Writing the DBQ - Putting it all Together

Paragraph 1: **Contextualization**
Situate the argument by explaining the broader historical events, developments, or processes immediately relevant to the question.

College Board states: “Historical thinking involves the ability to connect historical events and processes to specific circumstances of time and place and to broader regional, national, or global processes.” In other words, **put the question in the context of the bigger picture.** The best place to do this is **at the beginning of your essay.**

**EXAMPLE:**
Islam spread rapidly from West Africa into Africa and Central Asia mostly because of merchants converting people along trade routes. Because they were merchants, they were looking for economic opportunities and the slave trade was widespread. As Islam spread across Africa, the Muslims looked for new sources of slaves in East Africa, Southern Africa, and the Mediterranean region.

Paragraph 2: **Thesis**
Write a thesis paragraph that addresses the prompt and has historically defensible categories (usually 3) for analysis. Look for a key word in the prompt like: relationship, aspects, characteristics, views, etc.

College Board states: “To earn this point, the thesis must make a claim that responds to the prompt rather than restating or rephrasing the prompt. The thesis must consist of one or more sentences located in one place, either in the introduction or the conclusion.” It’s possible to write this in one sentence but it may help if you write one sentence to respond to the question and then one sentence for EACH of your categories.

**EXAMPLE:**
The aspects of slavery in Islamic societies are complex and can be analyzed in several different ways. First, female and male slaves were often used for different purposes. Second, ethnicity played a role in whom the Muslims chose to enslave. Finally, the treatment that slaves experienced could be relatively humane or, in other cases, brutal.
Paragraphs 3-5: **Body Paragraphs**

Write each body paragraph to cover ONE argument put forward in your thesis. Start each paragraph with a topic sentence. Use the document as evidence to support the argument made in your topic sentence. All document must be addressed individually, not discussed in groups. For example, do NOT write sentences like: “Documents 1 and 3 both discuss the poor treatment of slaves.” Do NOT list the documents by number in your topic sentence. A good topic sentence will not have any documents in it.

**EXAMPLE:**

**The first aspect of slavery was that gender often determined a slave’s role.** In document 3, Pelzen sends a picture home showing male slave soldiers, called janissaries, in the Ottoman Empire. The Devshirme system, as shown in document 3, was a ‘slave’ system where Christian boys were taken by the government, brought into the Islamic faith, and trained either as soldiers or as bureaucrats. Some of these slaves rose to the highest positions in the Ottoman government, such as the vizier (OE). On the other hand, women were often used as concubines. Document 5 describes female slaves in the sultan’s harem as being educated and sometimes rising to positions of power. Because the author is in charge of the slave market, it is understandable that he could accurately describe how slaves were used in society (POV). In document 6, Smee describes women being used as concubines. Smee is disgusted by how the women were treated given his formal Victorian English background (POV).  

**Ethnicity played a role in whom the Muslims enslaved.** In document 2, al-Muqaddasi speaks poorly of Zanj Africans saying they are no more than animals. As an Arab, not an African, the need to de-humanize a group that he has enslaved is driving him to write this (POV). Similarly, Bastiano, a white European, shares a first-hand account of being captured for enslavement and ransom by Muslims in document 4. This would happen because Muslims were forbidden to enslave people of their own religion, and would often convert those enslaved to Islam and free them after a period of service (OE).  

**One aspect of slavery was that the treatment of those enslaved could be either humane or brutal.** In document 1, al-Bukhari says that a reward in heaven awaits those who educate, free and marry their slaves. Because al-Bukhari is a scholar of Islamic society who is living at a time when Muslims are setting up the norms of society, it is understandable that he explains to slave owners the moral way to treat enslaved people (POV). Document 5 corroborates the good treatment of slaves when Efendi’s slave girls who showed skill were educated in reading and writing and given positions of power. This humane treatment is contradicted by the brutal treatment in document 7 where Livingstone writes about the cruel practices or Arabs toward their slaves, including starvation and murder.
A.P. World History
DBQ Essay Scoring Guide

Thesis/Claim – 1 Point Possible
___ Responds to the prompt with a historically defensible thesis/claim that establishes a line of reasoning. (1)
Improvement Needed:
___ Thesis is improperly argumentative but is too simplistic and lacks the necessary level of specificity.
___ Thesis simply restates or rephrases the prompt.
___ Thesis contains awkward organization, may be off-topic, or contain inaccuracies.

Contextualization – 1 Point Possible
___ Relates the topic of the prompt to broader historical events, developments, or processes that occurred before, during, or continued after the timeframe of the question. (1)
Improvement Needed:
___ Attempts at contextualization are underdeveloped, lack explanation, or hastily phrased.
___ There are no attempts at contextualization.

Document Evidence and Analysis – 3 Points Possible

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOAP</th>
<th>Document Usage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speaker</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasion</td>
<td>SOAP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience</td>
<td>SOAP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>SOAP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One-Point Level: Utilizes the content of at least three documents to address the topic of the prompt. (1)
Two-Point Level: Supports an argument in response to the prompt using at least six documents. (2)

SOAP: For at least three documents, explains how or why the speaker, occasion, audience, and/or purpose is relevant to the essay's argument. (1)

Improvement Needed:
___ Documents are described superficially or simply quoted.
___ Only one or two documents are utilized effectively.
___ Document analysis fails to take into account historical situation, intended audience, purpose, and/or point of view for at least three documents.

Evidence Beyond the Documents – 1 Point Possible
___ Provides additional pieces of specific historical evidence beyond those found in the documents relevant to the argument about the prompt. (1)

Improvement Needed:
___ Outside evidence consists of the same material in the documents or other scoring categories of this rubric.
___ Outside evidence lacks explanation, is inaccurate or irrelevant, or non-existent.

Analysis and Reasoning – 1 Point Possible
___ Essay as a whole is coherent and employs effective use of historical reasoning and evidence to demonstrate complex understanding of the historical processes; essay may account for historical nuances, make connections within and across historical areas, and/or showcase alternative views or evidence. (1)

Improvement Needed:
___ Essay lacks the overall sophistication needed for this point.
___ Topic sentences are vague and/or unsupportive of thesis; one or more body paragraphs are ineffective.
___ Essay is too simplistic and/or incoherent.

Additional Feedback:
___ improve topic sentences  ___ budget your time  ___ use past tense  ___ no shorthand  ___ no quoting  ___ improve doc usage SOAP
___ more evidence  ___ oversimplifications  ___ be more organized  ___ study more  ___ writing needs improvement  ___ more depth
### AP History DBQ Rubric (7 points)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reporting Category</th>
<th>Scoring Criteria</th>
<th>Decision Rules</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A <strong>THESIS/CLAIM</strong> (0–1 pt)</td>
<td>1 pt. (\text{Responds to the prompt with a historically defensible thesis/claim that establishes a line of reasoning.})</td>
<td>To earn this point, the thesis must make a claim that responds to the prompt rather than restating or rephrasing the prompt. The thesis must consist of one or more sentences located in one place, either in the introduction or the conclusion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B <strong>CONTEXTUALIZATION</strong> (0–1 pt)</td>
<td>1 pt. (\text{Describes a broader historical context relevant to the prompt.})</td>
<td>To earn this point, the response must relate the topic of the prompt to broader historical events, developments, or processes that occur before, during, or continue after the time frame of the question. This point is not awarded for merely a phrase or reference.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| C **EVIDENCE** (0–3 pts) | Evidence from the Documents:  
1 pt. \(\text{Uses the content of at least three documents to address the topic of the prompt.}\) OR  
2 pts. \(\text{Supports an argument in response to the prompt using at least six documents.}\) | To earn one point, the response must accurately describe — rather than simply quote — the content from at least three of the documents. To earn two points, the response must accurately describe — rather than simply quote — the content from at least six documents. In addition, the response must use the content of the documents to support an argument in response to the prompt. |
| C **EVIDENCE** (0–3 pts) | Evidence beyond the Documents:  
1 pt. \(\text{Uses at least one additional piece of specific historical evidence (beyond that found in the documents) relevant to an argument about the prompt.}\) | To earn this point, the response must use more than a phrase or reference. This additional piece of evidence must be different from the evidence used to earn the point for contextualization. |
| D **ANALYSIS AND REASONING** (0–2 pts) | 1 pt. \(\text{For at least three documents, explains how or why the document’s point of view, purpose, historical situation, and/or audience is relevant to an argument about the prompt for each of the three documents sourced.}\) | To earn this point, the response must explain how or why (rather than simply identifying) the document’s point of view, purpose, historical situation, or audience is relevant to an argument about the prompt for each of the three documents sourced. |
| D **ANALYSIS AND REASONING** (0–2 pts) | 1 pt. \(\text{Demonstrates a complex understanding of the historical development; that is the focus of the prompt; using evidence to corroborate, qualify, or modify an argument that addresses the question.}\) | A response may demonstrate a complex understanding in a variety of ways, such as:  
- Explaining nuance of an issue by analyzing multiple variables  
- Explaining both similarity and difference, or explaining both continuity and change, or explaining multiple causes, or explaining both cause and effect  
- Explaining relevant and insightful connections within and across periods  
- Confirming the validity of an argument by corroborating multiple perspectives across themes  
- Qualifying or modifying an argument by considering diverse or alternative views or evidence  
This understanding must be part of the argument, not merely a phrase or reference. |

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DBQ Quick Guide - Structure

Context paragraph - what is the larger picture of history in which the prompt is situated that lead to the prompt?

Thesis: Sort the documents into groups. Write a thesis paragraph that addresses the prompt and those groupings.

Body paragraph 1: Look at the first group of matching documents
Create a topic sentence that matches ONE group to be discussed
Explain how each document relates to the topic sentence
Include POV analysis for documents that you used in the paragraph
May include outside knowledge

Body paragraph 2: Look at the second group of matching documents
Create a topic sentence that matches a SECOND group to be discussed
Explain how each document relates to the topic sentence
Include POV analysis for documents that you used in the paragraph
May include outside knowledge

Body paragraph 3: Look at the third group of matching documents
  ● (if you have a third group)
Create a topic sentence that matches the final group to be discussed
Explain how each document relates to the topic sentence
Include POV analysis for documents that you used in the paragraph
May include outside knowledge
DBQ Quick Guide - Dos & Don’ts

• DO Summarize each document
• DO Connect each document summary to an argument (topic sentence and use of key prompt terms)
• DO Refer to the document by author or title and number.
• DO Uses all seven of the documents to support your arguments. (You may omit one, but
that is a risk).
• DO Explain the significance of author's point of view, purpose, document's historical
situation, and/or audience for at least THREE documents.
• DO use outside information

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• DON'T Quote the document (waste of time, see first "Do" above)
• DON'T Lump documents together:
  ○ "Document 3 and 4 both talk about ... "
• DON'T Write a 'laundry list' where you summarize each document in order
  ○ Document 1 is about ... Document 2 talks about. .. In document 3
    the author says ... The main point in document 4 is ...
• DON'T Ignore/misrepresent pictures or graphs
  ○ Making stuff up will not get you credit for the document
• DON'T Forget a document. You may omit ONE document but it is a risk,
  because if you make one mistake and omit one you will not receive a fairly
  easy point.
• DON'T Use social, political, economic, or cultural as categories!