

2019-2020 DBQ
AP World History; Modern

Answering AP World History DBQ Tips

- **1. Group with intent:** One skill tested on the [AP exam](#) is your ability to relate documents to one another—this is called grouping. The idea of grouping is to essentially create a nice mixture of supporting materials to bolster a thesis that addresses the DBQ question being asked. In order to group effectively, create at least three different groupings with two subgroups each. When you group—group to respond to the prompt. Do not group just to bundle certain documents together. The best analogy would be you have a few different colored buckets, and you want to put a label over each bucket. Then you have a variety of different colored balls which each color representing a document, and you want to put these balls into buckets. You can have documents that fall into more than one group, but the big picture tip to remember is to group in response to the prompt. **This is an absolute must.** 33% of your DBQ grade comes from assessing your ability to group.

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- **2. Assess POV with SOAPSTONE:** SOAPSTONE helps you answer the question of why the person in the document made the piece of information at that time. It answers the question of the motive behind the document.
- **3. S:** S represents Speaker or Source. You want to begin by asking yourself who is the source of the document. Think about the background of this source. Where do they come from? What do they do? Are they male or female? What are their respective views on religion or philosophy? How old are they? Are they wealthy? Poor? Etc.

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- **4. O:** O stands for occasion. You want to ask yourself when the document was said, where was it said, and why it may have been created. You can also think of O as representative of origin.
- **5. A:** A represents for audience. Think about who this person wanted to share this document with. What medium was the document originally delivered in? Is it delivered through an official document or is it an artistic piece like a painting?

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- **6. P:** P stands for purpose. Ask again, why did this person create or say this document? What is the main motive behind the document?
- **7. S:** S is for the subject of the document. This is where you see if you have an understanding of how the subject relates to the question the test is asking you. Think about if there are other documents or pieces of history that could further support or not support this document source.

- **8. TONE:** Tone poses the question of what the tone of the document is. This relates closely with speaker. Think about how the creator of the document says certain things. Think about the connotations of certain words.
- **9. Explicitly state your analysis of POV:** Your reader is not psychic. He or she cannot simply read your mind and understand exactly why you are rewriting a quotation by a person from a document. Be sure to explicitly state something along the lines of, “In document X, author states, “[quotation]”; the author may use this [x] tone because he wants to signify [y].” Another example would be, “The speaker’s belief that [speaker’s opinion] is made clear from his usage of particularly negative words such as [xyz].”

- **10. Assessing Charts and Tables:** Sometimes you'll come across charts of statistics. If you do, ask yourself questions like where the data is coming from, how the data was collected, who released the data, etc. You essentially want to take a similar [approach to SOAPSTONE](#) with charts and tables.
- **11. Assessing Maps:** When you come across maps, look at the corners and center of the map. Think about why the map may be oriented in a certain way. Think about if the title of the map or the legend reveals anything about the culture the map originates from. Think about how the map was created—where did the information for the map come from. Think about who the map was intended for.

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- **12. Assessing Cultural Pieces:** If you come across more artistic documents such as literature, songs, editorials, or advertisements, you want to really think about the motive of why the piece of art or creative writing was made and who the document was intended for.
- **13. Be careful with blanket statements:** Just because a certain point of view is expressed in a document does not mean that POV applies to everyone from that area. When drawing from the documents, you need to explicitly state which author and document you are citing. – **“According the Document 1, Niccolo Machiavelli....”**

- **14. Bias will always exist:** Even if you're given data in the form of a table, there is bias in the data. Do not fall into the trap of thinking just because there are numbers, it means the numbers are foolproof.
- **15. Be creative with introducing bias:** Many students understand that they need to show their understanding that documents can be biased, but they go about it the wrong way. Rather than outright stating, "The document is biased because [x]", try, "**In document A, the author is clearly influenced by [y] as he states, '[quotation]'**". See the difference? It's subtle but makes a clear difference in how you demonstrate your understanding of bias.

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- **16. Refer back to the question:** As you write your DBQ essay, make sure to reference back to the question to show the reader how the argument you are trying to make relates to the overarching question. This is one way you clearly demonstrate that you spent a few minutes planning your essay in the very beginning.
- **17. Leave yourself out of it:** Do not refer to yourself when writing your DBQ essays! “I” has no place in these AP essays.
- **18. DO NOT QUOTE FROM THE DOCUMENTS**

2018 DBQ

EVALUATE THE EXTENT TO WHICH RAILROADS
AFFECTED THE PROCESS OF EMPIRE-BUILDING IN
AFRO-EURASIA BETWEEN 1860 AND 1918.

RUBRIC

EVALUATE THE EXTENT TO WHICH RAILROADS AFFECTED THE PROCESS OF EMPIRE-BUILDING IN AFRO-EURASIA BETWEEN 1860 AND 1918.

THESIS

Thesis must make a claim that responds to the prompt without restating the prompt; it must be either at the beginning or the conclusion.

Thesis should:

- Contain a reference to geography and chronology (Afro-Eurasia & 1860-1918)
- Relate to theme of railroads & empire-building

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- Address the HRS of causation

EXAMPLE OF **ADEQUATE** THESIS

“Although railroad construction in Asia and Africa greatly facilitated the development of European colonial empires, it also aided in the emergence of nationalist movements against European rule.”

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EXAMPLE OF **INADEQUATE** THESIS

“The construction of railroads greatly affected European imperialism in Afro-Eurasia in the 19th and 20th centuries.”

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ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF INADEQUATE THESIS

“Railroad construction in Afro-Eurasia influenced the development of the Qing and Ottoman empires.”

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ADEQUATE OR INADEQUATE?

“Railroads came to Asia and Africa too late to save the European colonial empires there from collapsing.”

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ADEQUATE OR INADEQUATE?

“The construction of railroads had a limited impact on empire-building in Afro-Eurasia because the development of advanced military weaponry and European control over maritime trade were more significant.”

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ADEQUATE OR INADEQUATE?

“The construction of railroads in Afro-Eurasia helped European imperialism because it allowed Europeans to increase their political power in Asia and Africa.”

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CONTEXT

Describes a broader historical context relevant to the prompt.

- Must relate topic to broader historical events or developments
- May occur before, during, or after
- Develop the thought

(Must accurately describe a context relevant to the role of railroads in the process of empire-building)

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EXAMPLE OF **ADEQUATE** CONTEXT

“Railroads played an important role in the Industrial Revolution because they provided a faster and more efficient method of overland transport than had ever existed before.”

(Relates broader events and developments to the topic)

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ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF **ADEQUATE** CONTEXT

“Industrial Revolution technologies aided Europeans in the creation of large empires by linking places together at cheaper costs.”

(Relates broader events and developments to the topic)

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EXAMPLE OF **INADEQUATE** CONTEXT

“Railroads were a part of the Industrial Revolution.”
(Needs explanation)

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(Must accurately describe a context relevant to the role of railroads in the process of empire-building)

ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF **INADEQUATE** CONTEXT

“European powers held a series of conferences in the late nineteenth century to defuse tensions between them and avert war.”

(No reference to railroads)

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EVIDENCE

- USES CONTENT OF AT LEAST THREE DOCUMENTS (1 PT.)

OR

- SUPPORTS ARGUMENT BY USING 6-7 DOCUMENTS (2 PTS.)

- DO NOT RELY ON QUOTES
- MUST RELATE TO PROMPT

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OUTSIDE EVIDENCE (1 PT.)

- AT LEAST ONE PIECE RELEVANT TO ARGUMENT
- MUST BE DESCRIBED
- DISTINGUISHED FROM CONTEXT BECAUSE OF SPECIFICITY

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DOCUMENT SOURCING

- POINT OF VIEW, PURPOSE, HISTORICAL SITUATION, AND/OR AUDIENCE
- FOR AT LEAST THREE DOCUMENTS
- MUST EXPLAIN

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- MUST EXPLAIN

EXAMPLE OF SOURCING

(DOC. 5) “As a politician, Sir Henry Norman is critical of Britain ‘continuing to sleep’ in terms of responding to Russian imperial expansion in East Asia, as he is interested in persuading the British government and public opinion to adopt a different policy.”

(provides sourcing regarding the author’s POV relevant to an argument addressing the prompt)

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DOCUMENT SOURCING

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- FOR AT LEAST THREE DOCUMENTS
- MUST EXPLAIN

ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF SOURCING

“By cautioning the Qing court against allowing Western investors to build railroads in China, while supporting the building of new transportation and communication infrastructure in general, Shen Baozhen is trying to convince the Qing government to modernize China using the country’s own resources, a position shared by many Qing officials at the time.” (DOC.2)

(Provides sourcing regarding the purpose of the memorandum relevant to an argument addressing the prompt)

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- FOR AT LEAST THREE DOCUMENTS
- MUST EXPLAIN

ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF SOURCING

(DOC. 6) “Ernest Roume’s speech to the colonial assembly illustrates how Europeans justified their imperialism in Africa by claiming that what they were doing was bringing ‘progress’ and ‘civilization’ to a land mired in ‘poverty’ and ‘barbarism.’”

(Provides sourcing regarding the historical situation of the document relevant to an argument addressing the prompt)

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DOCUMENT SOURCING

- POINT OF VIEW, PURPOSE, HISTORICAL SITUATION, AND/OR AUDIENCE
- FOR AT LEAST THREE DOCUMENTS
- MUST EXPLAIN

ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF SOURCING

(DOC. 3) “Because the Ottoman sultan had to approve the proposals mentioned in document 3, the report attempts to flatter the sultan by emphasizing his supposed popularity among Muslims across the world and how the construction of a railroad from Damascus to Mecca would only increase that popularity.”

(Provides sourcing regarding the audience of the government report relevant to an argument addressing the prompt.)

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DEMONSTRATES COMPLEX
UNDERSTANDING

- CORROBORATE: Documents that support each other
- QUALIFY: Support for a document
- MODIFY: Alternative interpretation of a document
- SYNTHESIS: Insightful connection across time and space
- THOUGHT MUST BE DEVELOPED