**DOCUMENT ANALYSIS**

The Historical Précis is a way to appropriately use a document in your analytical essay to ensure you are analyzing and NOT just describing the document.

**How to Reference a Document in a DBQ**

The most unsophisticated way to reference a document in a DBQ essay is to do the following, “According to ‘Document 1’ blah, blah, blah.” “Document 1 says this, document 2 says this . . . etc.” Instead, you should show the reader that you understand the documents and use them effectively within the argument of your paper. DO NOT quote the documents. At the end of the sentence where you reference or use a document, make parenthetical reference by putting the document letter in parentheses. (Doc. A)

**Historical Précis Format**

1. Sentence #1 (THE WHAT)
   1. Name of author and, if possible, a phrase describing the credentials of the author
   2. The genre (essay, lecture, letter, article, etc.) and title of the work
   3. The date, if available (in parenthesis)
   4. A rhetorically accurate verb (such as “asserts,” “argues,” denys,” “refutes,” “proves,” claims,” “explains,” etc.);
   5. A “that” clause containing the major claim (thesis statement) of the work
2. Sentence #2 (THE HOW)
   1. An explanation of how the author develops/supports the major claim/thesis (such as by comparing and contrasting, narrating, illustrating, defining, etc.)
   2. Present explanation in the same chronological order that the items of support are presented by the author in the text

CHOOSE TWO OF THE FOLLOWING

1. Sentence #3 (THE WHEN) = OCCASION/CONEXT
   1. A statement of the context around the time the source was written.
   2. What had just happened or what is on the verge of happening? What issues are causing this document to be created? Must be specific to this document and not just the topic of the essay. Must connect the document to the context explicitly.
2. Sentence #4 (THE WHO) = SPEAKER’S POINT OF VIEW
   1. Characteristics of the author that influences the message, such as position in society, office held, group membership, belief in something specific, ulterior motive, lack of understanding of alternative views on topic, etc.
   2. How the characteristic influenced the message specifically, which could include tone, position on topic, rhetorical strategy, etc.
3. Sentence #5 (THE WHY) = PURPOSE
   1. A statement of the author’s purpose
   2. Followed by an “in order to” clause which explains what the author wants the audience to do or feel as a result of reading the work
4. Sentence #6 (THE TO WHOM) = AUDIENCE
   1. A description of the tone the author uses
   2. A description of the intended audience and/or the relationship the author establishes with the audience

Adapted from Mrs. Biziewski

**SOAPS Analysis - Sample Statements and Descriptions**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **S** | Speaker’s Point of View: Who is the author of the document? What does (s)he believe or want? How does the author’s personhood impact what they wrote? Is his/her point of view (POV) limited or strengthened in some way? | * race, gender, age, ethnicity, religion, or other general background * education level, profession, role in the issue or society * personality, values, viewpoints, on the issue * Does the author have ulterior motives? Does the author’s background make it hard for him/her to understand the opposing viewpoint or be convincing in his/her argument? | | | | | | | |
| [*author name*] [*profession, gender, social status, date, position of important, why well known*] believed that [*belief of the author*]. This belief likely influenced his writing because [*explain how why they were/when they were writing affected what was being said*]. | | | | | | | | |
| Example. *[John Winthrop*], [*an affluent Puritan minister and 1st governor of Massachusetts Bay Colony*] believed that [*his colony had a covenant with God and wanted to create a City of a Hill as a model holy society*]. This belief influenced his writing because [*he was heavily influenced by his own personal religious beliefs and feelings of righteousness*]. | | | | | | | | |
| **O** | Historical context: In what context has this message been created? | * At the time the source was created, what has just happened? What is on the verge of happening? * What proximate or deep-rooted issues are causing this document to be created? * How does this document represent the period/era? | | | | | | | |
| The [name of document] from relates to the [main topic/argument being discussed in the body paragraph], because/by [how it relates to the main topic/argument]. | | | | | | | | |
| [*Common Sense*] relates to the [*the ideological causes of the American Revolution*] because [*it discusses the advantages and reasons why the colonies needed independence, such as reasons why it doesn’t make sense for a small country to rule a continent, wrote in a clear, simple language that used Biblical references rather than the flowery style of the Enlightenment thinkers, to help convince many colonists to join the Patriot causes*]. | | | | | | | | |
| **A** | Audience: Who is the intended primary audience? Who else would hear or see it? | | | * Specific person, group, sector of society? * Is this audience one in which the speaker belongs? * Is there a reason this audience has been targeted? | | | | | |
| The audience of [*list document*] was for a/the [*list the audience*]. The intent was to make the [*what did it want this audience to do and why*] and therefore the style/language/words [elements of the writing targeted to audience]. | | | | | | | | |
| The audience of [*Common Sense*] was for [*common people*]. The intent was to make the [*revolutionary causes seem like “common sense” by explaining reasons and advantages of independence from Britain]* and therefore the style/language/words [*used everyday language and Biblical references that would appeal to the common man*]. | | | | | | | | |
| **P** | Purpose: What is the author trying to accomplish? Why at this specific time? | | connect  prove  illustrate | | | introduce  offer  predict | suggest  compliment  establish | distinguish  propose  questions | honor  contrast  justify |
| The purpose of the [*source type or title*] was to [*why was the document created*]. It was written at this specific time because/to [*why was the document created/written at that time*?]. | | | | | | | | |
| The purpose of the [*election graph*] was to [*inform the public about the electoral vote in the 1992 election between presidents Bush and Clinton*]. The document was created at that time to [*depict the state by state results of that electoral vote, and show how close the electoral voting was in that election*]. | | | | | | | | |
| **S** | Why? Why is the document important in history? How does it connect to the thematic learning objectives? How does it connect to your argument/thesis? So what? | | | | * Explain why it is important to read and understand this document in order to understand something from history, specifically the question you are addressing. | | | | |