GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY
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The Document-Based Essay

A Brief Overview of the Document-Based Essay

The purpose of writing a document-based essay is for you to study the document(s) provided by your professor to discover and communicate a significant point about history. This type of writing parallels the writing in professional, scholarly history books: the writing is thesis-driven and evidence-based. It seeks to prove a point.

The document-based essay is like other academic writing in history in that it shows how the topic under discussion relates to the time period of your focus. You should, therefore, keep your focus on the documents' historical context (rather than on contemporary America) and seek to answer this question: Why did this topic matter to people at that time?

The purpose of writing a document-based essay is for you to study the document(s) provided by your professor to discover and communicate a significant point about history.

Audience

Your primary audience is your professor and perhaps your classmates. However, you should write with an academic audience in mind that is knowledgeable about history, but not necessarily a specialist in the documents you are analyzing.

Writing Process Tips

Read the entire assignment sheet carefully! If the assignment asks you a question relating to one or more documents, do the following before beginning to write:

- Read the assigned document(s) carefully. Get a sense of what each document says, and what their purpose and audience seem to be.
- Read the question on the assignment sheet carefully. Get a clear sense of what your professor wants you to do with the document(s).
- Re-read the document(s) in light of the assignment sheet. If your task is to write about more than one document, concentrate on how the assignment guides you to think about the relationship among the documents.
- Try creating a compare/contrast chart before crafting a thesis, if you are writing about multiple documents. On a piece of paper, draw a column for each document. Describe each document in its own column, then take stock of how the documents compare. Such a chart can help you to produce a thesis that deals directly with the contents of the documents rather than your assumptions about the documents.

Keep in mind that your answer to the assignment's question is your thesis. It usually appears in the first paragraph of the essay. Be sure to include all points that you will make in your paper in your first paragraph. A reader should be able to outline the rest of your paper just from the thesis.

It can be helpful (or even necessary) to outline in order to get things in chronological order, as doing so will help you to prevent errors in argument. Most importantly, one idea should flow from another with smooth transitions of thought. Keep in mind that your answer to the assignment's question is your thesis. It usually appears in the first paragraph of the essay.

Historians typically write about their topics in chronological order.

How To Write A Document Based Essay

Arturo Cuomo

How To Write A Document Based Essay:

Document-Based Assessment Activities for Global History Classes Theresa C. Noonan, 1999 Covers all significant eras of global history Encourages students to analyze evidence documents and other data to make informed decisions Develops Document-Based Assessment Activities Marc Pioch, Jodene Smith, 2020-03-02 Today's students essential writing skills need to know how to evaluate sources and use evidence to support their conclusions This K 12 resource for teachers provides instructional support as well as a variety of learning opportunities for students Through the activities in this book students will ask and answer compelling questions analyze primary sources approach learning through an inquiry lens and hone their historical thinking skills The lessons teach skills and strategies for analyzing historical documents partnered with document based assessments Graphic organizer templates help students structure their analyses This resource written by Marc Pioch and Jodene Smith prepares students for standardized tests and engages students with inquiry The scaffolded approach to teaching analysis skills can be applied across grades K 12 5 Steps to a 5 AP European History, 2010-2011 Edition Jeffrey Brautigam, 2010-01-01 A Perfect Plan for the Perfect Score We want you to succeed on your AP exam That s why we ve created this 5 step plan to help you study more effectively use your preparation time wisely and get your best score This easy to follow guide offers you a complete review of your AP course strategies to give you the edge on test day and plenty of practice with AP style test questions You ll sharpen your subject knowledge strengthen your thinking skills and build your test taking confidence with Full length practice exams modeled on the real test All the terms and concepts you need to know to get your best score Your choice of three customized study schedules so you can pick the one that meets your needs The 5 Step Plan helps you get the most out of your study time Step 1 Set Up Your Study Program Step 2 Determine Your Readiness Step 3 Develop the Strategies Step 4 Review the Knowledge Step 5 Build Your Confidence Topics include Recovery and Expansion 1300 1600 The Renaissance 1350 1550 The Reformation 1500 1600 The Rise of Sovereignty 1600 1715 The Scientific Revolution during the Seventeenth Century The Enlightenment A Cultural Movement during the Eighteenth Century Social Transformation and Statebuilding in the Eighteenth Century The French Revolution and the Rise of Napoleon 1789 1799 The Fall of Napoleon and the Post Napoleonic Era 1800 1848 The Second Industrial Revolution 1820 1900 The Rise of New Ideologies in the Nineteenth Century Nationalism and Statebuilding 1848 1900 Mass Politics and Imperialism in Africa and Asia 1860 1914 Politics of the Extreme and World War I 1870 1918 The Interwar Years and World War II 1918 1945 and The Cold War and Beyond 1945 Present Also includes Practice tests AP Advanced Placement Program and College Board are registered trademarks of the College Entrance Examination Board which was not involved in the production of and does not endorse this product Roadmap to the Regents Princeton Review (Firm), 2003-01-21 The Princeton ReviewUs Roadmap series gives students the help they need to make state tests a breeze The Roadmap guides for New York students include practice tests designed to simulate the real exams as closely as possible The Roadmap series works as a year long

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