

HOW TO SCORE ALL SEVEN POINTS ON A DBQ

The following are the requirements provided in the scoring rubric for the AP US History Document Based Essay. They are accompanied by suggestions as to how students could achieve each of the points.

The Thesis: 1 Point

The thesis must take a position on all aspects of the question. This must be done without repeating the question. One way to avoid that pitfall is by providing the organizing categories of document analysis along with the position taken by the student. This must be stated in the first paragraph of the essay.

Document Analysis: 4 points

For the first three possible points:

Students are required to analyze the content of all or all but one of the documents and use that analysis to support your thesis. They will not be given points if they only imply, infer, or hint at how the information in the document helps to answer the question. Students must state how and why (that's analysis) the information supports their argument. Merely describing the document will garner students no points. Students can achieve only one point if they analyze only half of the documents.

Along with the analysis of the documents, points can be earned by adding one the following to all or all but one of the documents:

- Analyze the intended audience of the document and how this relates to it. This can be accomplished by simply adding "the author's intended audience was _____ and this is shown by _____."
- Analyze the purpose for which the document was written. This can be accomplished by simply adding "the author's purpose in creating this document was to _____" and this is shown by _____."
- Analyze the historical context (what was going on at the time) of the document by adding the phrase "the historical context of this document is _____."
- Analyze the author's point of view by explain how the author's perspective might have impacted what they wrote. Their perspective could be determined by, for example, conservative or liberal views, geography, gender, and/or other personal characteristics. This is simply done by adding "the author's point of view was _____ and this is shown by _____."

If these are added to more than half of the analyzed documents, they add one point to the score. If they are added to all or all but one of the documents, they add two points.

For an additional point, students must use the documents to bring in information from the time period not mentioned in the documents. This used to be called outside information.

Contextualization: 1 Point

Students must connect the documentary information, and the outside information, to historical events in the same era. For example, an essay on the politics in the Roaring Twenties might begin with reference to the time period's being that of the Harlem Renaissance and dramatic social change. The

contextualization point is most often found in the introductory paragraph as a form of “table setting” for the rest of the essay.

Synthesis: 1 point

The synthesis point can be achieved in one of three ways. Synthesis best fits at the end of the essay either in the conclusion or in the penultimate paragraph. The three ways the point can be earned are:

- The student can extend or modify their position. This would include use of counter arguments or “except” positions. Counter arguments are those which provide evidence that is in opposition to the thesis position. For example, the philanthropy of Andrew Carnegie might be used as a counterpoint to the crimes of the robber barons. The “except argument” would be expressed by stating that all of the evidence provided proves the point, except what is next provided.
- The student can provide contradictory evidence from primary or secondary sources the student has studied during the year. An example of this might be using the specific arguments or positions of Howard Zinn or Paul Johnson in contradiction to the position taken in their text or the documents.
- The last way to achieve this point would be to connect it to other historical periods, geographic areas, contexts, or circumstances. For example, an essay on the radicalism of the pre-Civil War abolition movement might be tied to the increased radicalism of the 1960s Civil Rights movement. Since students will be writing their essays during the school year, they will most likely have to look to the past for their point here. In what was used as the abolition example above, they might refer to the antebellum reform movements as their synthesis connection.