

Extending the Lesson: Document Based Question

In high school, many students following an Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate curriculum will need to use primary source documents to answer questions regarding historical perspective.

In middle school, an introduction to the format can help familiarize students to future expectations. The physical and written evidence included with Aboki Box Schools content and resources should be discussed in terms of the larger meanings that the items represent.

In AP History (both World and American), students are given a prompt and a set of seven documents to help respond to the prompt. The documents will represent various perspectives relating to the prompt, and they will always include a mixture of **primary source text** documents and **primary or secondary source visuals**. The student's task is to use these documents, along with their knowledge of history, to answer the prompt.

The DBQ is designed to test knowledge of history, ability to analyze a variety of sources, and skill in crafting and supporting a clear and complex argument. It is the single most complicated task on the exam; however, it is very doable with practice and preparation.

With the materials included with Aboki Box Schools, be sure to explore the four acceptable categories of sourcing analysis:

1. **Historical situation** - this is like a miniature version of contextualization. Ask: when/where was this document created? How does that historical situation influence what the document is or what it says?
2. **Intended audience** - every document was created with an audience in mind. A document created for a king will likely be very different from a document created for a lover. Ask: for whom was this document created? How would that person have understood it? What did they know or understand that the creator could leave unsaid? What did they need to be explained?
3. **Point of view** - every document was created by someone, and that person has specific knowledge, opinions, and limitations that impact what they create. Ask: who created this document? How well did they understand the topic of the document? What would limit their understanding or reliability on this topic? What characteristics might influence them (race, gender, age, religion, status, etc.)
4. **Purpose** - all documents were created for a reason. Figure out the reason and understand why a document says or shows what it does. Ask: why was this document created, and how does that impact what it is?

Source: <https://library.fiveable.me/ap-world/dbq/dbq-overview/study-guide/ZT0GZwEWSNreRHs0jwUi>

Sample Document Based Question Writing Prompts:

1. Using the source documents, establish the importance of entertainment in Mexican culture.
2. Using the source documents, explain how the choice of entertainment popular throughout Mexico's history describes the cultural identity of Mexico's people.

Teaching Practices to Introduce Document Based Questions in Middle School

1. Look at the Advanced Placement American History and World History website. You can see samples of actual test questions. The essays make up 45% of the overall student score.
2. As you discuss the documents, discuss the questions, and add questions of your own. The goal should be for students to develop opinionated claims that the evidence in the document can support.
3. For one or more of the documents, have students practice writing paragraph-long answers that incorporate the evidence in the document or discuss the visual.
4. For citation, AP allows students to cite the document number. Example: (4).
5. For a culminating activity, students need to combine three of the documents to support an overall prompt. Two samples are supplied above.
6. In this instance, all the documents have to do with entertainment. They represent a rich historical perspective in Mexican culture, and they involve communities playing together.
7. Encourage a diversity of opinion as you discuss the documents to ensure a wide variety of answers.
8. The four source analysis expectations listed above need to be included in the essay. These serve as useful discussion starters as well.
9. Combine whole class, team, and individual practice opportunities for students in advance of the culminating AP-style essay.