

How I found my inner unicorn.

Reflections from two APUSH students.



When the magic happens... seek insight from your students!

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“My first step when writing a DBQ or LEQ is to read the prompt and try to think about possible ways of approaching the essay. I focus specifically on the main topic of the essay and try to **find potential pieces of evidence as well as ways that the topic can be connected to other time periods.** It is helpful to approach the topic from a more broad historical view that extends outside of the parameters of the prompt. I use the ‘Although X, Y because’ format as well which helps me organize my essay. I try to go beyond the one or two evidence requirements and write a well developed paragraph about the topic. I **also try to include causation skills in CCOT essays and CCOT skills in causation essays to add more complexity.** I also found that when writing DBQs, I could explain why all of the documents in the paragraph work to support my topic sentence/claim. I also found that it’s best to **develop your own argument** and use the documents as support; it’s harder and unnecessary to write an effective essay based solely on the documents. **At the end of my paragraphs, I like to make a connection to modern times or explain if the topic is a major continuity or change in American history to further add complexity.”**

-Semira

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“It finally clicked for me when I realized that I had more knowledge about each topic from past history unites and current events. I decided to try connecting outside knowledge to the topics that I was analyzing. For me, this was especially helpful when I would demonstrate the purpose of, content of, and point of view of documents. **As I dissected the documents I could connect the main idea or topic to something I either learned in past unites or something occurring in the present.** To connect my thoughts, I would first analyze the document with the three step process and then **add in my own observations.** While I wrote, I attempted to come up with at least one connection to each document and explain it thoroughly, connecting it back to the source and ultimately supporting my stance and my thesis. Other than including past and present comparisons, one thing that helped me was **constantly connecting my ideas to the topic/thesis.** Each time I unpacked another document/source, I would include the key words from the prompt and make sure to ATRP. This was carried on throughout my essay in all of my analysis paragraphs. Even more than referring to the topic, I connected each analysis with my own argument/stance, strengthening my viewpoint and remaining relevant. **In conclusion, for me it became easier to discover my inner unicorn as I reflected on my outside knowledge and constantly connected my thoughts to my thesis.”**

-Ainsleigh