read your final work.

Remember:

- It's important that you put your analytic skills to work and demonstrate that you understand (a.) the historical context & (b.) author's bias - frame of reference regarding the documents' sources and the authors' points of view.