

AP European History

Details of the AP Exam

- * The AP European History Exam is a 3 hour and 5 minute test divided into 2 main parts:
 - a) a 55-minute multiple choice section with 80 questions
 - b) a 130-minute free response (essay) section that is broken down as follows:
 - 1) a mandatory 15 minute reading period
 - 2) 45 minutes to answer a DBQ (document based question)
 - 3) 70 minutes to select and answer two thematic essays

- * The Multiple Choice Section:
 - Generally, most all of these questions deal with Europe from 1450 to present
 - Approximately one-half of these questions will deal with Europe from 1450 to the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Era; the other half will deal with the period from the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Era to present
 - Thematically, the questions are roughly broken down as follows: 20-30% dealing with cultural and intellectual themes, 30-40% dealing with political and diplomatic themes, and 30-40% dealing with social and economic themes. Many questions obviously cross these lines and draw from multiple chronological periods and/or themes.
 - The College Board reinforces the fact that due to the incredible volume of information that spans European History from 1450 until the present, students are NOT expected to be familiar with all of the material covered.
 - The questions are usually grouped together in several “chronological cycles.” Thus, the first 10-20 questions will fall in chronological order (beginning with the earliest), and the next group will start over again.
 - Be aware of overly inclusive or exclusive terms in questions – like NOT, none, any, all, or except.
 - Answer the easiest questions for you first. Then return and work through the others.
 - Some of these multiple choice questions demand absolute factual knowledge and recall (You either know it, or you don’t.), but others require a broader understanding of themes and relationships. You can often eliminate some or all of the incorrect answers through inferencing and deduction.
 - You are no longer penalized for guessing incorrectly so you need to attempt to answer every question. Number Correct = Multiple Choice Score
 - The Multiple Choice section overall represents one-half of your total score on the AP exam.

* The Free Response Section – General Information:

- First, students will have a mandatory 15 minute reading period to read through the various Free Response questions – especially to begin to analyze the documents for the DBQ.
- Students will then have 45 minutes to answer the DBQ and the 70 minutes to answer the other 2 free response essays. Yet, this time is flexible. I suggest that you spend the time necessary to do the DBQ well and then work on the other essays.
- Remember these important general guidelines:
 - a) Write legibly.
 - b) Do NOT write in first person. The essence of good persuasive writing is making an opinion seem like a fact.
 - c) Write in PAST tense – not the historical present.
 - d) Do not over-generalize. Be wary of terms like: “always,” “never,” “everybody,” “Europeans,” etc.
 - e) Do not get a fact wrong. Do not guess. If you do not know precisely, take it to a level of generalization to the point that you are confident. For instance, if you do not remember that Martin Luther posted his 95 Theses on October 31, 1517, you might indicate that he did so in the early 16th century.
 - f) Do not invent new terms.
 - g) Often, political, diplomatic, and/or religious questions that seem harder may be much easier to answer successfully than broad, vague “social history” questions that frequently lead to rambling answers because few facts are available for you to defend your answer.
 - h) Details, Details, Details! Names, places, dates, events!
 - i) Write all you know!
 - j) Watch your time!
 - k) Remember that better organized and more fluent essays will automatically create a better impression and earn a higher score than those that ramble.
 - l) Both DBQs and FRQs are scored on a 1-9 scale, but the latter are graded “holistically.” Thus, there is not a series of “core elements” required, but you MUST answer/address all parts of the question with legitimate points and evidence to earn at least an “average” score.
- It is essential that you do the following with all DBQs and FRQs...
 - 1) Read each question multiple times, noting the time period and the specific terms. With the DBQ, read through the documents *at least* once to start.
 - 2) Note the operations that you are asked to discuss, most notably “Bloom’s Taxonomy” terms...
 - a) Analyze – determine their component parts; examine their nature and relationship
 - b) Assess/Evaluate – judge the value or character of something; appraise; evaluate the positive points and the negative ones; give an opinion regarding the value of something; discuss the advantages and disadvantages of something
 - c) compare – examine for the purpose of noting similarities and differences
 - d) contrast – examine in order to show dissimilarities or points of difference
 - e) describe – give an account of; tell about; give a word picture of something
 - f) discuss – talk over; write about; consider or examine by argument or from various points of view; debate; present the different sides of
 - g) explain – make clear or plain; make clear the causes of or reasons for; make known in detail; tell the meaning of
 - h) synthesize – to bring component parts together; to mesh multiple concepts

- 3) Note words that indicate how many things you are meant to discuss (like “compare X and Y in terms of two of the following three things”).
- 4) Design a grid that matches the structure of the ENTIRE question – columns/rows for all of the things that you are required to discuss.
- 5) Label the grid with the exact terms of the question.
- 6) Fill in each part of your grid with your *own knowledge* (what AP calls “outside information”). Brainstorm. Find something to say for every box. Think and figure it out.
- 7) Organize the information in your grid. Can you identify any helpful patterns or categories which help you to sort the information and apply it to the question more systematically.
- 8) Look at your grid – the headings and your information – and decide on a thesis. Your thesis *must*:
 - a) address *every part* of the question.
 - b) use the *major terms* of the question.
 Notes:
 - You may take a middle position: “the X movement was only somewhat effective”
 - You may have a mixed thesis: “Y was effective with respect to X, but ineffective with respect to Z”
- 9) If you are doing the DBQ, re-read your documents carefully and work them into your grid.
- 10) Write your introductory/thesis paragraph. You may write 1 or 2 introductory sentences if you would like, but be smart.
 - Do not make a silly statement just to get started.
 - Do not refer to a time period outside of the once designated in the question.
 - The main purpose, of course, is to tell the reader what point you intend to prove concerning the topic.
 - Most importantly, *address every part of the question in a didactic manner!*
- 11) Write your body paragraphs. Basically, *write your grid!*
 - The columns and/or rows of your grid should essentially become the basis for your body paragraphs because they identify all parts of the question that you are addressing.
 - Make sure that your essay addresses every box in the grid. You will need to consider how to organize/distribute/order your information within your essay.
- 12) For each body paragraph:
 - a) Write a good *topic sentence* that does the following:
 - *recapitulates* a part of your thesis using the *specific terms* of the thesis
 - uses good *linking language* that shows the logical connection between this paragraph and the prior one (like “not only X, but also Y” or “although X, not Y,” or “while X very much, Y only somewhat”)
 - b) Use the *GEI* approach:
 - *G = Generalization*. Always state your generalization first. Do not start with an anecdote or example.
 - *E = Example or Evidence*.
 - *I = Interpretive Statement*. Explain what the evidence means and what it shows. Be didactic in explaining to the reader how the evidence supports your generalization.

- c) Just as you use good linking language to connect topic sentences, you also want to use good linking language to connect points within your body paragraphs (like "Another reason X liked Y was Z"). You are stating a new sub-generalization so use linking language and repeat the GEI process.
- 13) Write a conclusion (even if brief) that restates your thesis with the same *specific terms* used earlier, making sure to once again address *all parts of the question*.
- 14) After writing any free response essay, please re-read your answer carefully to look for errors, to check that it makes sense, and most importantly to determine if it truly answers all parts of the question being asked.

* Specific Notes for DBQs:

- The DBQ is an essay that requires the student to use historical documents to answer a question which *usually* pertains to some type of social and/or cultural history, though the topics have sometimes related to politics or diplomacy.
- Unlike the U.S. History exam, you are NOT expected to bring in outside information. Of course, any details that you can provide to help provide a good historical context for the documents will assist you in understanding them and will enhance your essay – especially your introduction and conclusion. Yet, you will be penalized for any incorrect information so be careful.
- The primary purpose of the DBQ is not to test the students' prior knowledge of subject matter but rather to evaluate their ability to formulate and support an answer from primary source evidence. The College Board assumes that students who have taken the course understand the broader historical context, and thus depending on the topic and focus, the question may or may not require students to discuss change over time in their essay.
- Documents are not always "text" in nature; in fact, some DBQs contain art, photographs, cartoons, and/or charts/graphs. Most DBQs contain a variety of types of documents.
- Documents are chosen on the basis of both the information that they convey about the topic and the perspective that they offer on other documents used in the exercise. Thus, the richest understanding of any particular document emerges only when that document is viewed within the wider context of the entire series.
- In essence, the DBQ requires the student to become the historian as this type of question is designed to test skills analogous to those of the historian at work on source materials, but the DBQ is a bit different from actual historiography in two ways: a) the time available for analysis, and b) the prearranged selection of the documents which may help to illuminate specific details presented by the question.
- Keys to answering DBQs:
 - a) Read the historical background information provided and underline important statements. Then make your own notes about outside information that you could bring in as well as any relevant information that you know about this particular period.
 - b) Make notes and highlight/underline while reading through the documents; the booklet is yours so use it well for notes, ideas, and organization. Once you have thoroughly read the documents and re-read the question, make notes and begin grouping the documents based on what the question requires. Generally, the documents are presented to you chronologically, but you will need to reorganize them to fit your answer. Often, making a chart with documents and notes will help you to organize your thoughts and your essay.

- c) Point of View and Analysis are the most important considerations with the documents. You need to use the documents to draw your own conclusion. Significant angles to examine may include: socio-economics, gender, family, ethnicity, religion, job, age, experience, knowledge of the situation, education level, motive, eyewitness, nationality, credibility, and hearsay. Very often, a person's name attached to the document indicates a particular slant while the absence of a particular name (i.e. – a German farmer) indicates a broader perspective.
- d) In addition, you need to carefully analyze the style and tone of the author (sarcasm? humor? serious? exaggerated? tongue-in-cheek?), and you need to look at the date of each document while seeking a pattern concerning change over time.
- e) Critical judgment is essential to a good document-based essay. Awareness of the documents' sources and their authors' points of view requires students to demonstrate the skills of critical reading and inference. Therefore, you should pay attention to both internal evidence (the content and tone of each document in relation to the others) and external evidence (identifications of authors, the documents' purpose or intended audience, and the date when each document was written or produced). Thus, a student reading critically will examine the various documents for similarities, differences, biases, inconsistencies, and patterns.
- f) Remember that the documents will not present a clear answer all of the time. In fact, DBQs are generally prepared with at least four documents that intentionally provide "internal tensions or ambiguities." Thus, some documents will temper your thoughts as you make generalizations, and you should be careful with "absolute" statements like "all," "total," or "none." While no "right answer" exists, your job is to take a clear stand and to defend that viewpoint by using the documentary evidence.
- g) The strongest essays will always acknowledge opposing points of view, often even quoting or citing other documents; this type of argumentative structure will allow you to deal directly with contradictory perspectives and will strengthen your essay for the reader. You will automatically seem more thoughtful.
- h) You do not have to use all of the documents provided, but you should work at least two-thirds of them into your essay. No documents are intentionally misleading as was the case in some past years, but some may be less relevant to the overall question or theme – especially depending upon your personal organization and thesis.
- i) Work the documents into a *grid* that addresses *all parts of the question*.
- j) Your *thesis* may not simply restate the question, but it needs to use the basic terms and framework of the question while also addressing *all parts* of the question.
- k) You must organize the documents into *at least three logical, valid groups*. It is important to go beyond the minimum with four or more groups as well as sub-groups.
- l) When citing the documents, try to avoid lengthy quotes; aim for smaller quotes and general paraphrasing. Most importantly, always introduce a document by providing the full identity of the source (not just a name). You may then place the document number/letter in parentheses. For example, "Queen Elizabeth I argued that..." (Doc. 3).
- m) Remember *GEI* – Never start a paragraph or point with a document. Documents support points – not vice versa.

- n) Remember the rules outlined in the previous section about *thesis* development, *body paragraphs*, *topic sentences*, and *linking language*.
- o) Analyze and comment on *point of view*, *bias*, and *perspective* as often as possible – *at least five or six times* throughout the essay. Thus, you must move beyond interpreting the meaning of the document to analyzing the *WHY* behind it.
- p) *Label the thesis, groups, and POVs* to the side in the margins.
- Avoid the following pitfalls that are common when answering DBQs: 1) a “laundry list” of documents (simply paraphrasing or summarizing the documents), 2) failing to answer the question that is being asked, 3) failing to integrate the documents into the essay, 4) failing to analyze the documents or determine their significance, or 5) failing to demonstrate independent thought.
- DBQs are scored on a 1-9 scale with a “9” being the highest score, though an essay does not need to be “perfect” to earn this distinction. AP scores DBQs using a “core scoring” method which involves six required elements that must be present. The DBQ must...
 - 1) provide an appropriate, explicitly stated thesis that addresses all parts of the question and does not simply restate the question.
 - 2) discuss a majority of the documents individually and specifically.
 - 3) demonstrate an understanding of a majority of the documents.
 - 4) support the thesis with appropriate interpretations of a majority of the documents.
 - 5) analyze the documents by explicitly grouping them in at least three appropriate groups (preferably more) with at least two documents used to support each grouping – these groupings must be logical and appropriate.
 - 6) take into account both the sources of the documents and the authors’ point of view.
- You receive one point (of the nine possible) for each of these six elements; thus, if they are all present and done correctly, you are “guaranteed” a “6” on your DBQ. At that point, the readers will determine whether to award “bonus points” if your essay is particularly good; this is how you can earn a “7”, “8”, or “9”.
- Please note that if you do not have all six required elements, you cannot earn any bonus points. Thus, no matter how good your essay is, failing to include all six of these requirements locks you in at a lower score. Think of those six elements as a “gate” to a higher score; you must pass through that “gate” to earn a better mark.

* The Free Response Section – Scoring:

- Overall, the Free Response section will count for one-half of your total exam score.
- Of this Free Response total, the DBQ will count 45 % while the other two thematic essays together will count 55 %.
- As noted earlier, each essay is scored on a scale from 1-9. Please remember the six requirements for the “core scoring” on the DBQ.
- The DBQ raw score (0-9) is multiplied by 4.500.
- Each thematic essay raw score (0-9) is multiplied by 2.7500.
- These three products are then added together to get the overall “Free Response” score.
- The Free Response and Multiple Choice scores are then added together for the final AP score, somewhere between 0 and 180. Upon analyzing the range and distribution of scores, AP will set the “cutoffs” for each overall grade. *Generally*, the cutoffs are approximately as follows: 5 (120 and above), 4 (100), 3 (65), 2 (45), 1 (Below 45).