

## What is the Document Based Question (DBQ)?

A document-based question is a special kind of essay question, which requires you to answer a question by using evidence provided from a series of seven to nine documents. A document-based question requires you to use evidence from the documents as well as your own knowledge of the time period. This is often referred to as "outside information."

### Steps in completing the Document Based Question:

**Step One:** Read the directions given prior to the essay question and do exactly as you are instructed. *This is very important.*

**Step Two:** Get the question in mind and keep it in mind as you begin to formulate ideas about the historical period of the question. Be sure you establish the chronological period.

**Step Three:** Make a list of everything you can remember about the time period of the question. Be very thorough. This is your outside information. Do this before reading the documents.

**Step Four:** Keep the question in mind as you read each document, making notes on the test book on how the document relates to the question, **and** to the historical time period of the question. *Construct your thesis statement in draft form, prior to your review of the documents.* The emphasis here should be on **your** ideas and subsequent analysis, which is a thesis-serving use of documents). Resist the document description temptation ( aka, "In doc. A it says. . ." ). Better: paraphrase with document source identification. ( vs. the doc. letter ). Document grouping is ok ( i.e., doc. A, C, H ), provided a linkage rationale is clearly stated.

**Step Five:** As you search each document, set up a key telling how each helps answer the question. Be sure to set up your key for all aspects of the question. For example, if the question asks for three items or areas, you must answer in all three, or your essay will be weak.

**Step Six:** Integrate your list of outside information from step three.

**Step Seven:** Formulate your thesis statement to answer the question. The thesis **MUST**: fully address every aspect of the question, take a position with regard to the question, and provide organizational categories for analysis in the body of your essay.

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## Suggested Construction of Persuasive Essays

- I. **Introduction:** Broad general statement on the topic ( 2-3 sentences introducing subject )
  - A. **Thesis:** Your answer to the question. The argument that will control the entire essay; what it is that you are trying to persuade the reader to believe. The thesis **must:**
    1. Fully address every aspect of the question
    2. Take a position with regard to the question
    3. Provide specific organizational categories for analysis
  
- II. **Topic Sentence:** The main point of the paragraph.
  - A. **Evidence:** Relevant historical facts that you will use to support the topic sentence, and the thesis, explained in detail.
  - B. **Interpretation/Commentary/Analysis:** What do these facts mean in relation to the topic sentence, and, then in relation to the thesis. Explain in detail--how and why--that is, give reasons for reasons.
  - C. **Clincher** sentence: Answers the question, "so what?" So what does all this mean ? "All this" is the facts and the interpretive commentary, which precedes the clincher sentence.
  - D. **Transition** Sentence: Moves the essay to the next major topic sentence in the essay.
  
- III.-IV. **Topic Sentences :** The main point of the paragraph.
  - A. Evidence: 1-2-3-4...
  - B. Interpretation/Commentary
  - C. Clincher Sentence
  - D. Transition Sentence
  
- V. **Concluding Paragraph**
  - A. Topic Sentence: begins with any words BUT the words: "In conclusion," "I conclude," or "It can be concluded that." Instead say, "As a result of..."
  - B. Summary of the main points of each of the body paragraphs. One or two sentences to summarize each paragraph. The conclusion must:
    1. reinforce the thesis
    2. summarize the main points of the body paragraphs -synthesize the clincher sentences
    3. address "so what?"
    4. It can be proven that. . .

# Seven Steps in Essay Writing

## 1. **Read and Analyze the Question**

- what is the question asking ?
- what is the question asking *you* to do ?

## 2. **Collect and Sort the Data** Needed to Answer the Question

- brainstorm a list of factual information
- create categories for this information

## 3. **Create your thesis** statement

- the thesis is your answer to the question. It is the guiding argument of the essay
- the thesis must fully address the question, take a position with regard to the question, and provide organizational categories for analysis

## 4. **Write the introduction** to your essay

- begin with a broad statement on the topic
- narrow the paragraph with 2-3 sentences which bring the question into focus
- conclude with the thesis statement

## 5. **Write the body** of the essay, in which each paragraph must have. . .

- a topic sentence
- evidence, or historical fact
- **analysis**, which may be presented as interpretation or commentary
- a "clincher" sentence, answering: "so what?"
- a transition sentence to direct the reader to the next paragraph

## 6. **Write the Conclusion**, which must. . .

- reinforce the thesis.
- summarize the main points of each of the body paragraphs
- synthesize the clincher sentences
- address the "So what ?" "Who cares ?" factor

## 7. **Proofread** your essay

- to eliminate grammatical errors
- to eliminate contradictions between the thesis and the body

## Key Words in Essay Questions:

Enumerate	Name, over one after another; list in concise form. <i>Enumerate</i> the great Dutch Painters of the Seventeenth century.
Evaluate	Give the good points and the bad ones; appraise; give an opinion regarding the value of; talk over the advantages and limitations. <i>Evaluate</i> the contributions of teaching machines.
Contrast	Bring out the points of difference. <i>Contrast</i> the novels of Jane Austen and William Hakepeace Thackeray.
Explain	Make clear; interpret; make plain; tell "how" to do; tell the meaning of. <i>Explain</i> how man can, at times, trigger a full scale rainstorm.
Describe	Give an account of tell about; give a word picture of. <i>Describe</i> the pyramids of Giza.
Define	Give the meaning of a word or concept; place it in the class to which it belongs and set it off from other items in the same class. <i>Define</i> the term "archetype."
Compare	Bring out points of similarity and points of difference. <i>Compare</i> the legislative branches of the state government and the national government.
Discuss	Talk over; consider from carious points of view; present the different sides of. <i>Discuss</i> the use of pesticides in controlling mosquitoes.
Criticize	State your opinion of the correctness or merits of an item or issue; criticism may approve or disapprove. <i>Criticize</i> the increasing use of executive agreement in international negotiations.
Justify	Show good reasons for; give your evidence; present facts to support your position. <i>Justify</i> the American entry into World War II.
Trace	Follow the course of; follow the trail of; give a description of progress. <i>Trace</i> the development of television in school instruction.
Interpret	Make plain; give the meaning of; give your thinking about; translate. <i>Interpret</i> the poetic line "The sound of cobweb snapping is the noise of my life."
Prove	Establish the truth of something be giving factual evidence or logical reasons. <i>Prove</i> that in a full-employment economy a society can get more of one product only by giving up another product.
Illustrate	Use a word picture, diagram, a chart, or a concrete example to clarify a point. <i>Illustrate</i> the use of catapults in the amphibious warfare of Alexander.
Summarize	Sum up; give the main points briefly. <i>Summarize</i> the ways in which man preserves food.



