

## **Tips for Writing Document Based Essays**

---

### **Step One: Read the Question**

- What is the question asking?
  - Underline key words.
  - Identify categories such as time periods, countries, social, economic, political, etc.
  - Number the parts of the question that must be answered.

### **Step Two: Brainstorm Outside Information**

- Do NOT look at the documents yet.
- On scrap paper, write down all of the information that you know about the question.

### **Step Three: Read the Documents**

- Read the documents carefully.
  - Underline key words & phrases.
  - In the margin, summarize what the document is saying in 1 or 2 simple phrases.
- Answer the scaffolding questions.

### **Step Four: Outline the Essay**

- Combine steps 1-3.
  - Write a thesis statement that answers all parts of the question and goes beyond simply restating the theme or question.  
*\*Note: A thesis statement is an argument, it is not a question!*
  - Make an outline that will answer all parts of the question.
  - List the documents that you intend to use in each paragraph
  - List the outside information that you intend to give.
  - Be sure to include one more than ½ of the documents.

### **Step Five: Write the Essay**

- Use your outline as a guide.
- Separate your answer into distinct paragraphs, each with a strong topic sentence.
- Use both documents and outside information to support your answer.
- Carry your argument throughout the entire essay.
- Conclude with a summary of your main argument.

### **Step Six: Revise the Essay**

- Read over your work and check for careless mistakes.
- Make sure you prove your original thesis.
- Make sure you used all appropriate documents.
- Make sure you used ample relevant outside information to support your argument