

Lesson 5 — Outlining and Planning the Essay Structure

Exercise 1

Brainstorming Main Ideas, Details and Explanations

Before you start to write a DBQ essay, you need to look over the primary sources. As you do, it helps to take notes. You only have minutes to do this, but it can actually SAVE you time. Do it in a "brainstorming" fashion, jotting down words and phrases as you think of them. As you take notes, keep this in mind: A good DBQ essay includes your thesis as well as paragraphs with the following three kinds of statements:

- (M) A few main ideas or subtopics supporting the thesis.**
- (D) Details, facts or examples supporting the main ideas or subtopics.**
- (E) Explanations or general statements about the details, facts, or examples.**

In the box is a DBQ based on the sources for this lesson. Below it are a few notes about the DBQ and the primary sources. Each note is labeled as either **(M)** for "main idea or subtopic," **(D)** for a "detail, fact or example," or **(E)** for "explanation of a detail, fact or example." They've been arranged in order here and labeled. We realize that in a test situation, you can't jot notes quickly in this organized way. We only show them this way here so that you can see how this **M-D-E** system looks in practice.

Now, for about ten minutes, add as many notes as you can in the blank area provided on the right. Then see how many of your own notes you can label using this same **M-D-E** lettering system.

You will use all of these notes in Exercise 2

The Question:

"Revolutionary idealism and revolutionary violence go together." Assess this statement by comparing and contrasting the French Revolution of 1789 and the Russian Revolution of 1917.

Revolution and utopian ideals (M)

Declaration of the Rights of Man (D)

"Workers of the world unite" (D)

philosophes (D)

Using ideas to construct a perfect society (E)

Add some notes of your own here ...

Class enemies of the revolution (M)

Aristocrats (D)

Capitalists (D)

Priests and monks (D)

Kulaks. (D)

Whole groups demonized as enemies to be eliminated (E)

Lack of law and democracy (M)

Bolsheviks as conspiratorial elite (D) Paris mob (D)

Cheka (D)

Committee of Public Safety (D)

Arbitrary power soon in hands of supreme leader -- Lenin, Robespierre, Napoleon, etc. (E)

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Exercise 2 Organizing Your Notes

Use your notes from Exercise 1 for this lesson to create a more organized outline for part of an essay on the DBQ from that exercise. The DBQ is repeated here. All you need to do is come up with a brief thesis statement (see Lesson 4) and an outline of TWO main ideas supporting your thesis statement. Along the left side of the sheet below are guidelines based on the three-part classification system presented in Exercise 1 (**Main idea-Details-Explanations**). Follow these guidelines in creating your partial outline.

In Exercise 4, you will have a chance to write a partial essay based on this outline.

The Question:

“Revolutionary idealism and revolutionary violence go together.” Assess this statement by comparing and contrasting the French Revolution of 1789 and the Russian Revolution of 1917.

Use this space to fill in your outline.

Thesis Statement:

1. Main Idea or subtopic

Should be a key idea that you think helps to prove the thesis.

Details, Facts or Examples

Details or primary sources that prove or support the main idea or subtopic listed above.

Explanations of Details or Facts

Brief ideas showing why the details, facts, examples or primary sources back up the main idea listed above.

2. Main Idea or subtopic

Should be a key idea that you think helps to prove the thesis.

Details, Facts or Examples

Details or primary sources that prove or support the main idea or subtopic listed above.

Explanations of Details or Facts

Brief ideas showing why the details, facts, examples or primary sources back up the main idea listed above.

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Exercise 3 Essay Structure: Some Typical Formats

As you take notes for a DBQ, you should also think about the overall structure of your essay. By **“structure,” we mean the way all the paragraphs in your essay are organized.** Four essay-structure formats are summarized in the boxes on the right here. All of these formats follow a single basic pattern: 1) an introductory paragraph presents the thesis; 2) two or more internal paragraphs present the main ideas and key points; 3) a final paragraph concludes. The only thing that changes from one format to the next is how the internal paragraphs are organized.

Which essay format you choose depends on the type of question you have been asked. On the left are the four question types you studied in Lesson 3. In the spaces provided in the boxes on the right, indicate the question type best suited to the essay format described. As a class, discuss your choices.

Question Types

1. “Assess the Validity”

As in this question: *“The colonists could not have won the Revolutionary War without the leadership of General Washington.” Assess the validity of this statement.*

2. “Compare and Contrast”

As in: *Compare and contrast the strengths and weaknesses of the colonists and the British in the American Revolution.*

3. “Explain Why” or

“Explain to what extent”

As in: *Explain why the colonists won the Revolution in spite of Great Britain’s superior numbers and military strength.*

4. “Describe the Changes,” or “Describe and Explain”

As in: *Describe how colonial attitudes toward the British shifted from 1763 to 1776, and explain why these changes took place.*

Essay-Structure Formats

Format A Question Type _____

Introductory Paragraph - Thesis

Internal Paragraphs:

- “One reason or factor ...” (back with details and explanations).
- “Another reason or factor ...” (back with details and explanations).
- “Perhaps the most important reason or factor ...” (back with details and explanations).

Concluding Paragraph

Format B Question Type _____

Introductory Paragraph - Thesis

Internal Paragraphs:

- “First this key event or development took place ...” (back with details and explanations).
- “Then this occurred ...” (back with details and explanations).
- “Finally this happened. ...” (back with details and explanations).

Concluding Paragraph

Format C Question Type _____

Introductory Paragraph - Thesis

Internal Paragraphs:

- Similarities between two things ... (back with details and explanations).
- Differences between two things ... (back with details and explanations).

Concluding Paragraph

Format D Question Type _____

Introductory Paragraph - Thesis

Internal Paragraphs:

- “I disagree (or agree) because ...” (back with details and explanations).
- “On the other hand, it is true that ...” (back with details and explanations).

Concluding Paragraph

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Exercise 4 Using Your Outlining Skills

Here is a chance to use the work you have done in all three previous exercises. Look back over your notes from Exercise 1 and Exercise 2. Re-read the DBQ (it is presented here again). Also, look over Exercise 3 and think about the essay format that would be best given the DBQ and your thesis statement. Now, write a partial DBQ essay made up of one introductory paragraph (this is where your thesis statement goes) and the two internal paragraphs you outlined in Exercise 2.

The Question:

“Revolutionary idealism and revolutionary violence go together.” Assess this statement by comparing and contrasting the French Revolution of 1789 and the Russian Revolution of 1917.