

Step 7: Comparing Documents

Now that you've analyzed all the documents individually, it's time to start the fun part of comparing the documents to each other. There are a bezillion ways to do this, but here are some of the most common.

CHRONOLOGICAL – “Response to the Spread of Buddhism”

Date	Doc #	SOAPSTone Characteristics		Notice any trends or patterns? (e.g. changes over time, documents that agree with or contradict each other?)

Remember the **Historical Background** information? Do you see any relationship between the characteristics you listed in the table above and the timeline described in the Historical Background section?

SOAPSTone CHARACTERISTICS – “Response to the Spread of Buddhism”

There must be at least 2 documents that share each characteristic Any characteristic that is present in only 1 document is inadmissible because it is not a characteristic that is shared by a “group” of documents as required by the rubric.

This characteristic...	Is shared by these documents...	as shown by these specific word(s) from the document (cite the evidence).

Caution: Do NOT summarize the documents. Your reader already knows what the documents “say.” Your job is to *interpret the evidence* in the documents in order to *answer the question*.

Wrong

“Doc #4 is strongly anti-Buddhist.”

or

“Doc #5 says that all the religions are equal.”

Right

“Han Yu’s vehement rejection of Buddhism reflects the resurgence of Confucianism after imperial order was restored. (Doc #4)”

or

“Because Zong Mi is afraid the emperor will discriminate against Buddhism, he is eager to tolerate all religions,. (Doc #5)

Step 8: Putting It All Together

Now, look at your characteristics list on the previous page. You may not realize it, but you've just outlined the body paragraphs for your essay. Simply change the titles on the columns and you'll see how.

- The topic sentence is the characteristic in the left column.
- The sentences in the rest of the paragraph that analyze the documents/authors are listed in the middle column
- The precise words that you've listed in the right column are the specific evidence that supports your paragraph's topic.

See the final outline that you will be completing.

Step 9: The Thesis

It is vitally important that you write your thesis *after* you've examined the evidence in the documents. Perhaps the greatest mistake you can make is to choose a thesis in a knee-jerk manner when you first read the question, because then as you read the documents you will tend to selectively favor *only* the evidence that supports your thesis and ignore any evidence that contradicts your thesis. The DBQ is designed to test your ability to interpret *all* relevant evidence and develop a thesis that reflects that evidence. To write your thesis before examining *all* of the evidence is to fail the DBQ before you even start. This is a fundamental error that even superior students will construct. Even professional historians struggle to maintain the objectivity when examining the complexities of all relevant evidence.

Here's a guide to the most common mistakes students make when attempting to write a thesis.

DBQ Outline

Based on the following documents, analyze the responses to the spread of Buddhism in China. What additional kind of document(s) would you need to evaluate the extent of Buddhism's appeal in China?

Thesis			
Paragraph Subject (written as a topic sentence)	Doc #'s and author's names to include in this paragraph	Specific points to make, with notes on what word(s) from the document to use in quotes.	Context / POV statement about one of the docs in the paragraph (written as a complete sentence)
Missing Voice / Additional Document	Type of Information it will provide	How would this document help answer the question more completely? How would an historian <i>use</i> this document? (written as a complete sentence)	