

Introduction to Document Analysis

One of the key aspects of the document-based question (DBQ) in AP World History is the recognition that the document is not neutral information (like a dictionary or phone book). The evaluation of the documents as reliable and credible resources is a key to a successful score on the DBQ essay.

A very important part of analyzing a document is determining the Point of View (POV) of the author. A person's POV is made up of their personal frame of reference and the historical context in which they live.

Frame of Reference: This is influenced by a person's gender, occupation, class, education, religion, personal interests and other aspects of their being. Examples: supporting the Yankees baseball team, being a Texas Longhorn or Texas Aggie, passing the Bar exam, being a nun, being the only daughter, growing up wealthy/poor, etc.

Historical Situation: This is made up of the society's influences on a person. It can be societal values, economic pressures, political conditions or other things which influence the society. Examples: gas prices, war, theocratic government, revolution, etc.

There are many aspects of a document that can be considered when determining its reliability as a source. The SOAP formula for analysis will focus your thoughts on analyzing a document.

Reading for **SOAP**:

S = Speaker Who is the speaker? **CORNPEG** - class, occupation, religion, nationality, political position, ethnic identity, gender. Are they an insider or an outsider?

O = Occasion Is there a current situation of importance (revolution, famine, prison, etc.)?

A = Audience To whom is the piece addressed? It may be a large or small group or one person.

P = Purpose What is the reason for the text, cartoon, etc.? Why was it created?

By applying the SOAP formula to each document, you will quickly learn to consider the POV of the author and assess the document for its reliability and credibility as a source.

Not every document will encompass every category. Practice makes perfect.

Writing POV Statements: Summary + SOAP

A POV statement is based on your SOAP analysis of the document. A simple way to organize your ideas is to write **two sentences** that are formulated to cover all aspects of the SOAP, this will usually cover the POV requirement. Let's see how this is done using the

following example:

Confucius, a philosopher and teacher in China, from *The Analects of Confucius*, a lesson to his students, fifth century B.C.E.

The object of the superior man is truth, not food. . . . The superior man is anxious lest he should not get truth; he is not anxious lest poverty should come upon him... The mind of the superior man is conversant with virtue; the mind of the base man is conversant with gain. The superior man is modest in his speech, but exceeds in his actions. The superior man has his hatreds. He hates those who proclaim the evil of others. He hates the man who, being in a low station, slanders his superiors.

Sentence 1: Describe who the speaker (**S**) is by **expanding** on the information given in the attribution (if all you do is reiterate the attribution given you have not gone far enough) and using your own knowledge; then explain the occasion (**O**) by providing the context of where it is and what is going on at that time.

Example: *Confucius is a leading philosopher and teacher at a time of great instability in China known as the Warring States period.*

Sentence 2: Explain who the message is designed to reach, the audience (**A**), and the purpose (**P**) for which the message is created.

Example: *Confucius is addressing his words to the ruler of his kingdom and to his followers in particular to try and convince them that morality must be respected in order to create stability in an unstable China.*

To recap:

Sentence 1 = S + O

Sentence 2 = A + P

How to fully address a document

- Summarize the document in a sentence that contains one or two facts and refers to the document number and either the author OR title. **NEVER QUOTE THE DOCUMENT.**
- Write two sentences to cover the POV: in the first sentence address the subject and occasion, and in the second sentence address the audience and purpose of the document.

Example:

Confucius explains that a superior man in society is modest, honest, hates evil, and thinks about society more than himself. Confucius is a leading philosopher and teacher at a time of great instability in China known as the Warring States period. He is addressing his words to the ruler of his kingdom, and to his followers in particular, to try and convince them that morality must be respected in order to create stability in an attempt to calm chaotic China.

POVs in a DBQ: Subjectivity and Credibility

A key component to writing a DBQ is to include POVs about the writer/creator of the document. They demonstrate to the reader that you understand that the documents are not statements of fact, but opinions of events made by people at a particular time and place and often for a specific reason. Sometimes the DBQ will feature documents that seem contradictory to the each other but aren't invalid—they are put there so students can explain historical complexity thru diverse perspectives. You must point out the reason why the document author/creator should be taken seriously. There are two main types of POV.

Types of POV:

1. Based on the author's background: Awareness that the class, occupation, religion, nationality, political position, ethnicity, or gender (CORNPEG) may have influenced an author's view.

Baldassare Castiglione; Italian author, courtier, and diplomat, who served in the courts of Mantua and Urbino and later served the pope. His book, *The Courtier*, describes the conduct of the perfect courtier (aristocrat who serves at the court of a noble).

Employ in everything a certain casualness which conceals art and creates the impression that what is done and said is accomplished without effort and without its being thought about. It is from this, in my opinion that grace largely derives.

Summary and POV based on political position, class and occupation: Castiglione indicates that people should act calmly, as if everything just comes naturally to them. Castiglione is a successful diplomat and a courtier who had worked for several important nobles in the courts of various Italian city states during the Renaissance. He writes his book for other young men like himself who aim to work for the rich and powerful leaders of the day in order that they learn the best way to behave in every situation.

Yuan Ts'ai, Neoconfucian provincial magistrate and official in China, Song Dynasty, from his book, *Precepts for Social Life*, 1178 C.E.

For women who live a long life, old age is especially hard to bear, because most women must rely on others for their existence. Before a woman's marriage, a good father is even more important than a good grandfather; a good brother is even more important than a good father....After her marriage, a good husband is even more important than a good father-in-law; a good son is even more important than a good husband.

Summary and POV based on gender, religion and class: Yuan Ts'ai claims that men are more important than women and a woman will always have a man in their life to look up to. Yuan Ts'ai was a member of the scholarly bureaucracy, and influenced by his Neo-Confucianist training which taught that women should be relegated to subservient positions relative to men; he writes at a time when the status of women declined. He wrote this work as a guide for others to live by, with the purpose of reinforcing the Confucian values of respect and filial piety that he believed to be so important to his society.

2. Based on authenticity, reliability, and accuracy of the source: Examine the author and the type of source to determine WHY it is accurate and reliable. Is the document an official report? Propaganda? Private letter, etc.? Is the author an inside or outside observer?

Vespasiano da Bisticci of Florence, wrote over 300 biographies, helped form the papal library and was a leading humanist philosopher of the age. The following is from his biography on Cosimo Medici, leader of the great Florentine family, ca. 1450.

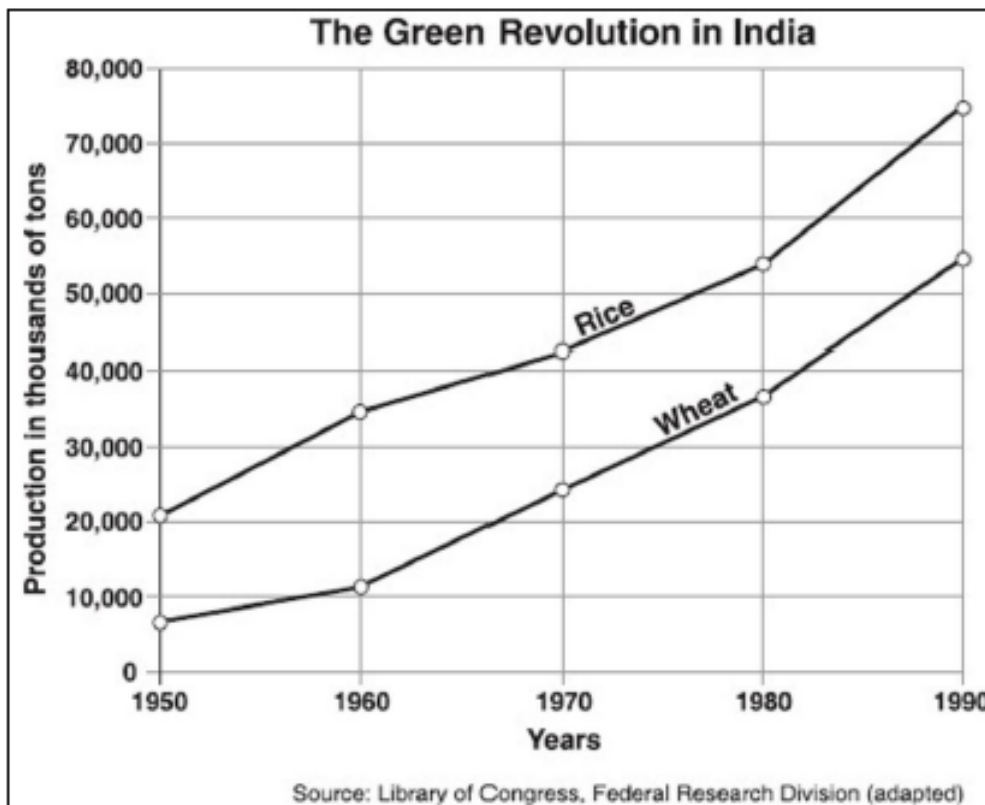
Cosimo became increasingly aware of the fact that if he wanted God to have mercy on him and conserve him in the possession of his temporal goods, he had to turn to pious ways... his conscience [bothered] him about some money which he had come by not quite cleanly. Wanting to lift this weight from his shoulders, he went to talk to Pope Eugenius... to satisfy himself and to unburden his conscience he... spent in all more than forty thousand florins...on the building.

Summary and POV based on authorship of biography writing: Da Bisticci writes that Cosimo Medici donated money to the Church because he was feeling guilty about how he had made that money. Da Bisticci was a member of the court of Cosimo de Medici in Florence and was a noted biographer, living in a city state dominated by the Medici family during the Renaissance. He wrote this account, which he knew would be read by Cosimo and other city dignitaries, in order to produce a favorable view of Cosimo, so he uses language that would not anger the wealthy leader as his livelihood depended on staying in the favor of important men.

Zhou Dagan, Chinese envoy and high ranking member of a delegation sent to Cambodia by Kublai Khan. Written in a 1297 report to the emperor, after a year-long stay.

In Cambodia, women attend to trade. Even a Chinese who arrives there and takes a woman will profit greatly from her trading abilities. They do not have permanent stores, but simply spread a piece of mat on the ground. Everyone has her own spot.

Summary and POV based on being an outsider and sending a report to the emperor: Zhou Dagan mentions that women in Cambodia are heavily involved in trading. Zhou Dagan, is an important diplomat chosen by the Mongol leader of the Yuan dynasty and sent on a mission to neighboring Cambodia at a time when the Mongol dynasty were eager to use the ideas and expertise of others to advance their power. His experience, as an outsider from male-dominated China, would have made the role of women in Cambodia stand out in his mind and seem strange to him. He is reporting back to the Chinese court and has little reason to report falsely to his superiors in China.



Summary and POV based on authenticity, reliability, and accuracy of the source: The chart provides evidence of the increase in the rice and wheat crop yields in the second half of the 20th century. The Library of Congress used information collected by a federal research group, and there is no reason to suspect that the data is not accurate. The Green Revolution took place at a time when the population of India seemed destined to outpace the supply of food, causing the Indian government to take action. The graph was made for economists to understand the degree of success that the new policies produced at a time when some were questioning the efficacy of the program.

A Better Way to Say “Said”

While there is nothing wrong with the word “said” there are better ways to convey POV when writing the DBQ. Some AP teachers call these the “wonderful verbs.” You want to use a verb that denotes some kind of analysis of the author. Consider these.

implies

writes

confesses

alleges

suggests

asserts

contends

admits

declares

discloses

remarks

insinuates

reports

reveals

affirms

demands

hints

explains

maintains

emphasizes

argues

proclaims

proposes

insists

comments

acknowledges

observes

concedes

implores

replies

responds

divulges

insists