

Writing Document-Based Questions (DBQs)

AP World History & AP European History - Mrs. Rivas

Pre-Planning

Follow these steps:

1. Read the DBQ question and annotate it as follows:
 - a. Circle the entire part of the question that your essay will be about. You will include a phrase or words from this part of the question in your own thesis so that you will stay focused on the question.
 - b. Note if the question is asking you to analyze, most likely it will. If so, write HOW or WHY next to the word analyze so you remember you need to include analysis in your thesis – don't forget the word "because" or "due to"
2. Contextualize the question. Do this by jotting down specific facts, evidence that help tell the history behind the topic of the question. Write specific facts (evidence) that help you explain this history, thereby providing background (context) to the question.
3. Read each document, mark them up as follows and group them if possible:
 - a. To get your summary and analysis point - Underline key words in the document that will help you stay focused on the main points of the document so that when you come back to the document your underlined words will quickly remind you of what the document was about. You will restate the main points of the document **IN YOUR OWN WORDS** and connect it to the question by explain how the document supports your thesis. When writing it in your body paragraph you may say something like... "According to... [summarize the document and reference the document at the end of your summary like this = (doc. 5). Then analyze the document by connecting it to your argument. "This shows that...."
 - b. To get your outside evidence point - Circle a word or phrase in the document that you know something about and draw a line to somewhere outside the document where you have space to write. Jot down facts you know to elaborate on that topic. This is to show that you have outside knowledge of something the document mentions. When writing this in to your body paragraph, you may write it after your summary and analysis and before your POV/CAP.
 - c. To get your sourcing point - Look at the source and write a POV or CAP outside the document wherever you have space on the paper. Draw a line from the source to remind you when you return that this is your POV or CAP. **POV** means point of view. Here you are getting inside the speaker's head. Find out: (1) what topic he's commenting on (2) what is his view on this topic (3) given the little they told you about him in the source line, why YOU THINK he may have that particular view on that particular topic. **CAP** stands for contextualization + audience + purpose. Here you are going to explain the audience the speaker is trying to reach and what he's trying to accomplish by saying what he's saying to them given the circumstances of what's going on around him. You don't need to do both so that if you CAP and source you don't need to write a POV on it too and the other way around. If you write a POV on the source you don't have to CAP it too. Remember: one or the other.
 - d. Grouping – documents will be in dialogue with each other. This means that one source will same something that seems to agree with another source. In forming your arguments you will most likely create your own argument based on what two or more sources appear to agree on. Then, you will form another argument based on another point two or more other sources seem to agree on. **YOUR ARGUMENTS** and **YOUR ARGUMENTS**. They should not be direct quotes or written in the same wording as one of your sources. **USE YOUR OWN VOICE** when writing **YOUR ARGUMENTS**.

Writing your Essay:

1. Introduction paragraph:

- Contextualization – begins with this, write 4 – 5 lines explaining the historical event that the question relates to
- Next - Write a sentence that connects this background to the question.
- Next - Write your thesis next. WADE – While..., Although..., Despite..., Even though...
 - When writing your thesis, make sure you have your argument and counter-argument. Use WADE – While, Although, Even though, Despite to begin your sentence. This will force you to include your argument and counterargument in one sentence. Follow this with a sentence for each part of your thesis that then brings in ANALYSIS, “because...” “due to...” “as a result of...”
- When writing your thesis, make sure you analyze your answer as most questions ask you to ANALYZE something. ANALYZE means to explain HOW or WHY something is happening. BECAUSE is a great word for getting this done. Try also DUE TO, AS A RESULT OF, etc.

2. Body Paragraph:

- Begin with your argument or topic sentence. Rewrite the part of your thesis that you will be arguing in this paragraph.
- Beginning using the documents ONE AT A TIME. Begin with your summary of the main points of your first document for this argument. You may want to say something like.... “According to a German peasant.... (doc. 5).” The parenthesis and number at the end is referencing the source.
- Next, write your analysis. Connect what this person is saying to the argument you are trying to prove in this paragraph. You may want to say something like.... “This shows that....”
- Next, include outside evidence. You are now elaborating on something mentioned in the document that you know something about. This is where you show off your knowledge of European history.
- Next, write your POV or CAP. This is where you analyze the source. When using CAP to analyze a source you may want to say something like “Because this peasant is writing at a time when..... is happening he is most likely trying to convince....(identify audience) to (identify purpose). When writing a POV, you may want to say something like... “As a peasant, he most likely.... which explains why he believes that....” Or, “It is expected that a peasant who.... would think that.... because...”
- Next, write a phrase or a complete sentence that will connect the document you just finished writing about to the document you will be writing about next. You may want to say something like... “The German peasants’ criticism of nobles was also reflected in a document by a French peasant.”
- Next, begin your summary of the new document and follow the same steps listed above.
- When all documents for that argument have been discussed in the paragraph, bring the paragraph to a close. You may want to say something like.... “Therefore, these documents prove that....” “These documents show that....”

3. Conclusion Paragraph:

- Restate your thesis. Don’t simply copy the exact thing you wrote in your introduction paragraph. You have now written out your entire essay so trust that you are much clearer about the topic and so will write a stronger thesis than when you first stated it in your introduction.
- Write your synthesis. This is where you take the topic of the question BEYOND the parameters of the question by extending the topic to:
 - Another era
 - Another region
 - Another area. For example, the question asks you to analyze political and economic consequences of an event and in your synthesis you are now including social consequences not asked for in the question.
 - Another discipline such as art history (for AP Euro classes only)