**AP US 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 Progressive movement fostered political change from 1890 – 1920.” 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 Progressives successfully advocated for political changes in terms of efficiency and purity of departments ranging from Congress to local governments. It also was successful in terms of reforming anti-trust legislation and social advocacy for the ban on alcohol. However, they had several shortcomings failing to solve the issue of racial segregation.” (b) While the Progressive Movement certainly fostered political changes for white Americans, it failed to improve the true political equality for African-Americans. It failed in this process because it allowed the continence of discriminatory practices” 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. For example, let’s say you have a prompt that asks “Evaluate the extent to which the Constitutional Convention was successful in making political and economic reforms from 1787 – 1844.” So, what you will learn (or have learned) was that the Articles Government created during the Revolution reflected a decentralized government where the states held nearly of the power. This is known as “states rights” and made national unity very difficult. Finally, Shays Rebellion against taxation in Massachusetts illustrated the need for a stronger national government.
* 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.
* You will want to help the reader by citing your source by the document number. Let’s say your first source is Theodore Roosevelt and it is a speech. Here’s how to address it: “In a speech to Congress TR 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 Progressivism was successful politically. You would need to pull from your knowledge and/or the source to back up your position. This task 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. You are making the argument that the Constitution did successfully address political and economic issues. But then you mention that there were also social issues that were not addressed such as slavery or women’s rights. You’d need something specifically explained like the “3/5 clause” that allowed the southern states to count slaves as people every 10 years. This empowered the south without forcing them to weaken slavery. 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. Audience and Point of View world 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.
* Also, you must explain the elements of HIPPO. For example, using the T. Roosevelt example from above, you would cite his POV in the speech by citing his position as a Progressive against trusts and monopolies and maybe even cite legislation like the Sherman Anti-Trust Act. In other words, you must do more than cite HIPPO. It has to be explained.
* 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 reforms in Progressivism and you explain how this is similar to Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal during the Great Depression. You would need to pull out some specific examples. For example, both TR and FDR pushed for reforms that strengthened labor unions.
* Another way that you could get the point would be to “**modify**” your position. Using the prompt example on the Constitution you could discuss the successes politically and economically but then you could counter by giving some examples also of shortcomings. By asserting that slaves were property and then that property could not be taken away without due process, the Civil War might have been guaranteed and also by not unifying currency (partly due to state’s rights) economic weaknesses and instability continued for decades.

**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.**