**European History DBQ Essay Rubric and Writing Tips**

**Introduction**

The DBQ essay counts 25% of your AP Exam score. Therefore, it is the most important component of the written section of the test (the MC section is the most weighted score overall at 40%). You will be given 7 documents from a given period of history and a prompt that will ask you to make a defensible argument. In this section I break down the parts of this essay and how they are scored by the College Board. Also, I give you the scores that you will receive in class for your essays.

**The Thesis (0-1point)**

* Your first step in the thesis is writing is to understand the prompt. Your second step is to read and process the documents. This is where you will not only tell the reader the topic of your essay but also, and most importantly take a position on the prompt. All DBQ prompts are asking you to take a position. You will get no points for simply restating the thesis.
* Here’s an example prompt: “Evaluate the extent to which the Thirty Years War (1618 – 1648) was fought primarily for religious or political reasons.” The use of the terms *evaluate the extent to which* is asking you to make an argument in two ways: you are taking a position on the impact and, you are saying how much of an impact.
* Here are two go examples of a strong thesis for this prompt. (a) “The Thirty Years’ War was fought overwhelmingly for religious purposes, with countries being drawn into war to defend the sanctity of one religion or another, and always divided Catholics and Protestants.” (b) “While there were religious overtones the Thirty Years War was fought primarily for political reasons. This was a war over dynasty and imperial gains.” These are good examples because they set up the arguments throughout the paper.
* The Thesis should ALWAYS be in the intro because the readers need to know your position. While the CB will give credit if it is in the conclusion, what happens if you run out of time? Remember it is a timed test. So, the safe bet is to put the thesis in the into section.

**Contextualization (0-1 point)**

* This section can be in the intro paragraph but fits much better in the first body paragraph. Context is background information leading to your prompt. This must be relevant to the topic and most importantly it has to have detail and elaboration.
* This should DIRECTLY relate to events leading to the topic of the essay and should be explicit in content. Using the example prompt above, you would need to both CITE and EXPLAIN events leading up to the Thirty Years War. For example, there had already been fighting between Lutherans and Catholics in the Holy Roman Empire during the 16th century called the Schmalkaldic War. You would then want to explain what happened and how it related to Thirty Years War. There had also been religious wars in France. So, this background gave the essential political and economic problems and was brought together by an actual specific event.
* Special Note: This is NOT the same as the section below in sourcing evidence using HIPPO where the H is Historical Context. This relates to the context of a document. That context is shorter and more specific. See Below for more Detail.

**Evidence (0-3 Points)**

* In this section there are three basic operations that you will perform to get three points. This is the section where you will dig into the seven sources. Here is the first step. You will need to cite the source and explain what these sources are about. The CB says **THREE** sources must be used for a single point. I want you to get used to doing **SIX sources** so that you have a greater chance to receive three points. This is a section where students routinely lose points simply by being lazy.
* You will want to help the reader by citing your source by the document number. Let’s say your first source is the Holy Roman Emperor and it is a letter to Protestant leaders in Bohemia. Here’s how to address it: “In a letter to Bohemian Protestants the HRE claimed……(doc.1)” This is like citing a source in MLA format.
* You must NEVER QUOTE a word for word. Your job is to use the source to support your thesis. So, if we look back at our example thesis above your thesis was to claim that the Thirty Years War was mostly political. You would need to pull from your knowledge and/or the source to back up your position. You might write that Bohemia was a key component to Catholic Habsburg control of the empire and while religion was an issue, it was more about holding on to dynastic power. Doing this discussion in 6 documents will insure you **TWO** points.
* The **THIRD** point is a bit harder to get because you’ll need to enter and explain a point of evidence that is **NOT** one of the Seven Documents. This must be relevant to the topic that you are discussing. Let’s again use the example prompt and thesis from above. Let’s again say that you are asserting that politics was the most important issue and you point out that a similar situation occurred in England under Henry VIII. His break with the Catholic Church and creation of Anglicanism was about his power and dynastic control. This would have to not be one of the seven sources to get credit.

**Analysis and Reasoning (0-2 Points)**

* Your first task here is called “**Sourcing**” and this is where your HIPPO analysis comes in. For this point you will need to use aspects of HIPPO for THREE or more of the documents. Here is my suggestion. I would try more to INDENTIFY and EXPLAIN using HIPPO and I would try to employ TWO elements of it. Be aware that the “Historical Context” cannot be the same as in your Contextualization paragraph. *Intended Audience* and *Point of View* work pretty well together. I suggested a little extra here because I you try more than three sources and you mess one up, they’ll give you credit for the correct ones. Think of it as insurance. To take our example prompt and docs, use he HRE letter to the Protestants. You could say his POV is Catholic and the Audience is Protestant but you want to elaborate. He is also the Holy Roman Empire sworn to protect Catholicism and the leader of a political dynasty. The Audience is Protestant leaders who long chaffed at Habsburg control.
* The last point is called “**Complexity**” and this one can be awarded for a variety of methods. You can gain this point by comparing events of one historical period to another period. This is called “**synthesis**” and I will give you examples of this all year. Okay so let’s say you are discussing how the Thirty Years War was more political and you point out and explain how splits between Islamic modernists and fundamentalist Sunni Muslims led to conflicts in post WWII Turkey. You have used a further example and its from another historical period. Be aware that the synthesis can also go backwards to earlier historical periods as well as forward.
* Another way that you could get the point would be to “**modify**” your position. Using the prompt example on the Thirty Years War you could discuss the successes whether the war was mostly political or religious. Then, you could point out that economics might also have been important as Bohemia was rich in iron ore and coal, two important resources economically.

**Class Scoring on DBQ Essays**

**7 = 100 -95**

**6 = 94 – 90**

**5 = 89 – 85**

**4 = 84 – 80**

**3 = 79 – 74**

**2 = 73 – 69**

**1 = 68 – Below**

**\*\*There is the chance that the 1 and 2 score can be counted as low as a 50. This really should never happen if you simply pay attention to the above tips and give it your best shot.**