

Lesson 8 — Writing a Strong Conclusion

Exercise 1 Choosing Your Conclusion

To write a good conclusion to a DBQ essay, first look back at your introductory paragraph. This will focus you again on the question and your thesis. Your conclusion should refer in some way to both the DBQ and your basic thesis, and it should comment on how the evidence you have presented supports your thesis. **Do NOT simply restate points you have already made. Also do NOT add new evidence or specifics at this point. Try instead to find a simple and forceful way to call attention to your thesis and how you have backed it up.**

In the box is a DBQ based on the documents for this lesson. Below it is an essay minus a conclusion. A typical DBQ essay will be a bit longer and more detailed than this one. But this one will be easier to work with for now. On the second page of this exercise (p. 74) are three possible conclusions to the essay. Choose the conclusion you think is best and explain your decision in the spaces provided.

The Question

How did the Islamic world's view of Western civilization change from 1500 to the present? Describe and explain the pattern you see.

In 1500, the Islamic world, led above all by the Ottoman Empire, was still more advanced than the West in many ways — militarily, economically and intellectually. Moreover, Muslims clearly saw their civilization as superior to that of the Christian West. By the 20th century, their mood had practically reversed itself. Most Muslims by then felt despair at the Islamic world's weakness in relation to the West. This led some to admire the West and seek to imitate and learn from it. But it led others to deep resentment and a rejection of all Western ways. The Muslim world today is still torn between these two conflicting ways of reacting to the West.

The Ottoman Empire reached the height of its power in the 1500s, especially under the rule of Suleyman the Magnificent, as he was known in the West. As this title suggests, the West looked on the Ottomans with fear and awe. Westerners may have disliked Suleyman's claim to be "Slave of God, master of the world." But they would understand why he saw himself that way. In 1529, Ottoman forces conquered all the way to Vienna, where they held the city in siege for a time. Ottomans still largely controlled land and sea trade routes to Asia. And they were still dominant in the Mediterranean as well. Yet in fact, a long slow decline had already set in.

In Europe, the Renaissance, Reformation and Scientific Revolution had begun to foster new ideas and vastly increased economic and military power. By the early 1800s, many Muslims already feared Europeans as "tyrannical infidels and dissident evildoers" whose ideas about liberty and equality would destroy all order and authority (see Document 4). Others wanted to adopt Western ways in order to strengthen their own society. But by the 1800s, the Ottoman Empire was the "sick man of Europe," headed for complete collapse in World War I. The new Turkish nation that followed brought to power the greatest admirer of the West of all — Mustafa Kemal, later known as Ataturk. As Documents 6 and 7 indicate, he ended the Islamic religion's powerful political role in Turkey, introduced Western cultural practices large and small, promoted social and political equality for woman, and more.

Today, many moderates like Naguib Mahfouz and Abu Zeid share this spirit of openness to new ideas about Islam and the West. At the same time, other Muslims look to a much stricter, and even more political form of Islam to defend their region against a Western world they see as materialistic and destructive. The Muslim Brotherhood, the regime of Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran or the strict Islamic order in Saudi Arabia all express this stance in different ways. To these Muslims, the tolerant attitude of the moderates only fosters doubt and weakness at a time when Islam must stand strong against the West's power and corrupt ways.

(see second page of this lesson for three alternative conclusions to this essay.)

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Exercise 1 (Continued) Choosing Your Conclusion

Below are three conclusions to the DBQ essay found on the first page of this exercise. Read these through and choose the conclusion that you think best completes the essay. Then in the spaces provided, give a brief explanation of your decision about each of the three conclusions.

Conclusion 1

One of the clearest examples of the great divide in Islam today was the fatwa against novelist Salman Rushdie and the reaction to it by moderates such as Naguib Mahfouz. Mahfouz, who won the Nobel Prize for Literature, does not necessarily agree with all of Rushdie's views. Nor does he accept all aspects of Western culture. But he does see its ideas about freedom of thought and expression as "sacred" and consistent with Islam. Whether or not his views will prevail throughout the Muslim world still remains to be seen.

Did you choose this conclusion? Why or why not? _____

Conclusion 2

The Islamic world has gone from a sense of superiority to feelings of inferiority, to anger, rage and violence. What will come next? That depends as much on the West as it does on the Islamic world. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, the West came to dominate much of the Middle East politically. For a long time, it controlled the region's oil completely. This only added to the anger and sense of helplessness in the region. If the West adopts a less domineering attitude toward the Islamic world in the future, Islam's view of the West may change accordingly.

Did you choose this conclusion? Why or why not? _____

Conclusion 3

The Islamic world has come full circle since the 1500s. At that time, it saw itself as "the master of all lands, the shadow of God over all nations," as Suleyman's inscription puts it. But over the next three centuries, the facts of history forced Muslims to slowly alter and give up this confident world view. One group of them looked for ways to incorporate the West's science and technical skills, and in some cases its intellectual and cultural values as well. These Muslims hoped to modernize their region, calling for tolerance and a less literal approach to Islamic teachings. Others reacted the other way, trying to shut out the West and reassert a much stricter form of Islam through militant, even violent political action. Which of these two forms of reaction to the West will prevail remains to be seen.

Did you choose this conclusion? Why or why not? _____

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Exercise 2

World History Unfolding — Review Exercise

Here is a chance to apply what you have learned in all eight lessons in this workbook. Below is a checklist of the basic ideas stressed in these lessons. Use this checklist as a set of guidelines for evaluating the essay in Exercise 1 (including the conclusion you chose for it). Study the checklist. Also, look back at the instructions for some of the past exercises in this workbook if you need to. Now, next to each item on the checklist, jot down a few notes evaluating the essay in Exercise 1. How good a job do you think it does in meeting each standard on the checklist? In class, discuss your notes.

Introductory paragraph

Does the paragraph clarify the DBQ itself and present a clear thesis, or answer, to that DBQ?

Use of Primary Source Documents

Are they simply used in a “laundry list” fashion, or are they used thoughtfully to support key ideas and examples?

The Internal Paragraphs — 1

Are these paragraphs organized around main points with supporting details and explanations related to those main points? (Look back at the **M-D-E** system suggested in Lesson 5 and Lesson 7. But keep in mind that a good paragraph may vary the way it uses these elements.)

The Internal Paragraphs — 2

Are transitions and other phrases used effectively to connect points in a logical way?

Conclusion

Does it restate the DBQ and thesis in a way that sums up the main ideas without repeating old information or going into new details?