**Writing a complete Document Based Question (DBQ)**

Step 1 **( Steps 1-3, 10-15 minutes)**

Carefully read the prompt. Know exactly what the prompt asks you to do:

* **Underline the verb in the prompt**: evaluate, assess, analyze, establish the validity (truth), etc.
* **Look carefully at any conjunction in the prompt**: i.e. does the prompt ask you to compare **and** contrast, or does the prompt ask you to compare **or** contrast.

Step 2

Quickly make a list of what you already know--the people, documents, issues, topics, battles, social changes, etc… that **you feel are relevant** to the prompt.

Step 3

**Read all of the documents** looking specifically for things you can use in your essay. Underline everything relevant. You want to use **all** of the documents if possible. As a rule, the more you can use accurately the better your essay grade will be.

Step 4 **( Steps 4-6, 45 minutes)**

Write your introductory paragraph

* Write several sentences that provide historical context (e.g., information from or about the immediate prior era, other relevant information from the time period, or counterargument).
* Write a clear **thesis sentence statement** that expresses your response to the prompt. **The best place for your thesis is at the end of your introductory paragraph.**

Step 5

Each body paragraph should have a topic sentence that addresses one part of the thesis. Use relevant information to support your thinking. The more information, the more accurate it is, the more you **interpret or infer**, the better your essay score. The goal is to make connections between your content knowledge to as many of the documents as possible. A**nalysis should be supported by information that is as specific** as possible. You may use the documents more than once, but the ultimate **goal is to use all of the documents correctly at least once.** Ideally, the documents should be referenced by the author or title.

* Don’t use “I,” rather you should write in the third person. Remember this is a persuasive essay.
* Paraphrase rather than quote the documents or use only short quotes sparingly.
* Don’t make the mistake of just summarizing the documents; the reader already knows what they say.

Step 6 Write a conclusion paragraph

The conclusion should bring the reader back to your thesis position. The conclusion should not sum up the whole essay or introduce new evidence. Make a final statement on how your essay argument impacts the next period in history, or some larger idea or framework connected to what you’re studying.