

Writing tips for WHAP EXAM

- Circle and define all the parts/terms of the question so that you are SURE that you understand WHAT IS BEING ASKED.
- A THESIS is a one-sentence answer to the question. It is specific; it contains details.
- Make sure you have paragraphs – don't write a one-paragraph essay!

DBQ

1. The DBQ is the easiest essay. All the info is in front of you. No student knows anything more than you know on the DBQ. It is a skill test: can you work with historical documents?
2. The primary task is to write an essay – really a mini-research paper. You MUST have a thesis that answers the question.
3. Absorb and internalize that rubric – it's really important.
4. For every document, there is a POV – which is figuring out “why did this person say/write/compose/ this thing at this time and place?” You have to establish this as part of an explanation of why this doc proves your point. ***Do a POV analysis for every document.** → “This document was written by a military commander during the war. He had a vested interest in the success of the war. He probably approved of the conduct of the government because he doesn't want his 'bosses' to hear anything disloyal that would endanger his promotion.”
5. When writing a research paper (or in this case a mini-research essay) there is always a document you wish you had, or to phrase it another way, a weak part of your argument that isn't particularly well supported by the docs. You MUST ask for at least one “missing document” in this DBQ essay. The best way to do that is ask for a document in each proof paragraph. That way, you are asking for three, and you should get at least one correctly explained! → For example, take a comparative essay on Haitian and French revolutions. In your “political causes” paragraph, let's say you had a doc from the French National Assembly about France, a doc from a sailor in Port au-Prince describing the revolts, and a French letter to the editor about the revolt in the colony. You might ask for any document by a leader of the Haitian revolt, since you don't have a doc from a Haitian political leader, so you are missing a crucial primary source. (You don't have to be more specific than asking for a type of doc, but you must explain why or how you would use it.)

COMPARISON

1. Do not ever write "They were similar yet different" as a thesis statement. Or "they were different, yet similar." Or "They had many similarities and some differences." The blanket response to that is "DUH". If you have to write it, go ahead, and then cross it out.
2. If you must, qualify similarities and differences; e.g. "They were similar politically, but differed dramatically in their economic and social causes." This would squeak by as the barest minimum of an acceptable thesis.
3. You must have similarities and differences in the essay.
4. Organize the comparison essay by theme or topic and not by country. For example, if you are to compare the political, economic and social causes of the French and Haitian revolutions, you should have a paragraph on political causes, one on economic causes, and the third on social causes → the reason for this is that if you were to organize by country, chances are HUGE that you will forget to make a DIRECT comparison, and instead write 2 separate "snapshots". You won't get credit for making a DIRECT comparison. Parallel structure is not the same as a DIRECT comparison.

CHANGE AND CONTINUITY OVER TIME

1. The object of this question is to assess HOW or why things changed, and how or why they stayed the same. The key is the PROCESS of change and the REASONS for the continuities.
 2. You must describe
 - (1) the status quo at the beginning,
 - (2) the PROCESS (hows and whys) of changes and the REASONS for the continuities in the middle of the timeframe, and
 - (3) then describe the status quo at the end.
- if you only do steps 1 and 3, you will have missed the point of the exercise, and you will miss accumulating several points on the rubric.