

Guidelines for Writing

Example Document Based Question (DBQ)

Thomas Jefferson's Presidency

Document A

“This treaty must, or course, be laid before both Houses, because both have import functions to exercise in respecting it. They, I presume, will see their duty to their country in ratifying and paying for it so as to secure a good winch would otherwise probably be never again in their power. But I suppose they must then appeal to the nation for an additional article (amendment) to the Constitution, approving and confirming an act which the nation had not previously authorized.

The Constitution has made no provision for our holding foreign territory, still less for incorporating foreign nations into our Union. The Executive, in seizing the fugitive occurrence which so much advances the good of their country, have done an act beyond the Constitution. The Legislature, in casting behind them metaphysical subtleties, and risking themselves like faithful servants, must ratify and pay for it and throw themselves on their country for doing them unauthorized, what we know they would have done for themselves had they been in a situation to do it.”

-Thomas Jefferson

You would first write sentences that contain outside information but then you will need to include the information revealed by the documents because they should be connected to your outside information sentences.

For example:

Jefferson had a strict interpretation of the Constitution during the bank controversy during George Washington's administration. Because the Constitution did not specifically allow for the creation of a bank, the creation of a bank was unconstitutional in his mind. (This is an example of outside information that you should use). He also held the same interpretation of the Constitution in regards to the Louisiana Purchase. Jefferson believed that since there was no provision in the Constitution for acquiring foreign territory, an amendment should be ratified to approve such an act (Doc A). Because this underlined material is from a document, you must tag it even if you already knew this about Jefferson. You may also briefly quote from the document. You could also write: Jefferson believed that there was no "provision ... holding foreign territory" in the constitution and suggested that an amendment be ratified to approve such an act (Doc A). If you are going to use a quote, it cannot be longer than **FIVE** words.

Other examples of incorporating the document:

Jefferson believed that although purchasing the Louisiana Territory was beyond the limits of the Constitution, it was done with the intent to benefit the United States (Doc A).

OR

Jefferson believed that although purchasing the Louisiana Territory was beyond the limits of the Constitution, it was done to "advance ... the good of . . . country" (Doc A).

OR

Jefferson acknowledged that although the Louisiana Purchase was unauthorized, the American people would have taken the same action if they were in the same situation (Doc A).

OR

Jefferson acknowledged that although the Louisiana Purchase was unauthorized, the American people would have taken the same action "had they been...in. situation" (Doc A).

Do not under any circumstances write Document A shows how Jefferson felt the Louisiana Purchase was unauthorized but good for the nation. Instead write, Jefferson felt the Louisiana Purchase was unauthorized but good for the nation (Doc A). As a rule, do not start a sentence with "Document X." If you do begin most of your document sentences that way, you are probably "laundry listing" which is a big no-no in AP. A laundry list is a written response with body paragraphs that look like this: "Doc. A shows . . . Doc. B shows . . . Doc. C shows . . . Doc. D shows . . . Doc. E shows . . . If you "laundry list" you will not be able to get more than a three on your essay.

Each document does different things, so try to use them all. If you are referring to maps, cartoons et cetera, here is the format: 'As the map (Doc. B) indicates . . .' or 'The cartoon (Doc. D) illustrates . . .'

Concession Paragraph:

This is where you would address the one or two documents that do not seem to fit with the rest. These would be completely out of place. You could present it as follows: "There are some who suggest. . ." or "Some argue. . ."

Conclusion paragraph:

Coverage of the documents is important but the inclusion of outside information is critical. Strive for balance because only a balanced essay has a chance to break into the category. Remember that 50% of your written response must be of outside information.