

Rules for Writing History Essays / Free Response Questions (FRQs)

History essays are called **Three part essays**. These three parts are called:

- I. The Introduction paragraph
- II. The Body paragraph (s)....the number here will vary
- III. The Conclusion paragraph

So: do NOT ask if a history essay must have 5 paragraphs as you may have been taught for English essays.

I. The Introduction Paragraph:

1. Begins with statements that offer background information and establish the essay's purpose. Explain everything the reader needs to know: (Who? What? When? Where?)
2. **END** the paragraph with a **THESIS STATEMENT**:
The thesis is the point or idea that the essay will prove with facts.
The thesis is one of the most important parts of the essay.
Please always underline the thesis for me.

II. The Body Paragraph(s):

1. There should be one separate body paragraph for each major idea or point you are proving.
2. Each body paragraph should support the thesis (don't discuss anything else) with **FACTS**. Having many facts (what you were supposed to learn in class) is what proves your thesis and is what will get you a good grade on the essay.
3. Each body paragraph should begin with a **topic sentence**; this sentence should relate to the thesis.
4. If the information you know does not relate to the thesis: do NOT use it.

III. The Conclusion Paragraph:

1. **Begin** this final paragraph with a restatement of the thesis.
Do NOT use the same wording
Underline the thesis here, also.
2. The final sentences should **SUMMARIZE** what you have said in the body paragraphs.
3. Do NOT use any **new** information or facts here

Other facts to remember:

1. All paragraphs should have a minimum of three sentences.
2. Do NOT...EVER...
 - use "I", "we", or "you" in a history essay.
 - Refer to the essay itself
 Example of what NOT to do:
"In this essay, I will tell you about....."
3. Proper grammar, punctuation, and spelling will ALWAYS be graded.

(FRQ)

Essay standards for AP European history

Form	Content
<p>Introductory Paragraph: Brief Opening statements of background information Thesis is focused and concise Thesis is at the end of the paragraph Thesis reflects ALL the tasks of the question</p>	<p>Use of specific, relative <u>facts</u></p> <p><u>Details</u></p> <p><u>Examples</u></p> <p>Dates (where appropriate)</p>
<p>Body Paragraphs: Each body begins with a topic sentence that reflects the thesis. Paragraphs are in logical sequence There is one clearly distinct paragraph per task Focus words are repeated often</p>	<p>Shows any contradictions in facts that existed</p> <p>Shows change over time if applicable</p> <p>Continuous connection of facts both to the thesis and the task words</p>
<p>Conclusion Paragraph: Thesis is repeated at the first of the paragraph Summary of main ideas</p>	<p>Use of: "...such as..." "For example..." "...because..." "...as a result..."</p>
<p>In Addition: Spelling Grammar Subject/verb agreement Punctuation</p>	<p>Extra: Quotes Titles Repeated use of focus words</p>

Focus Words:

Those words within the question that dictate what must be covered and explained.
These words should be used repeatedly throughout the answer to establish the author's focus on the que

So...what would be the focus words in the following questions?

Question: Analyze the technological advances that helped to end the era of feudalism.

Question: Compare and contrast the views on the role of the clergy in both Catholicism and Protestantism.

(FRQ)
ESSAY WRITING

Handout

3.

An essay can only begin to be correct if it directly answers the question. Students must understand the meanings of the following terms:

1. **Assess:** judge the value or character of something; appraise; evaluate. "Assess the relative importance of social factors and economic factors as causes of Nazism."
2. **Compare:** examine for the purpose of noting similarities and differences. "Compare the leadership qualities of DeGualle and Miterand."
3. **Contrast:** compare in order to show unlikeness or points of difference. "Contrast the rights of males in Western and Eastern Europe."
4. **Criticize:** make judgements as to merits and faults; criticism may approve or disapprove, or both. "Criticize Machavelli's theory on power."
5. **Define:** give the meaning of (a word, phrase, concept); determine or fix the boundaries or extent of. "Define the term imperialism."
6. **Describe:** give an account of; tell about; give a word picture of. "Describe the events that led to convening of the Congress of Vienna."
7. **Discuss:** talk over; write about; consider or examine by argument or from various points of view; debate; present the different sides of. "Discuss the policy of Hitler's final solution."
8. **Enumerate:** mention or list separately; name one after another. "Enumerate the main points of the Declaration of the Rights of Man."
9. **Evaluate:** give the good points and the bad ones; appraise; give an opinion regarding the value of; discuss the advantages and disadvantages. "Evaluate the role played by the United States in the Russian Revolution of 1991."

Handout

4.

10. **Explain:** make clear or plain; make known in detail; tell the meaning of; make clear the cause or reason of. "Explain how the cotton gin revolutionized southern farming."
11. **Illustrate:** make clear or intelligible as by examples. "Illustrate the ways in which Americans exploited Africa and Africans in the nineteenth century."
12. **Interpret:** explain the meaning of; make plain; present your thinking about. "Interpret the processes by which medieval civilization declined."
13. **Justify:** show good reasons for; present your evidence; offer facts to support your position. "Justify the creation of NATO."
14. **Prove:** establish the truth or genuineness of something by giving factual evidence or logical reasons. "Prove that the industrial revolution was or was not a benefit to humankind."
15. **Trace:** follow the course of; give a description of the progress of; ascertain by investigation. "Trace the course of post World War II American-Soviet relations."
16. **Analysis:** detailed examination of a complex situation in order to understand its nature or to determine its essential features.
17. **Compare and Contrast:** to examine in detail for similarities and differences.

A GUIDE TO WRITING A DBQ

5.

The purpose of the DBQ (Document Based Question) is not to test your knowledge of the subject, but rather to evaluate your ability to practice the historian's craft. You will be required to work with the documents and use them to answer a question.

Writing the DBQ is an acquired skill, one that takes practice. You should not get discouraged if you do not "get it" right away. The goal is to acquire the skill by May. Remember that there is actually no right or wrong answer. Your answer is YOUR interpretation of the content of the documents. As long as your answer is logical and your interpretation is supported by the content of the document you are correct.

The following is your guide to writing a successful DBQ.

HISTORICAL CONCERNS

1. Read carefully the question prompt and the historical background. Underline the tasks demanded and the terms which are unique to the question.
2. Read the documents carefully.
 - a. Make sure that you understand the content of the document.
 - b. What is the author's Point of View (POV)?
 - c. Where is the tension?
 1. Are there people from the same place with differing POV?
 2. Is a Frenchman critiquing the French or is it an Englishman? Which is biased, which has great knowledge?
 - d. What is the origin of the document?
 - e. Is the document valid or is it hearsay?
 - f. If time, gender or age were changed would the person be saying the same thing?
3. You should strive to use most of the document (omitting no more than 1 or two).
4. Do not simply site the documents in "laundry list" fashion. You should strive to IMPOSE order on the documents. Find groupings for the documents. Can they be organized into a format? What is the OVERALL picture presented by the documents. Can you use the documents implicitly?
5. Your essay should be an ANALYSIS of the documents and their content. You are demonstrating analysis if you are doing the following:
 - a. The essay contains a thesis which divides your answer into categories.
 - b. The documents are used as evidence to support your thesis.
 - c. Frequent reference is made to the terms of the question. Be certain that your answer is always focused directly on the question. Do not drift afield.
6. Be certain that, if the question allows, you exploit all of the following in writing your answer.
 - a. Point of View (POV) is both indicated and discussed from several angles.
 - b. The Validity (VAL) of documents is noted.
 - c. Change Over Time (COT) is recognized and discussed (if this occurs in the

6.

- d. documents)
Did the pendulum of history swing in the chronological course of the documents? Did it swing back again?

LITERARY CONCERNS

1. The essay has an adequate introduction in which the time frame is noted.
2. The thesis provides an answer to the question and divides the answer into categories.
3. Proper essay style is used (think 5 paragraph format where applicable).
4. Grammar and spelling are adequate (do not misspell words that are supplied in the documents).
5. You have not referred to yourself in the essay and you have not told the readers what they are "going to learn".
6. A great majority of the documents have been used in a manner which makes their use readily apparent to the reader.
7. Quotations are limited to a phrase which is placed within the context of your answer.
8. ALL PARTS OF THE QUESTION have been answered.
9. A conclusion exists which summarizes the evidence, restates the thesis and indicates a direction for further study or occurrences.
10. Base all of your comments on the documents, NOT on outside information. Outside information may be used to enhance understanding but it must not be the basis of your argument.

CLUES FOR CONQUERING THE EVIL DBQ

Remember:

- You are NOT expected to know anything about the question's topic (unlike AP US)
- A DBQ is the equivalent of a 45 minute research paper with the research having been done for you. Your job is to USE the evidence to PROVE an argument.

Follow these steps in approaching each DBQ assignment:

1. Identify the task(s) within the question. There will usually be more than one task. Physical mark the tasks in some way: underline, number, re-write.
2. Read the documents - in the order given -make notes relating to the question's tasks.
3. Write the essay:

- a. Have a clear **THESIS** within a succinct introduction.
 - Having a distinct thesis is one of the benchmarks sought by the "readers"
 - Don't have a flowery introduction paragraph that goes on and on and on.....
- b. Have **one paragraph per task** or idea...use the evidence from the documents.
- c. **DO NOT** present the documents' information in the order given (the kiss of death for a DBQ grade and is called a "laundry list")
 - Group the information together in ideas or categories dictated by the tasks.
 - Combine the documents if possible.
- d. Include and note any **contradictions** from the documents (they love this)
- e. Use as many documents as possible.
- f. Include any pertinent, optional outside information that relates to and aids the essay's argument (not required but is helpful)
- g. Make reference to at least **3 POINT OF VIEW** (motivation, bias of a document's author)...**MUST** have this to score in upper categories.

** cannot just restate question
* use something/idea/elements
in documents*

*at least
3 groups*

Imagine this whole process as being that of a trial.
You are a lawyer and you must use evidence (information from the documents) to prove a point and win your case.

The DBQ exercise counts as 23% of the total score of the AP European History exam.

**Attribution
Examples of document references
for the APEH DBQ**

A.
"Documents 3, 9, and 12 all point out that....."

B.
"As shown in Docs. 2 and 6....."

C.
"..... (docs. 7, 11, 13)."

D.
"John Smith, sea captain, pointed out that....."

Notice that there are several forms to give credit to the documents.
There is no required form.
You may mix up the forms if you wish.

9.

Questions and Answers about Point of View on the AP European History Document-Based (DBQ) Question.

Why is Point of View (POV) important?

The crucial skill teachers and readers are looking for in a student's approach to documents is the awareness that documents are not statements of facts, but descriptions, interpretations, or opinions of events and developments made by particular people at particular places and times, and often for specific reasons. Too often, students write essays in which they take the documents at face value. Instead, students should be applying critical thinking skills to documents, evaluating whether they are likely to be accurate and complete, and in what ways the author of the document may be revealing bias.

How can students demonstrate awareness of POV?

The readers of the 2000 AP European History DBQs looked for POV in five distinct ways. The following examples refer to the 2000 DBQ on the purposes served by European rituals and festivals. The enclosed "Examples of Point of View from the 2000 DBQ" contains examples of POV from student essays written in response to question 1 (DBQ) on the 2000 AP European History Exam.

1. **Attribution.** This is the minimal approach to POV. When students cite the authors of the documents by name or position, they are indicating that they understand that this is a particular person's expression rather than a statement of fact. Students need to provide consistent attribution throughout their essays, meaning all or most documents should be attributed. Attribution means using the name of the author of a document or something about the author given in the document.

Examples of attribution are:

John Taylor, an English writer, said. . .
A Dominican monk in Florence described. . .

2. **Authorial point of view.** Student show awareness that the gender, occupation, class, religion, nationality, political position, or ethnic identity of the author may well have influenced the views that are expressed.

For example:

Baltasar Rusow, as a Lutheran pastor, was naturally upset by the celebration of a Saint's Day since Lutherans don't venerate saints.

3. **Reliability and accuracy of source.** Students critically examine a source for its reliability and accuracy by questioning whether the author of the document would be in a position to be accurate and/or would likely be telling the truth. The student can also evaluate the type of source, e.g. a letter or official report, showing an understanding that different types of sources vary in their probable reliability.

For example:

R. Lassels's report of the Carnival celebrations in Italy is probably accurate because as an outside observer, he is more objective.
R. Lassels's report of the Carnival celebrations in Italy is probably inaccurate because as an outside observer, he would not fully understand local customs.

10.

Mrs. Gaskell writes about riding stang in a private letter, which she probably would not write about in the same way in her published works.

4. **Tone or intent of the author.** Students is examining the text of a document to determine its tone (e.g., satire, irony, indirect political commentary) or the intent of the author. This may be particularly useful for visual documents.

For example:

Brueghel painted *The Battle between Carnival and Lent* to warn the people that their love of celebrating was overwhelming their religious observance of Lent.

5. **Grouping of documents by author.** When students group the documents by type of author, they are showing awareness that certain types of authors, by the very nature of being that type, will express similar views or consider events in a similar light. In the 2000 DBQ, there were three such groups of authors: government officials, clergy, and writers.

Is this stress on POV new?

No. Every DBQ has required students to address POV, and for many years this instruction has been emphasized in the directions for the DBQ. But its importance is more obvious now, because showing awareness of POV in an essay is required as one of the six basic core points.

**Generic Core-Scoring Guide for AP European History
Document-Based Question**

(Score scale 0 – 9)

BASIC CORE	Points	EXPANDED CORE	Points
1. Has an acceptable thesis that directly addresses the question.	1	Expands beyond basic core of 1 – 6. The basic score of 6 must be achieved before a student can earn expanded core points. Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has a clear, analytical, and comprehensive thesis. • Uses all or almost all documents. • Addresses all parts of the question thoroughly. • Uses documents persuasively as evidence. • Shows understanding of nuances in the documents. • Analyzes point of view or bias in at least four documents cited in the essay. • Analyzes the documents in additional ways — additional groupings or other. • Brings in relevant “outside” historical content. 	0 – 3
2. Uses at least a majority of the documents.	1		
3. Addresses all parts of the question.	1		
4. Demonstrates understanding of the documents by using them to support an argument. (May misinterpret no more than one document.)	1		
5. Analyzes point of view or bias in at least three documents.	1		
6. Analyzes documents by organizing them in at least three groups.	1		
Subtotal	6	Subtotal	3
TOTAL		9	