



A Consolidated Collection of APUSH exam tips

Fight Fiercely For a Five!

Contextualization Tips

Remind students that their teacher/reader is looking for evidence the they understand what is going on in the era ...and can relate that knowledge to their overall topic in their essay!



- **It can appear anywhere in the essay.**
- **It can include evidence and connections from other eras, but they must explicitly link it to the topic/era of the essay.**
- **Needs to include at least ONE piece of specific evidence. If they cannot identify something specific it is okay to focus on developments... [And encourage them NOT to include that evidence anywhere else in their essay... not in their thesis... not in their body paragraphs.]**
- **Practicing this skill with both local and broad context is recommended, however if they stay broad... that's okay.**
- **As with most analysis... EXPLAINING HOW OR WHY IS IMPORTANT!**
- **Rarely is there a length requirement; however, encourage students to try for at least three sentences.**

Contextualization Strategy

If students are struggling to “set the scene” by explaining the historical context of the essay topic, here is a question you can pose to them as they practice:

What do you need to know in order to understand the historical significance of this topic? Have them “brain-dump” who, what, when, where, why, how. You might also have them begin their contextualization with...

In order to understand the historical significance of (topic), one must consider...

Remember that chronological framing is not enough, but is a good start. They need to show understanding of the topic in the big picture.

I sometimes ask students, “Why do you think College Board is asking you this question? What do they want you to understand or know about history?”



Describing Documents - Tips

In a Document Based Question for APUSH, students can earn one of seven points by showing they essentially understand at least three of the seven documents. In addition to showing that they understand what they are seeing or reading, they should also be able to explain how it relates to the topic of the essay as well as use it in some way. If you are using the three step document strategy, combining steps one and three will help students ensure they earn this point.

Example: In the political cartoon, “Ograbme,” a merchant is trying to sell his goods despite the embargo that had been placed on trade. This relates to the topic of Market Revolution, because the economic expansion in that revolution could not occur until the embargo was lifted. The end of the War of 1812 led to the end of such policies and the economy grew rapidly.

Remind students that the readers already know the documents inside and out... go beyond simple descriptions and quotes!

GO BEYOND THE OBVIOUS!



OGRABME, or. The American Snapping-turtle.

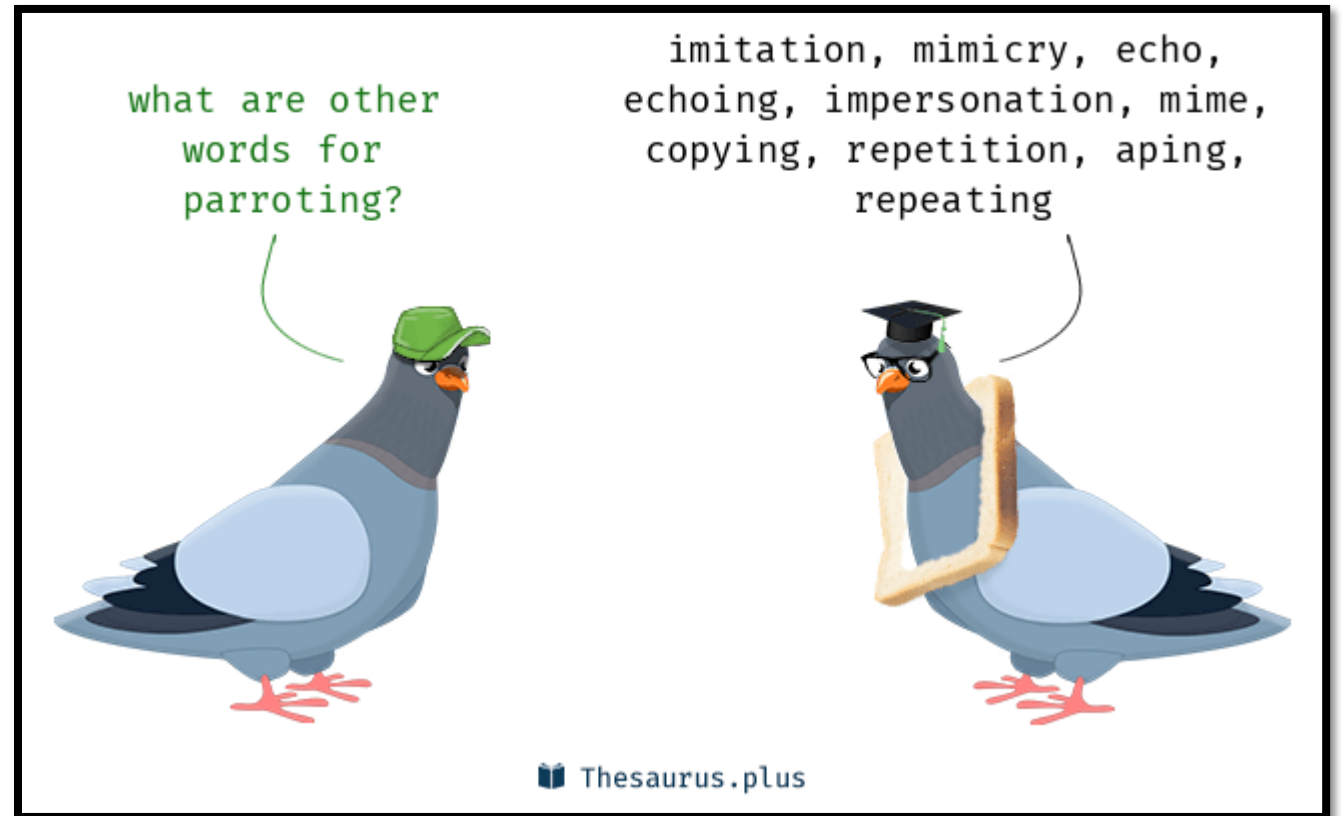
614 for the Proprietor, by D. Longworth 11 Park.

Encourage students to describe and relate MORE than three documents. Many bright and talented students are overconfident in their ability to understand documents. I recommend at least four (if not more).

HIPPING TIPS

On the DBQ essay for APUSH, students can earn one of seven points by successfully analyzing **h**istorical situation, **i**ntended audience, **p**urpose, or **p**oint of view for at least three of the seven documents.

- Encourage students to “use the lingo!”
If they are analyzing point of view... have them say, “the author’s point of view was...”
- Encourage students to HIPP more than three... they are often overconfident in their understanding of the document. I recommend HIPPING at least four (if not more).
- It is important that they **do NOT parrot the document**. Encourage students to **Go Beyond the Obvious**. I often remind my students to go beyond their “six grade self” to their “eleventh grade self.”
- Quoting is a sign of weakness... unless the student is briefly quoting in order to prove their analysis of the HIPP.
- It is not enough to HIPP well... they must also explain how their analysis of the document relates to their argument... closing the loop! This means a typical HIPP is at least two sentences.
- Students should stay within the parameters of the prompt even if documents written in other eras.



HIPPING STRATEGY

REMEMBER THE HIPP POINT IS NEVER AN EASY POINT TO EARN, SO STUDENTS NEED TO BE THOROUGH IN THEIR EXPLANATIONS.

While grading mock exams, I noticed many of my students were weak in their HIPP analysis. If you are seeing this, too... consider this strategy for practice/skill review.

One HIPP strategy to ensure thorough analysis is a **three step process** of:

1. Choosing ONE of the HIPP and describing it.
2. Adding a sentence explaining how or why you “figured it out,” such as “This is evident because...”
3. Closing the loop!

Example:

The historical situation of the political cartoon includes the quota acts of the 1920s which limited immigration from places such as Italy. This is evident because the number of Europeans at the wide end of the funnel is much greater than the number actually emerging from the narrow end of the funnel where “3%” is applied. This limitation is relevant to the argument that immigration policies in the early twentieth century were very different from immigration policies in the later twentieth centuries, because such quotas were removed in the 1960s.



Using SIX of seven documents in a DBQ essay

Students can earn one of seven points on the APUSH DBQ essay if they **successfully use six of the seven documents to defend their thesis/argument**. If you are using the three step strategy, this point is in step three. Practicing this skill involves students **first understanding the document and how it relates to their topic, and then using the document as a piece of evidence to defend their thesis or argument**. Their argument may be present as a body paragraph topic sentence, or it may be evident in a “closing the loop” statement at the end of the paragraph.

One of my concerns about this point is that students often spend a great deal of their time on this step... much more time than on other parts of the directions/rubric. If students are not confident that they truly understand *and* can apply all (or almost all) of the documents to their argument, I encourage them to spend their time targeting other parts of the directions/rubric. Also, for your dyslexic students without extended time... you may want to recommend they focus on fewer than six.

It is good practice for students to use all three document steps for at least four documents, in my opinion... and you may want to remind them that excellence does not require perfection. 😊 Be strategic with time... be aware of the rubric.

“Excellence does not require perfection.”

- Henry James

Tips on Complexity

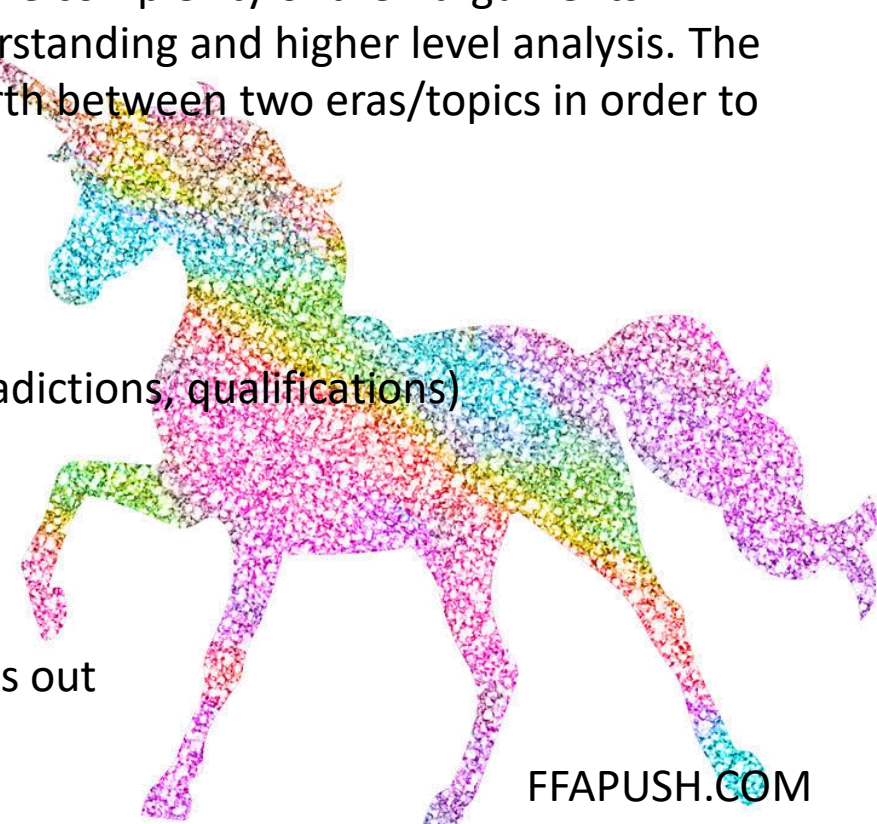
The “unicorn” point is a site to see! If your students are aiming for a **truly complex essay**, remind them of what the teacher/reader is looking for. They are looking for evidence that the student **understands deeply... understands nuances of documents and topics...** can write a **sophisticated essay...** and is clearly one of the most talented writers among peers.

I have encouraged my students this year to practice synthesis in order to increase the complexity of their arguments. Synthesis is no longer part of the rubric, but it is a skill that can reveal deeper understanding and higher level analysis. The ping-pong approach is a tool you may use to encourage students to go back and forth between two eras/topics in order to reveal a deeper understanding of the historical significance of a topic.

Other tips for increasing complexity:

- Well organized essay with topical or thematic body paragraphs.
- Explaining THOROUGHLY connections among documents (corroborations, contradictions, qualifications)
- Making connections to other eras/topics along the way.

For lower level students, I would focus their attention on other parts of the rubric. Not everyone can or will earn this point, and that is okay. Encourage your students to strategically target as many points/parts of the essay as they can but not to stress out if they are not able to hit every target.



Tips on using Outside Evidence in a DBQ essay

On the DBQ essay for APUSH, students can earn one of seven points by using historical evidence NOT found in any of the seven documents in order to defend their thesis/argument. There are a few strategies that can help students earn this point, and I encourage all students to try to include at least one piece of outside evidence in their essays. For the DBQ... they only need ONE! But the key is... it cannot be found in the documents.

- The piece of evidence MUST **fall within the parameters of the prompt.**
- It **should not be a brief comment or passing reference.**
- Students should **thoroughly explain how or why the evidence supports their argument.**
- Encourage students to **include specific evidence any time they think of something.**
For example, they may be reading a document about the Declaration of Independence and it brings to mind Common Sense. Encourage them to drop in any connection they may make even if just a passing reference... then if they have time later... elaborate on the connection.
- If a student makes an **inference from a document** that leads to a specific piece of evidence, that is sometimes enough. Encourage them shoot for one truly outside piece, but inferences are also important ways to use evidence beyond.





Tips on Thesis Writing



OUR STUDENTS ARE YOUNG HISTORIANS! REMIND THEM THAT THEY ARE DEVELOPING AND DEFENDING THEIR HISTORICAL ARGUMENTS IN RESPONSE TO A PROMPT.

On the DBQ essay, the thesis can earn one of seven points. On the LEQ essay it can earn one of six points. This point and process is essential to a successful essay, and students should begin their planning with development of a complex thesis.

TIPS

- **No Absolutes!** Do not say things like “all, none, always, never...” Absolutes are NOT historically defensible claims. *History is GRAY.* There is always an opposing view!
- **ATFP!** (Address The Full Prompt) Many students fail essays because they are not answering the question! Encourage them to identify the skill, qualifiers, eras, and categories.
- **Remind them to SLOW DOWN** in preparation and ensure they are addressing the entire prompt. Many students score low because they jump in without proper processing and planning their argument. Using the lingo of the prompt, including all topics and categories, and **targeting the skill are essential!**
- **Identify parameters** of prompt and stay within it.
- **FIRST or LAST PARAGRAPH!** *The thesis should not appear in the second paragraph, for example.*
- **BOTH SIDES!** Targeting the skill includes addressing both sides of the skill. I encourage my students to target both sides even if the prompt only addresses one side (especially for LEQ). John P. Irish’s thesis formula is recommended. It is essentially:

Although X (what there was less of), Y (what there is more of) because...

Comparison – similarities AND differences and what there was more of

Causation – causes AND effects and which was greatest or more significant

CCOT – continuities AND changes and which there was more of



More on Thesis Writing



Thesis statements must have some meat to them. Students should not rely on generic categories... gone are the days of “political, economic, and social” as generic categories. Instead, students should have categories that clearly relate to the prompt and topic. If students are using generic categories... encourage them to follow it up with a “because” statement. For example: Although the American Revolution was caused by social issues because the Patriots resented the way the British military looked down on them, the war was caused by political and economic issues to a greater extent as many colonists desired more freedom to live and work as they pleased. A thesis of “Although the American Revolution was caused by social issues, it was caused by political and economic issues to a greater extent,” will most likely NOT be adequate.

Thesis statements should not include quotes or topics from the documents. When students develop their argument on the DBQ essay... remind them that they are NOT searching the documents for the “answer to the question.” It is important for students to understand how documents address the prompt/topic, but they are NOT finding answers in them. They need to develop their argument blending what they know and what they read... remembering THEY are the young historian.

The Importance of Defending an Argument

Once students develop an argument and state their thesis, it is important that they **remain focused on defending that argument** as they write their essay. If they do not keep in mind their purpose... they may end up storytelling instead of analyzing history and defending an argument. For the DBQ, they may end up summarizing documents instead of analyzing them and using them to defend an argument. Many bright students tell beautiful stories on the essay test and score very low. **Their purpose is to defend an argument** that clearly addresses the prompt and illustrates historical analysis.

Over-simplification is a common pitfall. Have students practice defending arguments with evidence and explanations of how or why. Avoiding absolutes can also help them avoid an over-simplified essay. We can also help students avoid over-simplification by not presenting history as overly idealistic (sugar-coated) as well as not presenting it as overly cynical. Present history and have them practice analysis by considering alternative views...

there is always another side to the story... there is always another POV. The X-Y strategy in Irish's thesis formula can help. Also, having students address both sides of the skill even if the prompt only asks for one can help them avoid over-simplification.

Remind students to **close the loop!** They should connect back to the X and Y throughout their body paragraphs.



Fight Fiercely!

SAQ Reminders

- Answer, Cite, Explain. Answer, Cite, Explain. **ANSWER, CITE, EXPLAIN!!!**
- **Use the lingo** to set up your answer! Ensure you are ATFP (Address the Full Prompt).
- **Include one piece of specific evidence or analysis** NOT in the document or prompt. Shoot for proper nouns!
- **Explain HOW or WHY** your evidence supports/answers the question! If you are using “this is significant because” make sure your statement is explaining!

Other Tips

1. *Identify the skills being tested and the topics/eras. Keep your answers focused on what is being tested.*
2. *Plan your answer before you write. You'll have approximately 10-15 minutes for each SAQ set.*
3. *Write in complete sentences, and separate your answers. It is not one paragraph... it is three separate answers.*
Remember each answer should stand alone. Don't let one answer depend on another. Indent each answer (or separate in some way).
4. If the prompt says “one,” ONLY discuss One! If you talk about three things and one of the three is incorrect... you may not earn the point. So just focus on the ONE that you are most confident about.
5. Don't skip any SAQs! If you aren't sure how to address it, set up your answer and wing it! You never know what may come to mind as you are writing!
6. For two-source SAQs- clearly identify each historian's interpretation and HOW they differ from each other. DO NOT QUOTE unless it is brief and you are using it to explain how “this is evident because.”
7. For images/cartoons/charts/graphs- make sure you include a simple description of the document in one of your answers. Let the reader know that you understand what you are looking at.
8. **DO NOT REPEAT YOURSELF!** You will not get credit for “double dipping.”

What happens in contextualization...

Stays in contextualization!

One frequent weakness I've seen this year is double-dipping and contextualization crossovers that are inappropriate. One contextualization tip is include at least one piece of specific historical evidence

BUT... *and this is important...* do ***not*** repeat that evidence in the thesis or in the body paragraphs.

Encourage students to set up their scene...

contextualization... and then ***let it be***. Don't connect back to it, don't use it to defend a thesis, and don't use the evidence or development again in body paragraphs or in document analysis.



MULTIPLE CHOICE TIPS

- **Read and analyze the document carefully.** Don't assume you know what it's about just by reading the first few lines or by looking at the title. Pay attention to details such as author, date, etc. *All of your multiple choice questions will be grouped with a document. Most will address the document in some way, but you may have a few questions that can be answered independently. Many mistakes are made when students do not take the time to analyze the document first.*
- **DO NOT SEARCH FOR ANSWERS in the document.** The test is a skill based test... not a search and find test! You are applying YOUR knowledge of history with your ability to analyze and interpret documents.
- **Read the question carefully.** **Pay more attention to the question than you do to the answers.** **Note the verbs!** If you know the era... make a note of it. Students typically spend the majority of their time considering the answer choices and not enough time analyzing the document and the question. Don't make this mistake!
- **Identify the skill, the theme, and the era.** If you understand what is being tested it may help you eliminate choices.
- **Don't over-analyze!** *They are not trying to trick you.* Answers will likely emphasize a theme. Know your MAGPIES and objectives!
- **Don't change your mind after you bubble!** *The odds are against you.* **Go with your first choice!**
- There is **no guessing penalty.** **If you are unable to eliminate choices, have a plan beforehand to guess the SAME letter on all questions that you cannot answer.**
- **Bubble as you go...** if you run out of time and haven't transferred your answers from your test book to your answer document... *yikes, don't go there!*
- **If you have extra time, brainstorm & brain dump... what eras/events were NOT on the multiple choice?**
Your SAQs and Essays will most likely differ!

