

Revision Assistant Traits, Grades 11-12  
Argumentative

AP Scoring Guide: History  
Document-Based Question (DBQ)



## Advanced

7 points



### Language and Style

The essay demonstrates a definitive perspective and voice, as well as a **clear command of conventions**. The essay incorporates language that appeals to the reader's interests and effectively maintains a formal style and objective tone. The essay consistently employs vivid word choice and varied sentence structure.

### Clarity

Introductory Notes

The essay should be considered first drafts and thus **may contain grammatical errors**. Those errors **will not be counted** against a student **unless they obscure the successful demonstration of the content knowledge**, skills, and practices described in the rubrics.



### Claim and Focus

The essay introduces an interesting, **clear, arguable, and precise claim**, based on the topic or text(s) and **establishes the significance of the claim**. The essay **maintains strong focus** on the purpose and task, using the whole essay to support and **develop the claim and counterclaims fairly** while **thoroughly addressing demands of the prompt**.

### Thesis/Claim

Scoring Criteria

**1 pt.** The essay responds to the prompt with a historically **defensible thesis/claim** that **establishes a line of reasoning**.

Decision Rules

To earn this point, the thesis must **make a claim** that **responds to the prompt** rather than restating or rephrasing the prompt. The **thesis must consist of one or more sentences located in one place**, either in the **introduction or the conclusion**.



### Organization

The essay incorporates an **organizational structure** with clear transitional words and phrases that **enhances the relationships between and among ideas** (i.e. claim and evidence, claim and counterclaim, strengths and weaknesses) and establishes cohesion and clarity. The essay includes **a logical progression of ideas** from beginning to end, including an **effective introduction and a conclusion** which follows from and supports the arguments presented.

### Contextualization

Scoring Criteria

**1 pt.** The essay describes a broader historical context relevant to the prompt.

Decision Rules

To earn this point, the response must relate the topic of the prompt to broader historical events, developments, or processes that occur before, during, or continue after the time frame of the question. This point is not awarded for merely a phrase or reference.

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Support and Evidence

Evidence

The essay cites the most **relevant, appropriate, and valid evidence to support its claim and the counterclaims** while **fully explaining how the evidence cited and reasons support the claim**. The essay **demonstrates reasoning and full understanding of the topic and/or text(s), thoroughly stating the strengths and weaknesses of both the claim and the counterclaim(s)**. Counterclaims are acknowledged and/or distinguished from essay's central claim. The essay anticipates the audience's background knowledge, potential biases, and concerns.

Scoring Criteria

**Evidence from the Documents: 2 pts.** The essay **supports an argument in response to the prompt** using at least six documents.

**Evidence beyond the Documents: 1 pt.** The essay uses at least one additional piece of the **specific historical evidence** (beyond that found in the documents) relevant to an argument about the prompt.

Decision Rules

To earn two points, the response must **accurately describe – rather than simply quote – the content** from at least six documents. In addition, the response must use the **content of the documents to support an argument** in response to the prompt.

To earn this point, the response must **describe the evidence and must use more than a phrase or reference**. This additional piece of evidence must be different from the evidence used to earn the point for contextualization.

Analysis and Reasoning

Scoring Criteria

**1 pt.** The essay uses at least three documents, **explains how or why the document's point of view, purpose, historical situation, and/or audience is relevant** to an argument.

**1 pt.** The essay **demonstrates a complex understanding of the historical development that is the focus of the prompt, using evidence to corroborate, qualify, or modify an argument that addresses the question**.

Decision Rules

To earn this point, the response must **explain how or why (rather than simply identifying) the document's point of view, purpose, historical situation, or audience is relevant to an argument** about the prompt for each of the three documents sourced.

A response may **demonstrate a complex understanding in a variety of ways**, such as:

- **Explaining nuance of an issue by analyzing multiple variables**
- **Explaining both similarity and difference, or explaining both continuity and change, or explaining multiple causes, or explaining both cause and effect**
- **Explaining relevant and insightful connections** within and across periods
- Confirming the validity of an argument by corroborating multiple perspectives across themes
- **Qualifying or modifying an argument by considering diverse or alternative views or evidence**

This understanding must be **part of the argument, not merely a phrase or reference**.

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## Proficient

## 5-6 points

### Language and Style

The essay demonstrates a perspective and voice, as well as a **general command of conventions**. The essay incorporates language that shows an awareness of the reader's interests and generally maintains a formal style and somewhat objective tone with few possible exceptions. The essay employs interesting word choices and some variety in sentence structure.

### Clarity

#### Introductory Notes

The essay should be considered first drafts and thus **may contain grammatical errors**. Those errors **will not be counted** against a student **unless they obscure the successful demonstration of the content knowledge**, skills, and practices described in the rubrics.

### Claim and Focus

The essay introduces a **clear, arguable, and specific claim**, based on the topic or text(s). The essay **maintains focus** on the purpose and task, using most of the essay to **support and develop the claim and counterclaims** while **thoroughly addressing the demands of the prompt**.

### Thesis/Claim

#### Scoring Criteria

**1 pt.** The essay responds to the prompt with a historically **defensible thesis/claim** that **establishes a line of reasoning**.

#### Decision Rules

To earn this point, the thesis must **make a claim** that **responds to the prompt** rather than restating or rephrasing the prompt. The **thesis must consist of one or more sentences located in one place**, either in the **introduction or the conclusion**.

### Organization

The essay incorporates an **organizational structure** with clear transitional words and phrases that **show the relationship between and among ideas** (i.e. claim and evidence, claim and counterclaim, strengths and weaknesses). The essay includes **a progression of ideas** from beginning to end, including an **introduction and conclusion** which generally supports the argument presented.

### Contextualization

#### Scoring Criteria

**1 pt.** The essay describes a broader historical context relevant to the prompt.

#### Decision Rules

To earn this point, the response must relate the topic of the prompt to broader historical events, developments, or processes that occur before, during, or continue after the time frame of the question. This point is not awarded for merely a phrase or reference.

Proficient

5-6 points

Support and Evidence

Evidence

Scoring Criteria

Decision Rules

The essay cites **clear, relevant, and appropriate evidence related to the claim and counterclaims** while **explaining how the evidence supports the claim**. The essay **demonstrates some logical reasoning and understanding of the topic and/or text(s)** and **states the strengths and weaknesses of both the claim and counterclaim(s)**. Counterclaims are acknowledged but may be only generally explained and/or distinguished from the essay's central claim.

**Evidence from the Documents:**  
**2 pts.** The essay **supports an argument in response to the prompt** using at least six documents.  
**1 pt.** The essay uses the content of at least three documents to **address the topic of the prompt**.

To earn two points, the response must **accurately describe – rather than simply quote – the content** from at least six documents. In addition, the response must use the **content of the documents to support an argument** in response to the prompt. To earn one point, the response must **accurately describe – rather than simply quote – the content** from at least three of the documents.

**Evidence beyond the Documents:**  
**1 pt.** The essay uses at least one additional piece of the **specific historical evidence** (beyond that found in the documents) relevant to an argument about the prompt.

To earn this point, the response must **describe the evidence and must use more than a phrase or reference**. This additional piece of evidence must be different from the evidence used to earn the point for contextualization.

Analysis and Reasoning

Scoring Criteria

Decision Rules

**1 pt.** The essay uses at least three documents, **explains how or why the document's point of view, purpose, historical situation, and/or audience is relevant** to an argument.

To earn this point, the response must **explain how or why (rather than simply identifying) the document's point of view, purpose, historical situation, or audience is relevant to an argument** about the prompt for each of the three documents sourced.

**1 pt.** The essay **demonstrates a complex understanding of the historical development that is the focus of the prompt, using evidence to corroborate, qualify, or modify an argument that addresses the question**.

A response may **demonstrate a complex understanding in a variety of ways**, such as:

- **Explaining nuance of an issue by analyzing multiple variables**
- **Explaining both similarity and difference, or explaining both continuity and change, or explaining multiple causes, or explaining both cause and effect**
- **Explaining relevant and insightful connections** within and across periods
- **Confirming the validity of an argument by corroborating multiple perspectives across themes**
- **Qualifying or modifying an argument by considering diverse or alternative views or evidence**

This understanding must be **part of the argument, not merely a phrase or reference**.

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## Developing

## 3-4 points



### Language and Style

The essay demonstrates an uneven and/or inconsistent perspective and/or voice; it **may also contain errors in conventions that interfere with meaning**. The essay incorporates language that may not show an awareness of the reader's interests and does not maintain a formal and/or objective style consistently. Some attempts at strong word choices are made, and sentence structure may not vary.

### Clarity

#### Introductory Notes

The essay should be considered first drafts and thus **may contain grammatical errors**. Those errors **will not be counted** against a student **unless they obscure the successful demonstration of the content knowledge**, skills, and practices described in the rubrics.



### Claim and Focus

The essay uses a **basic organizational structure** but **relationships between and among ideas are not consistently clear**, including the explanation of the claim and the counterclaims or their strengths and weaknesses. The essay may move from beginning to end; however, the **introduction and/or conclusion may be overly formulaic and/or repetitious**.

### Thesis/Claim

#### Scoring Criteria

**1 pt.** The essay [may] describe a broader historical context relevant to the prompt.

#### Decision Rules

To earn this point, the response must relate the topic of the prompt to broader historical events, developments, or processes that occur before, during, or continue after the time frame of the question. This point is not awarded for merely a phrase or reference.



### Organization

The essay introduces a **clear, arguable, and specific claim, based on the topic or text(s)**, but it **may be somewhat unclear or not maintained throughout the essay**. The essay **may not fully address the demands of the prompt or stay focused** on the purpose and task. The writing may stray off topic at times. **Counterclaims may not be presented evenly or objectively**.

### Contextualization

#### Scoring Criteria

**1 pt.** The essay **[may] respond to the prompt** with a historically **defensible thesis/claim** that **establishes a line of reasoning**.

#### Decision Rules

To earn this point, the thesis must **make a claim** that **responds to the prompt** rather than restating or rephrasing the prompt. The **thesis must consist of one or more sentences located in one place**, either in the **introduction or the conclusion**.

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## Developing

## 3-4 points



### Support and Evidence

The essay uses **some evidence but may not precisely explain how it supports the claim** and/or the **claim is not properly distinguished from the counterclaim**. The essay includes **some reasoning and understanding of the topic and/ or text(s)**, but the strengths and weaknesses of the claim and counterclaims may be confusing, unclear, or absent.

### Evidence

#### Scoring Criteria

##### *Evidence from the Documents:*

**1 pt.** The essay **[may] use the content** of at least three documents **to address the topic of the prompt**.

##### *Evidence beyond the Documents:*

**1 pt.** The essay **[may or may not] use at least one additional piece of the specific historical evidence** (beyond that found in the documents) relevant to an argument about the prompt.

#### Decision Rules

To earn one point, the response must **accurately describe – rather than simply quote – the content** from at least three of the documents.

To earn this point, the response must **describe the evidence and must use more than a phrase or reference**. This additional piece of evidence must be different from the evidence used to earn the point for contextualization.

### Analysis and Reasoning

#### Scoring Criteria

**1 pt.** The essay **[may] use** at least three documents, **explains how or why the document's point of view, purpose, historical situation, and/or audience is relevant** to an argument.

**1 pt.** The essay **[may] demonstrate a complex understanding of the historical development that is the focus of the prompt, using evidence to corroborate, qualify, or modify an argument that addresses the question**.

#### Decision Rules

To earn this point, the response must **explain how or why (rather than simply identifying) the document's point of view, purpose, historical situation, or audience is relevant to an argument** about the prompt for each of the three documents sourced.

A response may **demonstrate a complex understanding in a variety of ways**, such as:

- **Explaining nuance of an issue by analyzing multiple variables**
- **Explaining both similarity and difference, or explaining both continuity and change, or explaining multiple causes, or explaining both cause and effect**
- **Explaining relevant and insightful connections** within and across periods
- **Confirming the validity of an argument by corroborating multiple perspectives across themes**
- **Qualifying or modifying an argument by considering diverse or alternative views or evidence**

This understanding must be **part of the argument, not merely a phrase or reference**.

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Document-Based Question (DBQ)

 <b>Emerging</b>		<b>1-2 points</b>	
 <b>Language and Style</b>	<p>The essay does not demonstrate a clear voice and/or perspective and <b>may contain pervasive errors in conventions that interfere with meaning</b>. The essay employs language that is inappropriate for the reader's interests and is not formal in style or objective in tone. Word choice is uninteresting or poor, and sentence structures are simplistic and unvaried.</p>	<b>Clarity</b>	<p>Introductory Notes</p> <p>The essay should be considered first drafts and thus <b>may contain grammatical errors</b>. Those errors <b>will not be counted</b> against a student <b>unless they obscure the successful demonstration of the content knowledge</b>, skills, and practices described in the rubrics.</p>
 <b>Claim and Focus</b>	<p>The essay <b>does not clearly make a claim</b>, or the <b>claim is overly simplistic or vague</b>. The essay <b>does not maintain focus</b> on purpose or task. The essay <b>does not address counterclaims</b>.</p>	<b>Thesis/Claim</b>	<p>Scoring Criteria</p> <p><b>1 pt.</b> The essay <b>[does not] respond to the prompt</b> with a historically <b>defensible thesis/claim</b> that <b>establishes a line of reasoning</b>.</p> <p>Decision Rules</p> <p>To earn this point, the thesis must <b>make a claim</b> that <b>responds to the prompt</b> rather than restating or rephrasing the prompt. The <b>thesis must consist of one or more sentences located in one place</b>, either in the <b>introduction or the conclusion</b>.</p>
 <b>Organization</b>	<p>The essay <b>does not have a clear organizational structure</b> and <b>may simply offer a series of ideas</b> without any clear transitions or connections. An <b>introduction and/or conclusion are not evident</b>.</p>	<b>Contextualization</b>	<p>Scoring Criteria</p> <p><b>1 pt.</b> The essay [does not] describe a broader historical context relevant to the prompt.</p> <p>Decision Rules</p> <p>To earn this point, the response must relate the topic of the prompt to broader historical events, developments, or processes that occur before, during, or continue after the time frame of the question. This point is not awarded for merely a phrase or reference.</p>

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 **Emerging****1-2 points** **Support and Evidence**

The essay **does not use clear or relevant evidence or reasoning to support the claim or to demonstrate an understanding of the topic or text(s) or uses very little evidence from the source.** Counterclaims are not acknowledged, addressed, or distinguished from the claim.

**Evidence**

## Scoring Criteria

*Evidence from the Documents:*

**1 pt.** The essay **[does not] use the content** of at least three documents to **address the topic of the prompt.**

*Evidence beyond the Documents:*

**1 pt.** The essay **[does not] use at least one additional piece of the specific historical evidence** (beyond that found in the documents) relevant to an argument about the prompt.

## Decision Rules

To earn one point, the response must **accurately describe – rather than simply quote – the content** from at least three of the documents.

To earn this point, the response must **describe the evidence and must use more than a phrase or reference.** This additional piece of evidence must be different from the evidence used to earn the point for contextualization.

**Analysis and Reasoning**

## Scoring Criteria

**1 pt.** The essay **[does not] use** at least three documents, **explains how or why the document's point of view, purpose, historical situation, and/or audience is relevant** to an argument.

**1 pt.** The essay **[does not] demonstrate a complex understanding of the historical development that is the focus of the prompt, using evidence to corroborate, qualify, or modify an argument that addresses the question.**

## Decision Rules

To earn this point, the response must **explain how or why (rather than simply identifying) the document's point of view, purpose, historical situation, or audience is relevant to an argument** about the prompt for each of the three documents sourced.

A response may **demonstrate a complex understanding in a variety of ways**, such as:

- **Explaining nuance of an issue by analyzing multiple variables**
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This understanding must be **part of the argument, not merely a phrase or reference.**