

Essay Writing For the AP Exam

AP Guidelines

In your response you should do the following.

- State a relevant thesis that directly addresses all parts of the question.
- Support the thesis or a relevant argument with evidence from all, or all but one, of the documents.
- Incorporate analysis of all, or all but one, of the documents into your argument.
- Focus your analysis of FOUR documents on at least one of the following: intended audience, purpose, historical context, and/or point of view.
- Support your argument with analysis of historical examples outside the documents.
- Connect historical phenomena relevant to your argument to broader events or processes.

Using Documents to Support Your Position in a DBQ

- Make your point first, then offer the document as supporting evidence
- Focus your analysis of each document on at least one of the following: intended audience, purpose, historical context, and/or point of view.
- Do not lead a paragraph with a document
- Double cite documents
- If you quote, make it very short and use only the section that is relevant to your point
- **INCLUDE OUTSIDE INFORMATION**

Example (Essay question: What was the principal cause of the American Revolution?)

Body Paragraph

The British policy of taxing the American colonists was one important cause of the American Revolution. After the French and Indian War, Britain was left with a very large debt and the expense of having to defend their recently won territories. The British believed that the colonists should help pay these expenses. In 1765 Parliament passed the Stamp Act, which put a tax on all printed materials. The colonists protested this measure by forming the Stamp Act Congress. In the Resolutions of the Stamp Act Congress, the colonists argued that Parliament could not tax them because they were not represented in Parliament (Document A). They opened the document, which was a petition to the King, expressing their loyalty, and the respectful tone indicates that they were not seeking independence at that time but were seeking only the repeal of repressive legislation. The Stamp Act Congress organized a boycott of British goods. Not all of the colonial protests were peaceful however. The Sons of Liberty often used intimidation and violence. A 1765 cartoon from a colonial publication shows a tax collector being tarred and feathered by members of this organization (Doc. B). Although Parliament repealed the Stamp Act, it asserted in the Declaratory Act that it had the authority to “bind the colonies in all cases whatsoever” (Doc. C). This claim by Parliament infuriated colonists because it showed that Parliament believed it had complete authority over the colonies. Later, Parliament passed the Townshend Duties, which imposed duties on imports of various commodities such as tea, paper and glass. Although most of these duties were later repealed (with the exception of the tax on tea), the Townshend Acts helped unify the colonists in their opposition to taxation measures and other British policies.

1. Introduction –

- a. **Inverted Pyramid.** Start broad but not too broad. Give some historical background to the topic you will be discussing. Narrow discussion as you get to your thesis.
 - b. **Thesis.** This is the point or argument that you are trying to make in your essay.
 - i. Be sure that it addresses all parts of the question.
 - ii. Simple statements are better than convoluted ones. It’s ok to have a thesis that is more than one sentence.
 - iii. If the question lends itself to it, have a concession
 - iv. A good thesis will help you structure the body paragraphs of your essay.
2. **Body Paragraphs.** Have a topic sentence that relates back to your thesis. It’s like a mini-thesis. Support your topic sentence with relevant facts and details. (see sample body paragraph below.) Explain and discuss rather than simply identifying. Avoid giving a “laundry list” of details. Explain them! It’s better to explain two details well than to simply identify six.

3. Conclusion –

- a. **SYNTHESIS** – connect to another time period or place. Consider what is the overall or long term significance of the issue/point you have argued.