

HOW TO ANALYZE SPECIFIC TYPES OF DOCUMENTS

Many of the following examples are based upon former AP DBQs. The principles of how to analyze documents apply to any document.

- I. Visuals
 - A. Pictures and photographs
 1. Subject
 - a. What person, event, or subject is represented?
 2. Time and place
 - a. When and where is the event taking place?
 3. Point of view
 - a. Is the artist or photographer trying to convey a particular point of view?
 4. Emotional impact
 - a. What is the general impression?
 5. Form of expression
 - a. What kind of picture-drawing, painting, etc. is it?
 6. Symbolism
 - a. Is any present?
 - B. Cartoon
 1. Characters
 - a. Who are the characters in the cartoon?
 - b. Are they realistic or exaggerated?
 - c. What are their expressions?
 - d. Are characters or other things labeled?
 2. Symbols
 - a. Obvious
 - (1) flags, Uncle Sam, etc
 - b. Subtle
 - (1) actions of characters, etc
 3. Overall impression
 4. Title or caption
 - C. Posters or Broadsides
 1. Publisher
 - a. Who?
 - b. Why? (May reflect bias)
 2. Title
 3. Audience
 4. Purpose
 - a. Obvious/stated
 - b. Hidden meaning
 - D. Diagrams and flow charts
 1. Use
 - a. summarize important ideas
 - b. illustrate ideas' parts or components.
 2. Title
 3. Examine all parts/sections
 4. Identify/understand all labels
 - E. Maps
 1. Identify era/time period
 2. Identify and understand topic/event/development depicted
 - a. Change over time
 3. Location/area shown
 4. Title
 5. Identifiers in key/legend
 6. Identify type

- a. Political
 - b. Geographic/topographic
- F. Charts
1. Purpose
 - a. usually illustrate relationship between two subjects
 - (1) identify subjects
 - (2) identify relationship
 - (a) direct
 - (b) indirect
 - (3) identify type of change depicted
 - (a) increase
 - (b) decrease
 - (c) status quo
 2. Identify and understand titles
 - a. Overall
 - b. Category
 3. Numbers
 - a. Absolute or percentages
 - b. Idea(s) conveyed
 - c. Whole or abbreviated
 4. Significance of change depicted
 5. Era/time period
 6. Influence of major event(s) on material presented
 7. X and Y axis
 - a. Expanded
 - (1) eras are contiguous
 - b. Collapsed
 - (1) selected non-contiguous eras presented

- G. Graphs
1. All types
 - a. Key
 - b. Title
 - c. Dates
 - d. Purpose
 2. Circle/pie graph
 - a. Note percentages
 3. Bar graph
 - a. Identify both axes
 - b. Identify comparison(s)
 - c. Identify any sub-groups
 - (1) Check legend
 4. Line graph
 - a. Identify both axes
 - b. Identify trend shown

II. Print

- A. Newspapers, Magazines, Pamphlets
1. Type of article
 - a. News
 - b. Editorial
 - (1) possible bias
 - c. Interview
 - (1) With
 - (2) By
 - (a) possible bias
 - d. Letter to the editor
 - (1) author
 - (a) possible bias
 2. Purpose of article
 - a. Reflect mass opinion
 - b. Influence/create mass opinion

- 3. Periodical Bias
 - a. Economic
 - b. Political
- 4. Audience
- B. Book
 - 1. General background
 - a. Contemporary or reflection
 - b. Primary or secondary account
 - (1) based on evidence or opinion
 - c. Author
 - (1) disinterested
 - (2) partisan
 - (a) political
 - (b) social
 - (c) economic
 - (3) domestic or foreign
 - 2. Preface
 - a. Personal statement
 - (1) intent
 - (2) bias
 - 3. Novels
 - a. Historical or pure fiction
 - b. Symbolism
 - 4. Memoirs
 - a. Selective
 - b. Personal view
 - c. Rarely self critical
- C. Poems
 - 1. Use of language
 - 2. View
 - a. Spiritual
 - b. Symbolic
- III. Personal Documents
 - A. Speech
 - 1. Speaker
 - a. As individual
 - b. As representative of a group
 - (1) potential bias
 - 2. Audience
 - 3. Draft or finished copy
 - 4. Type
 - a. Official
 - b. Informal/impromptu
 - c. Campaign or other
 - 5. View presented
 - a. Typical for author/group
 - B. Letter
 - 1. Date
 - 2. Type
 - a. Personal
 - b. Official/Business (Public)
 - 3. Intended audience
 - a. Group
 - (1) relationship to
 - b. Person
 - (1) relationship
 - (a) subordinate
 - (b) peer
 - (c) superior
 - (d) friend or family
 - C. Diary
 - 1. Author

2. Date
 - a. Before/during/after fact
 3. Type of entry
 - a. Observation
 - b. Partisan viewpoint
 4. Self-criticism/examination
- IV. Political Documents
- A. Party/Group Platform
 1. Speaker
 - a. Personal views
 - (1) in sync with platform
 - (2) in contrast to platform
 2. Type
 - a. Compromise
 - b. Multi-lateral
 - c. Unilateral
 - d. Declaration
 - (1) Organization
 - B. Legislative
 1. Organizations represented
 2. Pattern of support or opposition
 3. Surprises/unusual alliances
- V. Public Records
- A. Laws, Proclamations, Executive Orders
 1. Why issued/passed
 2. Representative of
 3. Root cause/event
 4. Purpose
 - a. Behavior/action targeted for change
 - b. Sentiment reflected
 5. Support
 - a. Broad based
 - b. Sectional/regional
 6. Symbolism
 - a. In design
 - b. In enforcement
 7. Commentary on/reaction to
 8. Impact area
 - a. Federal
 - b. State
 - c. Local
 9. Time in effect
 - a. Amendments to
 - B. Court Decisions
 1. In support of
 - a. Intended consequences
 - b. Unintended consequences
 2. Rejection of
 - a. Finding
 - b. Basis for finding
 - c. Intended consequences
 - d. Unintended consequences
 3. Court finding
 - a. Universal decision
 - b. Split decision
 - (1) identify division
 - (a) by number
 - (b) by ideology
 - (c) by group
 - i) geographic
 - ii) president appointed
 4. Views represented

- a. Broad based
 - b. Sectional/regional
 - c. Particular group/class/party
 - 5. Reaction to
 - a. Was decision enforced/obeyed?
 - (1) narrow or broad interpretation
 - 6. Reporting of
 - a. News account
 - b. Primary source
 - (1) court document
 - (2) trial transcript
- C. Legislative Debate, Speech in Congress, Testimony before Congress
 - 1. Where reported
 - a. News
 - b. Congressional Record
 - 2. Audience
 - a. Congress
 - b. Constituents/Public
 - 3. Speaker
 - a. Role
 - b. Level of Influence
 - c. Outside activities/interests that may be reflected
 - d. Point of view
 - (1) personal
 - (2) of constituents
 - (3) of group(s)
- D. Government Agency report
 - 1. Federal, State or Local
 - 2. Reflection of era
 - a. Political, economic or social views
 - 3. Purpose
 - a. Self reflection/evaluation
 - b. Basis for future action(s)
 - 4. Audience
- E. Other
 - 1. Diplomatic Correspondence
 - a. From Superior/Government
 - (1) instructions
 - (2) stand
 - b. To Superior/Government
 - c. Intra-national
 - d. International
 - 2. Official Letters
 - 3. Treaties
 - a. Provisions within
 - (1) impact on prior agreements
 - b. Consequences
 - (1) intended
 - (2) unintended

****NOTE**** The above information was taken from classroom materials originally created by Mr. McCracken.