

CROSSCURRENTS

Synthesizing Sources in a DBQ





Introduction to Synthesizing Sources

When you synthesize sources in a DBQ (Document-Based Question), you combine them to help support your original claims and subclaims.

For the DBQ, students are only asked to “[support] an argument in response to the prompt using at least four documents.” This resource will provide some ideas on how to “use” the documents in various ways that will strengthen your argument.

Here are four methods for synthesizing sources effectively:



Method 1: Combination

This method involves combining evidence from multiple sources to support an original subclaim that contributes to your overall argument.

When using this method, it is important to identify the commonalities or connections between the sources and use transitional language to create a cohesive flow of information. Some examples:

- "Also,..."
- "Another example,..."
- "We see _____ again with _____."



Method 2: Responding to an Opposing View

This method acknowledges and addresses sources that do not directly support your claim or present an opposing viewpoint.

When encountering such sources, use transitional words to signal a shift in perspective. Some examples:

- "Unlike..."
- "On the other hand,..."
- "However,..."

Note that you must respond to the opposing view. You can choose to refute or rebut the opposing view by providing counterarguments or concede certain points while maintaining your overall argument.



Method 3: A Nod to Point of View

This method incorporates the concept of point of view into your writing, recognizing that different sources may have different perspectives and biases.

To incorporate point of view effectively, introduce potential biases through the use of appositives, such as "According to the author, a known critic of the government..." Combine this with clear reasoning to support your claim, acknowledging the potential limitations of certain sources.

- Author X [choose one: supports/challenges] Author Y when it comes to _____.



Method 4: A Nod to Audience

This method considers the impact of audience on the interpretation of historical documents.

To incorporate audience awareness into your writing, identify the demographics and values of the intended audience. Analyze how different audiences might respond to key issues based on their own perspectives and expectations. Some examples:

- To audiences who value _____, such a message would mean _____.
- Not all audiences would agree with _____, as demonstrated by _____.

Demonstrating an understanding of audience impact strengthens the relevance and credibility of your argument.



Last Thoughts

By employing these four methods effectively, you can synthesize sources in a DBQ in a manner that is both comprehensive and persuasive, allowing you to construct a well-supported and nuanced historical argument.

To see some of these methods in use, take a look at the sample student essay on p. 183 of CROSSCURRENTS.

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