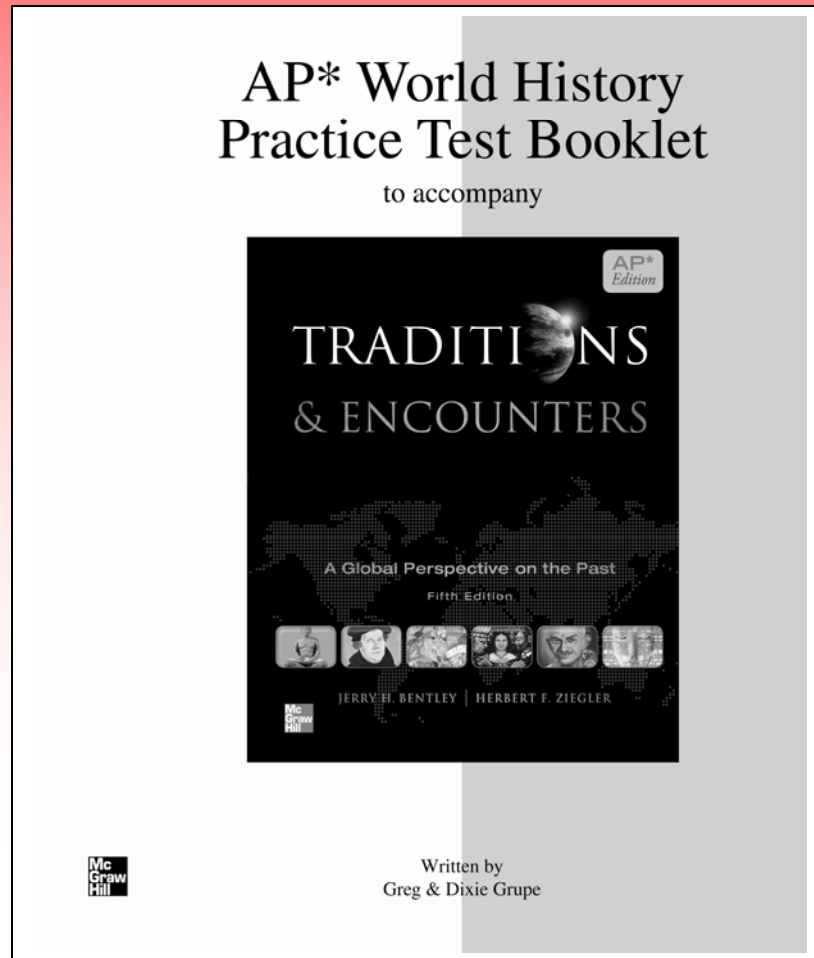


# AP\* World History

# ESSAY WRITER'S

# HANDBOOK



**WRITTEN BY:**  
**GREG & DIXIE GRUPE**

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**School Education Group**  
**AP\* Honors & Electives**

Writing the answers to free-response questions takes lots of practice. This portion of the exam counts as one-half of your exam score. There are always three specific types of essays, and each essay contributes one-sixth of your total Advanced Placement World History Exam score. Below you will find some ideas, suggestions, and recommendations to consider as you prepare to write.

## 1. Writing the AP World History DBQ

Though each question on this test is tied to a specific historical thinking skill, the Document-Based Question (DBQ) is specifically designed to evaluate your ability to read critically and to formulate and support an answer from documentary evidence. These are the same types of skills a historian uses in his or her career, but this evaluation is timed.

Like the other essay questions on this exam, there is no single right response in crafting your DBQ. Further, like the other essay questions, there is not a magic formula that can compensate for poor reading, thinking, or writing skills. Like the other questions, if you have practiced these types of essays using a consistent pattern, you will be free to demonstrate your abilities without worrying that you might forget something essential to the DBQ. So, given all those disclaimers, here are the consistent elements to consider:

1. **Read the prompt carefully and thoroughly.** Mark it to indicate the key words, phrases, or tasks required. Do not begin any other step until you know what the question is asking. Reading the prompt and any supplied historical background might also help you get some potential ideas about how to organize the essay. Sadly, to disregard these cautions means that you are in danger of joining the hundreds of students each year who write a beautiful essay with all the major elements included and yet still earn 0 points because they totally misinterpret the question.
2. **Do not panic if you know little or nothing about the topic of the question.** This question tests your ability to read, analyze, synthesize, and communicate those skills effectively in writing. Sure, knowing something about the topic is a great help, but it is not essential to writing a solid DBQ.
3. **When you are confident that you understand the demands of the prompt, begin to read the documents.** You can anticipate between 5 and 10 documents for each DBQ. Always mark the documents for key words, ideas, and phrases that seem to be important and always make a few notes in the margins next to the document to record your ideas as you read.
4. **Jot down your thoughts as you read each document.** After you have read a couple of the documents, you should begin to see some connections or contradictions between the documents. Underline or circle key ideas in each document. You will refer to these marks after you begin to write the essay. Begin a list of these ideas in the margins of your test booklet so you can refer to them later.

5. **As you finish reading the documents, you are ready to group them.** This is simply DBQ talk for combining documents that have similarities. You might group them by time period, region, types of sources, theme, or other criteria. In general, the best DBQs are those where the student groups the documents based on the content in the documents; this technique demonstrates that you are a careful and thoughtful reader. Refer to your margin notes to see whether the same ideas are represented in two or more documents. At this point, you are ready to group the documents.
6. **Make a quick chart in the test booklet.** This chart or other graphic organizer will assist you with recording your ideas and figuring out an analysis scheme. Include your grouping categories and the documents you have assigned to each group. It can be as simple as this:

Group 1 Idea	Group 2 Idea	Group 3 Idea
1, 2, 4, 6	5, 7, 8	3, 9

7. **Here are a few key points about grouping.**
- a. Have at least THREE groups. Yes, the generic rubric says “two or three ways,” but the determination of whether the standard is two or three is set each year at the reading. If you always have at least three groups, you will meet the standard every year. Creating and supporting more than five groups will be too time consuming, and you will have a hard time finishing the essay, so stick to three groups or maybe four, but no more.
  - b. Each group needs at least TWO documents.
  - c. You can use a document in more than one group.
  - d. Use all the documents. Although the generic scoring guide says “all or all but one” like the three-grouping rule discussed above, if you use all the documents, you will always meet this standard wherever it is set each year.
  - e. Though there are no irrelevant or misleading documents, sometimes you might find one document that does not seem to fit their otherwise wonderful grouping plan. It is okay to include such a document in an intro or conclusion. This will count toward the requirement of addressing, understanding, and supporting your thesis. However, you must interweave that document artfully in an introduction or conclusion to show that you understand the meaning of the document and that it supports your thesis. Of

course, it is best to use the document in a grouping, but it is not advisable to leave it out if you are unable to fit it into a group.

8. **Grouping the documents effectively allows you to form a thesis easily.** Consider the relationship between the groups. Can you connect them as causes and effects? Can you organize them as comparisons and contrasts? Can you see positive and negative aspects to them? Is one group more important than the other groups? A sentence that only lists your groups will not be enough to earn a thesis point. Figuring out a supportable relationship between the documents will help you create an acceptable thesis.
9. **As always with the all essays on this exam, draft a clear, one-sentence thesis that fully addresses the prompt, takes a position you can support, and provides a structural framework for the rest of your essay.** Make that sentence the last sentence of your introduction, if you have an introduction. Without an introduction, just start the essay with your thesis. Begin a new paragraph for each group.
10. **Each body paragraph should be tied to a grouping.** Use your thesis as a map for putting the essay together. Use words from your thesis in each body paragraph topic sentence. It is not necessary to list the documents that you will be using in the paragraph in this topic sentence. You will not be awarded any points for the list. Follow your thesis order and rely on your grouping chart to organize each body paragraph. Use the evidence you have identified in each document to support your thesis. This is where your margin notes next to each document will come in handy.
11. **Always cite the document.** You should cite each document every time you use it. Putting a (Doc. 1) or a (1), for example, after each usage is fine.
12. **The hardest point for most students to earn in the DBQ is for point of view (POV).** This point is earned as you demonstrate that you understand how a person's background, situation, purpose, audience, or life experience affects what he or she says and how he or she says it. It is like your parent might have said to you if you repeated something that you heard someone else say ... "Consider the source." Think about how you say hello to your friends versus how you say hello to your grandmother. Think about how someone who is running for political office might articulate something in public speech in a different manner than he or she might say it in a private conversation. Why is that?

For POV, think about how a person's gender, occupation, social class, religion, ethnicity, education, nationality, or a dozen other factors influence what he or she says or how he or she says it. Then you must explain how that factor affects the document. This task requires you to consider the document's context and frame of reference beginning with your careful reading of the document and the document

source information. Your POV statements should come as you begin to address a document or right after you finish using the document—never as a list at the end of the essay. If you have not practiced this POV analytical skill in other DBQs in your classroom with your teacher’s help and feedback, then this is a hard point to earn.

13. **You should include a POV reference for each document.** Although the generic scoring guide only requires two document references for basic core points, every document is selected by the test makers to have a point of view—the more great POV statements you can create, the more likely you are to earn expanded core points. Further, attempting only two points of view is never a good idea, as you might not reach an acceptable level with your two attempts and, therefore, will be ineligible for any expanded core points despite the quality of the rest of your essay.
14. **At the end of each body paragraph, ask for an additional document (AD) and explain why you need it.** Although the basic core rubric only requires one, you are going to ask for an additional document and explain why you need it at the end of each body paragraph. This habit ensures that you do not forget to ask or that you run do not run out of time, which sometimes happens when students have been taught to include this request in their conclusion. Asking for and explaining the need for an additional document at the end of each body paragraph also increases the likelihood that you will earn this point with an acceptable request. If you are effective at this skill, you will earn the expanded core point with three solid examples.

Here, your skill with comparison, contextualization, interpretation, and synthesis is being assessed. You must ask for a document that is

- a. **Possible:** A letter from God, or a TV broadcast from the 1258 C.E. Mongol conquest of Baghdad are not feasible documents and will not count.
- b. **Relevant:** In a DBQ about the factors that shaped the modern Olympics, a Taoist scripture about the benefits of exercise is too much of a stretch. The document must be relevant to the point of your essay.
- c. **Not already supplied:** If you already have a document from a fourth-century Christian monk discussing illuminated manuscripts, do not ask for an additional monk’s ideas to confirm the statements in the original document. That will not count.
- d. **Specific:** You will not earn this point with a statement such as “*I would like to have a document from a woman to know how women felt about this topic.*” Be specific in the type of document you want and why you want it. This request for an AD must be specific in the type of document you want,

who you want this document from and how it will help you answer the prompt's question more effectively.

- 15. Finally, when you have finished writing this essay, check your work.** Confirm that you have used and cited all the documents, that you have finished each body paragraph with a request for an additional document, that you have explained why that document would help you answer the DBQ question more effectively, and that you have addressed POV to the best of your ability. Remember that this essay is about assessing skills not content, so a check for the solid structure here could make a significant difference in your score. The DBQ score is one-sixth of your total score, so be attentive to structural details.

## **2. Writing the AP World History Continuity and Change-Over-Time Essay**

This essay will be the second one you see in the testing booklet, and it might be the one that you have the most difficulty with. Like the DBQ, you have to think about the big picture, but unlike the DBQ, you will not have documents to guide your thinking. Like the upcoming comparative question, you will have to know and analyze specific factual information; unlike the comparative question, how you analyze in the CCOT question will not be as simple as similarities and differences.

This essay is tied directly to the historical thinking skill, Patterns of Continuity and Change over Time, and it requires you to assess and evaluate not to merely recognize or describe those patterns. It demands that you know a depth of content about a theme, topic, or place; that you can identify key turning points and assess the reasons for those turning points; that you can identify elements that continue throughout that era and evaluate the reasons why they continue; and that you can place all that understanding in an accurate global context. This is a lot to do in about 40 minutes. You must have practiced those skills throughout the year to earn a top score on this essay.

One experienced teacher introduces the concept of Continuity and Change-over-Time to her students in this way. “Consider when you were born. What did you look like? What was your temperament? What was important to you? Now think about when you were five years old. What did you look like? What was your temperament? What was important to you? Now think about yourself at fifteen years old. What do you look like? What is your temperament? What is important to you? Now ask yourself the big questions: What changed over those years, and what stayed the same about you? Finally, why did those specific aspects about you change, and why did other elements about you stay the same?” The answers to all those questions would form the information for a CCOT essay about you.

Another experienced teacher uses the example of a large rock thrown into a still pond. “What is the water like before the rock is thrown into the water? What happens to the water when the rock hits it? What happens to the surface of the water five minutes after the rock

is thrown? What stays the same about the water throughout the event? What accounts for those changes, and what accounts for those continuities in the water?

There are a lot of elements to consider as you approach this question.

1. **Think about the concepts of Global and Local.** This question asks you to think about the global picture and then use snapshots as local pictures to support your ideas.
2. **Remember the mantra—analyze the process and explain the cause.** Fully analyze what happened and what stayed the same. Then tell why those things changed and why they stayed the same.
3. **Make a simple chart or other graphic organizer.** Use them to capture your ideas before you begin to write. What is the initial situation? What changes occur during the time period? What stays the same during the time period? What accounts for those changes, and what accounts for those similarities?

Initial Situation	Description	Global Context
Change #1	description/evidence	reason for change
Change #2	description/evidence	reason for change
Continuity	description/evidence	reason for continuity

4. **Follow the rubric on this essay.** More than either of the other two essays, if you lose track of your structure on the CCOT, you will not score well, even if you know a lot of information that is relevant to the prompt.

- A. **Thesis: 1 point.** You can begin with your thesis; an introduction paragraph is not necessary. If you have an introductory paragraph, make sure your thesis is the last sentence of your introduction.

To earn credit for your thesis, you must clearly address the time period and the global issue. This means that if the prompt asks for the time period 1450–1750, then you use the phrase, “From 1450–1750....” in your thesis. Leaving out either end of the time period might cost you this thesis point.

You should also include a sense of beginning, middle, and end in referencing your examples, and you should reference what stays the same as well. Your thesis must address change and continuity to count.

To do all that in a thesis usually requires the effective use of a semicolon. Two contiguous sentences might be accepted as a thesis because that is more desirable than a run-on sentence that is too hard to follow.

**B. Addresses all parts of the question: 2 points.** This element means that you must fully deal with the question's topic; explain the global context; establish a baseline situation, a turning point, and a final situation; explain how and why those changes occur; and explain how and why the continuity remains. That is a lot to do, and that is why this element is worth two points. You can earn 1 point if you omit one part of this requirement.

**C. Substantiates thesis with appropriate historical evidence: 2 points.** This is another challenging task; hence, it is worth two points. You earn these points by knowing your content and sticking to your thesis. This is not a place to dump everything you know and hope that the reader will award you points for having a large volume of information.

Information outside the time period will not count as evidence, nor will evidence about places outside the region that is asked for in the prompt. Do not write a great essay about India when the prompt asks about East Asia. You have to know your regions and your time period when you select your evidence.

The reader is looking for your ability to select historical information that supports the argument you made in your thesis. You must know and choose the appropriate content here to use as evidence. This criterion is assessing your appropriate use of relevant historical evidence.

**D. Uses relevant world historical context to effectively explain continuity and change-over-time: 1 point.** Here you are making connections to global processes; this is the big picture element of this question. What was going on in the world to impact these changes and these continuities? The historical thinking skill being examined in this question is global context.

**E. Analyzes the process of continuity and change over time: 1 point.** This is the hardest point for most students to earn. This criterion is assessing your skills at analyzing periodization and at assessing historical causation. Here you must explain what caused the changes to occur and what allowed the continuities to remain. To earn a top score, you must explain the reasons for the changes and the continuities.



5. **There are several ways to organize this type of essay.** Depending on the specific CCOT prompt, follow the framework or order you have established in your thesis throughout the paper.

In general, student essays follow a thesis order something like this.

*During the time period (date) to (date), the (topic) changed from (A) to (B) to (C); however, (D) stayed the same throughout the era because...*

Body paragraph #1 is about the initial situation A.

Body paragraph #2 is about the change to the situation B.

Body paragraph #3 is about the change to the situation C.

Body paragraph #4 is about what stayed the same D, and why it did.

- ✓ Each body paragraph should contain a topic sentence that sets the topic example in a time context.
- ✓ Each body paragraph should contain two to three specific examples that support your topic sentence.
- ✓ Each body paragraph should connect the historical events of the paragraph to the global context of the era.
- ✓ Each body paragraph should close by stating a reason for the change or continuity.

This structural suggestion is not a magic solution to making this question easier to write, nor is this template always appropriate. What is always valuable, however, is a reference to a specific time period as well as attention to correct locations, accurate supporting evidence, connection to global context, and accurate reasons for the changes and continuities.

Finally, many students choose to write this essay last because they might consider it to be the most difficult. They want to maximize their points on the DBQ first and then write the usually easier-to-manage Comparative essay. Certainly, you can decide to write these essays in any order. However, you should make that decision after you have read all three essay prompts. The CCOT might turn out to be your strength.

### 3. Writing the AP World History Comparative Essay

Like every essay in this exam, there is no substitution for careful reading, thinking, discussion, and writing throughout the year to prepare you to write this essay. Nothing helps you score at the top more than continuous hard work and mastery of content. That said, here are some structural elements to apply each time you write an AP World History Comparative essay.

**The Thesis:** The thesis is the most important part of each essay, and the comparative one is no exception. Although your classroom teacher might have explained this piece differently, here are some elements to consider as you plan your response to the comparative essay exam question.

- A. Although this is called the comparative question, you are expected to compare as well as contrast, identifying similarities and differences. You must always cover both concepts; there are no exceptions.
- B. Always have a one-sentence thesis that contains an argument (position, premise, or idea) that you can support with a framework (essay map, topic delineation, or slugs). You might be okay with a two- to three-sentence thesis in your regular classroom, but on this exam, a two- to three-sentence thesis can signal that the student writer has no clear plan or argument and is just connecting a list of topics to talk about. One, accurate, clear, non-run-on sentence is the ideal—and it takes practice to perfect.
- C. If you have an introduction, make your thesis the last sentence of the introduction. It isn't a problem if you do not have time for an introduction. Just write your thesis and then begin a new paragraph with your first body paragraph.
- D. Your thesis must have some value-added concepts, which means that you must demonstrate some applicable knowledge here. You cannot just rearrange the words of the prompt or write a generic thesis; for example, *There are many similarities and differences between....* Nor can you earn this point by simply writing *There are more similarities than differences between....* You must provide the reader with information that shows original thinking.
- E. Your thesis must deal with all aspects of the question and address similarities and differences. Some of the most successful thesis statements use one of the following formulas: stating two similarities and a difference or stating two differences and a similarity. One AP teacher describes this idea as “keeping the powerful singleton for the end.” This structural technique makes it easier to write *A and B are similar, but C is different because...* or *although A and B are different, C is similar because....* That kind of thesis can easily become an

expanded core thesis if you have the content knowledge and the historical thinking skills to support it.

- F. This is the most important point to earn, because you will rely on a solid thesis to guide the rest of your essay—do not be afraid to spend some time crafting it.

**Body Paragraphs:** Unlike the DBQ or the CCOT questions, the Comparative essay demands a depth of specific historical knowledge and the ability to use that knowledge in comparative analysis. These points are generally earned in the body paragraphs of your essay. Here are some ideas to help you demonstrate your knowledge in the most successful ways:

- A. Follow your thesis order for your paragraph order. This will keep you on track and reduce the time required to write the essay because you will not be wondering what to write about next.
- B. Do not write a block-style essay where you tell everything you know about topic A in a block and then tell everything you know about topic B in another block. The block style might be a structure you know well, but it will probably hurt you on this exam because it lends itself to description rather than analysis. This exam is called the Comparative exam because you are expected to compare; the block style makes it difficult to earn the relevant direct comparison point and the reason for the similarity or difference point. You can know a lot about a topic, but if it only provides description without specific comparative analysis, you will not score well on this question.
- C. Begin each body paragraph with a topic sentence that is a direct comparison or contrast. This means that both subjects must be addressed and specific similarities or differences must be identified; for example, *Han China and Imperial Rome relied on massive public works projects to demonstrate imperial power* or *Although medieval Europe had a chivalric code based in religious teachings, the code of bushido in Japan was secular in focus*. If your thesis is strong, then you can use those words to develop the comparison and contrast in each topic sentence. Sometimes English teachers call these kinds of topic sentences thesis reference statements.
- D. Be sure to use historical evidence to support each part of your topic sentence. Although you might know more about one aspect of the essay than another, be sure to use ample historical evidence to support each element in your topic sentence.
- E. Close each body paragraph with an explanation of why the similarity or difference exists. Demonstrating this ability requires a lot of specific historical knowledge as well as the historical thinking skills of contextualization, interpretation, and synthesis. For most students, it is the most difficult point to earn in your Comparative essay.

**Introduction and Conclusion:** You can earn a top score on this essay without these elements, so do not waste time on them. However, if you have time, the introduction and conclusion can be very significant in earning expanded core points, so here are some ways you can make them really count for you.

- A. Some student writers need to write their introduction to get to their thesis. If this is your style, then be sure to reread your introduction after you have finished the essay to make sure it still makes sense in relation to the ideas in your essay.
- B. Do not waste time seeking inspiration for an introduction. Leave a few blank lines at the top of your paper and begin with your thesis. Later you can add an introduction with a great opening idea if you have time.
- C. A restatement of your thesis might be helpful as the opening sentence in your conclusion—sometimes your wording will improve as your paper progresses. Again, you can earn a top score without this element, so do not use valuable time in crafting a conclusion.
- D. Often great conclusions echo the essay's introduction. If you began with a great idea, perhaps you can use the conclusion to finalize that thought. Sometimes teachers talk about this idea as tying a bow around your essay.
- E. In many high-scoring essays, the student uses the introduction and conclusion to establish a global context that earns expanded core points for the essay. Global context means that within the time parameters of the prompt, you should discuss what else was going on in the world that impacted or was impacted by the topics of this essay. Addressing global context effectively demonstrates to the reader that you understand how these details fit into larger global patterns. It allows you to demonstrate your skills at historical interpretation, periodization, and historical causation, as well as your knowledge of historical developments and processes. However, beginning with *Since the dawn of time...* is not showing global historical context.

**Lastly:** This is the third and final essay most of you will write, and you will be tired by the time you start it. Applying these ideas about format and structure will free you to show the applicable content you know without worrying about omitting a key structural component.