

How to....write a DBQ Essay

Tips for Writing Document Based Essays

Step One: Read the Question

- What is the question asking?
 - Underline key words.
 - Identify categories such as time periods, countries, social, economic, political, etc.
- Number the parts of the question that must be answered.

Step Two: Brainstorm Outside Information

- Do **NOT** look at the documents yet.
- On scrap paper, write down all of the information that you know about the question.

Step Three: Read the Documents

- Read the documents carefully.
 - Underline key words & phrases.
 - In the margin, summarize what the document is saying in 1 or 2 simple phrases.
- Answer the scaffolding questions.

Step Four: Outline the Essay

- Combine steps 1-3.
 - Write a thesis statement that answers all parts of the question and goes beyond simply restating the theme or question.
- *Note: A thesis statement is an argument, it is not a question!*
 - Make an outline that will answer all parts of the question.
 - List the documents that you intend to use in each paragraph
 - List the outside information that you intend to give.
 - Be sure to include one more than ½ of the documents.

Step Five: Write the Essay

- Use your outline as a guide.
- Separate your answer into distinct paragraphs, each with a strong topic sentence.
- Use both documents and outside information to support your answer.
- Carry your argument throughout the entire essay.
- Conclude with a summary of your main argument.