WRITING A DBQ: AP* World History

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Introduction

Answering a DBQ is a challenging experience for high school students, especially in an Advanced Placement course. It is also a challenge for the classroom teacher to instruct the students in how to answer these questions so as to maximize their scores. This teaching resource takes aim at this task by providing an approach that has been used successfully for many years by an experienced teacher.

Although methods of determining the content of specific documents may vary, the organizational structure should be helpful in allowing the student to approach the assignment with an increased measure of confidence. Students should be given ample time to discuss each stage, suggest possible interpretations, and select appropriate evidence. Some time suggestions are made in the presentation; however, you should proceed at a pace best suited to you, your students, and your schedule.

Prior to publication, these lessons were sent to AP World History teachers for critical comment. Here are some of their observations:

> "The product is very user friendly. By "user-friendly" I mean that the product will run itself if the instructor understands its purpose and the great deal of information that is locked into its presentation. It is laid out in a very systemized manner and, if used correctly, will save the teacher a lot of instruction time and the students a great deal of frustration. In part, this is due to the breakdown of the various parts to be mastered within the presentation."

> "In order to maximize the effectiveness of this product, it should be used in short blocks of time. While it is a wonderful tool, it should not just be thrown out there with a comment like, 'Just watch this, it is self-explanatory.' While a strong experienced teacher would never do that, a weak or inexperienced one might be tempted to. It should be viewed, and discussed, in small and large group settings, as part of a work session after various mini-lessons."

Also, if you are teaching an AP World History course, it is highly recommended that you give your students copies of the *Generic Core-Scoring Guide for AP World History Document-Based Question,* which may be found on the AP Central Web site. (http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/)

The two questions and documents are from the activity book *DBQ Practice*: *World History*. Copies of the questions and documents may be printed in advance for students. If you have the poster set *Writing the DBQ* displayed around the room, students can be sent in small groups to examine the contents and discuss them before viewing the PowerPoint presentation.

W. Williams
Senior Editor

Writing a DBQ:
AP World History

<u>Introduction</u>

The purpose of this presentation is to develop a systematic method for writing a DBQ. Although methods of determining the content of specific documents may vary, the organizational structure should be helpful in allowing students to approach the assignment with an increased measure of confidence. In addition to the primary objective of performance on the national exam, the process described herein also illustrates effective methods for researching and developing any written project, especially term papers.

<u>Note:</u> * denotes slide change.

DBQ ANALYSIS AND ORGANIZATION

PATTERNS OF TRADE
1000–1450

Preparation

Students should have the handouts that include a sample DBQ instruction page, the prompt, and the documents to be used. This presentation will focus on question #1 from the book *DBQ Practice: AP World History.*

Dialog

The AP World History exam contains three different types of essays: a COMPARE AND CONTRAST essay, a CHANGE OVER TIME essay, and a DOCUMENT-BASED QUESTION.

For the next few days, we will focus on the last form of essay, which is commonly referred to as a DBQ. A DBQ requires analysis of primary sources.

Let's look at the sample material provided. We will use a step-by-step method to analyze both the question and the documents provided.

DBQ STEP 1:
Analyzing the Prompt

Our first step will be to analyze the question or prompt. It is extremely important that we understand what the question requires, so let's see how we can break it down into its basic parts.

| QUESTION | Using the documents, analyze the <u>patterns of trade</u> in the period 1000–1450. In addition, identify possible <u>cultural consequences of trade</u> in this time period. |

What is the prompt (question) asking for?

Are there recognizable patterns?

What were the consequences of the contacts?

Are there any terms or words that you don't understand?

What is the question asking for?*

Can anything be eliminated?*

We will have to determine what patterns are apparent.* We also need to find "cultural consequences" or influences on the cultures of each participant.*

We know what the question is asking for and we will need to organize our response, but before we do that let's make sure we've utilized all of the information provided.

Historical Background

Trade within and among societies has existed since the time of the first civilizations. On the eve of Columbus's discovery of the new world, trade networks in both the <u>eastern and western hemispheres</u> were well-established and thriving.

Obvious categories have been provided in the supplemental material.

Use everything available!

DBQs often provide a historical background and that information should be used.*

There's some important information here…*

There could be a possible region grouping…*

*just don't lose an opportunity to use the material.

This is where we will end today. Please review the material tonight so that when we begin our discussion you will have a basic understanding of what the documents discuss. Some of them might be difficult, but don't worry if you don't fully understand them—just try to get a general idea of trade and its impact on civilizations.

DBQ STEP 2: Organizing the Information

We will now discuss Step 2 in the process: organizing the information in the documents.

Analysis and Organization

Develop a table or chart

Certain pieces of information ("universals") will be the same for every DBQ

- Document number
- Major point of the document
- Point of view
- Information needed

Note to teacher: Begin by addressing any questions about the documents students reviewed as homework.

In order to analyze and organize the documents, it can be helpful to develop a table or a chart. Some things will be the same for every DBQ. They are:

*document number

*major point of the document

*point of view

*information needed

These are usually the general instructions before the actual prompt or question.*

Your Table								
DOC	PAT	CON	A	C	O	NEED	P of V	MAJOR CONCEPT

"Trade patterns" = PAT

"Consequences" = CON

In addition to the "universal" categories, we'll add the prompt categories.

Documents on Africa = A

Documents on China = C

Documents on other regions (Latin America, Europe) = O

Another method of "grouping" would be regions.

Preparation

You may have students develop a table in their notebook, or you can use the blank table that appears as a handout at the end of the Teacher's Guide.

Dialog

Here is what an organizational table might look like.*

The "universals" are document number, needed information, point of view, and the major concept or important point from the document.*

Now let's look at possible ways to group the documents based upon the information in each.

*One method of grouping these documents would be to identify "who's talking" and what region they're discussing. For example, the first document is a European describing Africa; the second document is a European discussing the New World; and other documents have a European discussing Europe, a Muslim discussing Africa, Europeans discussing China, a European discussing the Mongols, and three maps.

DBQ STEP 3:
The Documents

Preparation

Note that some of the entries on the slides will be very short. Students should be advised to abbreviate, but to make sure that they still put in enough information to use for writing the essay.

Each of the "fill-ins" will reflect analysis of the documents. Individual interpretations may vary, but the process of analysis should follow the same pattern.

Dialog

Step 3 is to read the documents and to figure out how they fit into our table.*

Your Table								
DOC	PAT	CON	A	C	O	NEED	P of V	MAJOR CONCEPT

Let's look at the documents one at a time.

Number, region, and major concept

Pattern or consequence?

Complete each document, separated by a line.

Here is our table. We'll look at each document and determine the categories to be checked as we read. Notice that as we complete the table, some items only require a check while others require longer responses. Some of the responses you will see on the slide are very short because of limited space. Your responses should include enough information so that you don't have to go back to the document.

Here are the categories:

•Begin with the "universals"*

•Put down the "who and where"*

•Determine "pattern" and "consequence"*

Now we will organize the information from each of the documents. First the easy stuff: Number, and then location from either the info on the source or (if necessary) from the narrative. When reading the document, always keep in mind that you should look for information that relates to the columns (i.e., regions, "pattern," and "consequence"). Remember, don't try to summarize the whole document—take a "just the facts" approach instead. When you have filled in the information for a document, draw a line across and start the next document.