

**Writing a Document Based Question (DBQ)**

**Pre-Writing:**

*Step 1: Read the question and think about what you already know about this topic. Write down some notes/ideas that might be helpful.*

What outside information do you think might be helpful to include in your essay? Jot down whatever comes to mind in the box below. Consider activities, readings, notes from class. You might want to indicate where the information came from next to each note (this will make sourcing the material easier when it comes time to write your paper.)

*Step 2: Examine each document and underline key phrases or quotes that you will later use as evidence in your essay. (The goal is to find quotes to support the argument you are making. Be prepared to explain what the significance of your underlined passages is.) Once you've read the source, summarize the document on the chart below, note whether the document helps/hurts your argument and how, and indicate if you found a quote to use in your essay.*

<b>Document #</b>	<b>Brief Summary of Document</b>	<b>How this helps support your argument</b>	<b>Possible Quote or Analysis to Use in Essay?</b>
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			

Document #	Brief Summary of Document	How this helps support your argument	Possible Quote or Analysis to Use in Essay?
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			

*Step 3: Prepare a detailed outline for your essay.*

## **Writing the Essay:**

*Introduction:* Give some background information about your topic (set the historical stage). Make sure you give your reader enough information so that he or she knows what you are talking about. End your introduction with your thesis statement. *I repeat: The last sentence in your introduction should be your thesis.* Make sure your thesis addresses the fundamental question of the essay (see page 1); if you choose, you can elaborate and/or put it in your own words, but your thesis should definitely address the above question.

*Body Paragraphs:* Each body paragraph (AT LEAST THREE) needs to start with an analytical topic sentence. Your topic sentence needs to make an argument that supports your thesis. Use quotations and references to support the argument. ALWAYS remember to analyze, or explain, how the quotations and evidence you use support your thesis. At the end of each paragraph, you should explain how the evidence you presented in that paragraph AS A WHOLE connects back to your argument.

NOTE: When using evidence from the documents, do not refer to them as “documents.” Rather, refer to them by their title (if available) or the author.

Always make sure to properly “introduce” the document before you quote from it. For example:

- Ida B. Wells argued that “Blah blah blah.”
- Despite evidence to the contrary, Lincoln Steffens maintained his argument that “blah blah blah.”
- According to Margaret Sanger, “Blah blah blah.”

Remember to use AT LEAST ONE quotation in each paragraph. All told, you should make use of AT LEAST FIVE separate documents (at least 3 direct quotes and at least 2 specific references).

*Conclusion:* Here is where you spend one paragraph summarizing your findings without being blatantly repetitive. You will need to re-emphasize your thesis as well as your main pieces of evidence without writing them exactly the same way over again. After you do this, you need to give your reader some additional insight into the topic. For example, explain why these issues are important in the long run, or elaborate on the historical significance of these particular issues.