

# AP U.S. History DBQ Expanded Student Guide (PA Test Ready)

## What Is the DBQ?

The Document-Based Question (DBQ) asks you to write a historical argument using both provided documents and outside historical knowledge. Strong essays explain the documents rather than simply quoting them.

## DBQ Scoring Breakdown (7 Points)

- 1 pt – Thesis/Claim
- 1 pt – Contextualization
- 2 pts – Evidence from Documents (use at least 6)
- 1 pt – Evidence Beyond the Documents
- 2 pts – Analysis & Reasoning (sourcing + complexity)

## DBQ Planning Template (15-Minute Plan)

Prompt & Time Period	_____
Thesis (1–2 sentences)	_____
Context (Before/During)	_____
Documents Supporting Argument	Doc #s: _____
Outside Evidence	_____
Complexity / Counterargument	_____

## Sample DBQ Thesis Starters

- Although \_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_ ultimately resulted in \_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_.
- Between \_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_ was shaped most significantly by \_\_\_\_ as evidenced by \_\_\_\_.
- While some argue \_\_\_\_, the documents show that \_\_\_\_ primarily because \_\_\_\_.

## How to Use Documents Effectively

Use documents as evidence by describing their content and explaining how they support your argument. Avoid quoting directly. Group documents by theme when possible.

## Sourcing Documents (HIPP)

- Historical Situation – What is happening at the time?
- Intended Audience – Who is the document meant for?

- Purpose – Why was it created?
- Point of View – How does the author's background affect the message?

### **Student-Friendly DBQ Rubric**

- Thesis (1 pt): Clear claim that answers the prompt.
- Context (1 pt): Describes broader historical background.
- Document Evidence (2 pts): Uses and explains at least 6 documents.
- Outside Evidence (1 pt): Adds a relevant historical fact not in the documents.
- Analysis & Complexity (2 pts): Explains sourcing and shows a more complex understanding.

### **Final DBQ Tips**

Plan before writing. Use most documents but not all if unnecessary. Every paragraph should connect documents back to your thesis.