

AP World History DBQ Strategies and Planning

The Document-Based Essay Question or simply called the DBQ is an important part of the AP exam. For the AP World History examination you have one hour as the suggested reading and writing time. It is suggested that you use 15 minutes to read the documents and then 45 minutes to write the essay. They are suggestions, very good ones! However, you can begin writing the essay at any time.

The essay instructions are simple. Below are the actual ones used on the exam.

In your response you should do the following

- Respond to the prompt with a historically defensible thesis or claim that establishes a line of reasoning
- Describe a broader historical context relevant to the prompt
- Support an argument in response to the prompt using at least six documents
- Use at least one additional piece of specific historical evidence (beyond that found in the documents) relevant to an argument about the prompt
- For at least three documents, explain how or why the document's point of view, purpose, historical situation, and/or audience is relevant to the argument
- Use evidence to corroborate, qualify, or modify an argument that addresses the prompt.

Scoring for the DBQ Essay is based on 7 points:

Thesis/Claim, Contextualization, Evidence-Content Use of at least 3 documents, Evidence-Supporting the Argument using at least 6 documents, Complexity, Evidence Beyond the Document, Analysis and Reasoning Sourcing at Least 3 documents.

The prompt or essay question is short and simple. The example below is taken from the 2018 AP World History Practice exam.

Evaluate the extent to which the experience of the First World War changed relationships between European and colonized peoples.

So how does a student go about analyzing the documents to create the best possible answer? I recently came across a set of documents created by Ryba Epstein in 2017 which I have edited a little for our use. Ryba is an APWH teacher at Rich East High School in Park Forest, Illinois. She was written various course materials for the CollegeBoard as well as part of the Test Bank for the AP Edition of *Worlds Together, Worlds Apart* textbook.

The following three pages are based on Ryba's Analysis for Primary and Secondary Source Materials. As you will see, they are based on content areas and essential questions to ask yourself in order to compile and complete the essay requirements.

Primary Source Analysis

Period	What time period does this essay question cover?
Theme or Subject	What is the subject of this essay
Key Concept(s)	What are the main features or key words within the essay prompt?
Context	What is the historical situation or <u>context</u> shaping the issue in question?
Point of View	What is the author's <u>point of view</u> ? How does the author's background affect the way the author views the issue and the context addressed in the question?
Audience	Who or What was the intended <u>audience</u> ? How did their background affect the author's approach to the issue?
Purpose	What did the author hope the audience would think, feel, or do in response to the document?
Historical Setting	How does the source of the document provide information about the broader historical setting in which it was created?

Secondary Source Analysis

Thesis or Claim	Does the excerpt contain a thesis or claim? If so, what is the claim?
Context	How does the historian's context influence the claim or argument?
Evidence	What kinds of <u>evidence</u> does the author provide to support their claim or argument?
Historical Reasoning	What <u>historical reasoning</u> does the author offer to support his/her interpretation?
Trends or Patterns	In a non-text document such as a chart, graph or picture, what <u>trends or patterns</u> do you see?
Claim or Argument	Evaluate the effectiveness of the claim or argument? Is it bias or opinionated?

Primary Source Document Analysis – SOAPS

Subject

(AP Practice of Content, Limitations)

- What is the topic or content?
- What is the main idea the source is trying to convey?
- What historical reasoning skills does the author use in his/her argument?
- What does the document NOT say?
- How useful is the document to a historian?

Occasion

(AP Practice of Format/Medium, Historical Context)

- What is the form or type of document – diary, government report, speech, fiction, photo or painting etc.?
- In what time and place was this document created?
- What were the circumstances or events that led to the creation of the document?
- What is the regional or global context?
- Does the choice of format of the source reveal the author's intent?
- How do the occasion or format affect the meaning of the piece or our interpretation of its reliability and validity?

Audience

- Who is the intended audience for this document?
- How does that affect the content of the source and our interpretation of it?

Purpose

(AP Practice of Content, Purpose, Reliability, Usefulness)

- Why was this source created by this author at this time?
- Why has it survived to the present day?
- How does its purpose affect the document's reliability or usefulness?

Speaker

(AP Practice of Point of View, Reliability, Limitations)

- Who is the author? Gender? Occupation? Social class or rank? Nationality or ethnicity? Religion? Level of education?
- Why would this person, in this time and place, think or believe this?
- How close was the author to the actual event?
- What might have limited the author's knowledge?
- How reliable or objective is the author?
- What other documents might offer alternative points of view?

Primary Source Document Analysis – APPARTS-Q

Author (AP Practice of Authorship, Point of View)

Who created the document? What is their Gender, Class or Occupation?
What do you know about the author and what is the author's point of view?
What is his/her/its view derived from or based on?
Is the author a reliable commentator on the topic? Why?

Place and Time (AP Practice of Historical Context of the Document)

Where and when was the document produced? Is it contemporary to the event or not?
What is the world historical context? What else is going on in the region?
How might these events affect the document's meaning?

Prior Knowledge (AP Practice of Broader Historical Context, Authorship)

What do we know about the time, context, event or movement the document is about? What do we know about the author?
What assumptions or values do we bring to the text? [Equality of the law and the Code of Hammurabi]

Audience

What is the type of document: journal, image, pamphlet, diary etc. and how may it affect the reliability of the document? For whom was this document intended and why?
Multiple Perspectives: how would other people from different countries, classes, genders, etc. view this document or the situation contained in the document?

Reason (AP Practice of Author's Purpose)

Why and in what time period was the source created? Why has it survived to the present day?

The Main Idea or Message (AP Practice of Content, Context, Format, Reasoning, Support)

What point is the source trying to convey and what are you persuaded to believe?
How is the message of the document conveyed (wording, rhetoric style, or tone)?
Is this type of document reliable about the topic?
What historical reasoning skills are used by the author (causation, comparison etc.)?
What are the underlying assumptions or suppositions in the argument? How are they similar to or different to our own? (Example – our assumptions about gender)

Significance (AP Practice of Author's Purpose, Significance)

Why is this source important and why is this specific document important to the essay question?
Why do we still read this source today?

Questions (AP Practice of Limitations, Reliability, Credibility)

What are the authors' credentials? Does he/she have the expertise or first-hand knowledge to be a reliable source on this subject?
How reliable is this source? What facts or interpretations can be cross-checked against other sources?
Is the author consistently honest or are there gaps or unexplained lapses?
Tone is important. Is the author irate, indignant, sarcastic, ironic, etc.?
Is the author objective in his/her views? Are they too personal or over-opinionated?
Does the person have a personal stake in the issue or are they neutral?