

The Vietnam War: Would You Have Been A Draft Dodger?

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8th and 11th grade American History



Overview: As the Vietnam War began to escalate in 1965, the number of men being drafted into military service increased. Many Americans began to view the Vietnam War as being problematic, and questioned American involvement. Open protests began to mount, particularly on college campuses. One visual sign of protest was the burning of draft cards by young men who had been required by the American government to register for the draft. As the fairness of draft procedures were questioned, thousands of young American men chose to flee into exile in Canada or Sweden rather than risk conscription (being drafted). These men became known as "Draft Dodgers". Their actions were considered criminal by the government of the United States.

The Documents:

Document A: The American Military Oath, 1962.

Document B: CBS *Evening News*, 1968.

Document C: Ron Kovic, "Born on the Fourth of July", 1976.

Document D: Vaughn Shoemaker political cartoon: "But How To Let Go Gracefully", 1965.

Document E: David Levine political cartoon: "The Vietnam Bell", 1971.

Document F: Joe McDonald, "Feel Like I'm Fixin' to Die Rag", 1965.

Document G: Merle Haggard, "Okie From Muskogee", 1969.

Document H: Beal Rogers, "Winning hearts and minds", 1981.

Document I: Senator Eugene McCarthy, Hollow claims of victory, 1968.

Name _____

Date _____

Hook Exercise: An Ethical Dilemma.

Directions: Soldiers shipped out to Vietnam were quickly confronted with ethical dilemmas. Their overriding objective was to work to contain the spread of Communism from North Vietnam into South Vietnam. How to successfully achieve that objective, win the hearts and minds of the South Vietnamese people, as well as protecting our troops could be difficult. The below scenario is crafted from historical events. Take on the role of the soldier involved, and write a short explanation for each question.

It is your first day as a soldier in Vietnam. It is 1500 hours (3:00 p.m.), on August 3, 1965. You are part of a unit of United States Marines who are assigned to protect the area in and around the Da Nang airbase in South Vietnam. This key installation had been repeatedly attacked by Communist Viet Cong forces who have infiltrated small villages in the area. The Viet Cong carry out their raids, and then fall back to the villages, where they receive the protection of sympathizers.

In July, a unit of nearly 100 Viet Cong soldiers made a successful raid on the airbase, using automatic weapons and mortars. They destroyed 3 planes, and damaged 3 others before retreating into nearby villages. One such village was Cam Ne, located a few miles southwest of the airbase. American intelligence considers the village and its residents to be “long-time Communist sympathizers”.

Earlier, at 1000 hours (10:00 a.m.) on this day, three platoons of Marines came under small arms fire from a tree line near the village. Those Marines returned fire with small arms and 3.5-inch rockets. In the firefight between the Marines and the Viet Cong, 3 American soldiers were killed and 27 were wounded. Additionally one 10 year-old boy was killed and four villagers were wounded when they were caught in the shootout. Seven Viet Cong soldiers were killed before the remainder fled the village and retreated to the forest outside of the little hamlet. The Marines located more than 300 homemade booby traps and 6 mines in the area, along with 38 trenches, tunnels, and prepared positions.

The area commander, issues orders to “search out the VC (Viet Cong forces) and to destroy them, their positions, and their fortifications.” In interpretation of this order, your company commander has instructed you to “overcome and destroy any position, including huts, from which the fire (weapons fire against the Marines) was received.”

Your platoon leader describes Cam Ne as an “extensively entrenched and fortified hamlet.” He tells your platoon “In many instances, burning huts is the only way to ensure that the houses do not become an active Viet Cong military installation, after our troops have moved on past them. The village must be punished.” As you enter the small village of Cam Ne, you are not under fire from the enemy. By all appearances, any Viet Cong soldiers who had been there are long gone.

As you enter the village, the citizens are ordered out of their homes. No Viet Cong soldiers are found hiding in the huts. The platoon leader announces that he is going to burn the village to the ground. To the villagers of Cam Ne, this is ancestral land. They are simple farmers. Their parents are buried nearby. While some are supportive of the Viet Cong, others cooperate out of intimidation and brutality.

Old men, women and children from the village plead with your platoon leader not to burn the village. He refuses. They ask him to at least delay, so at least they can remove their possessions can be removed from their huts. He again refuses. Another Marine leans over and tells you “Welcome to Viet Nam. Here everyone is treated like an enemy until he’s proven innocent. That’s the only way we can do it.” The Marine hands you a zippo lighter and tells you to get busy. What will you do?



A U.S. Marine uses his Zippo lighter to set a Vietnamese hut on fire.

1. Would you follow orders and help torch the village of Cam Ne? Explain why you would or would not follow those orders.
2. If you refuse to follow those orders, what do you think will happen to you?
3. How do you think Americans back home will view these actions as necessary to protect the democratic freedoms of the people of South Vietnam?
4. Is treating everyone as if they are an enemy first the only way to succeed in this situation? Can you offer any other suggestions for dealing with this problem? Explain why or why not.

The Vietnam War: Background Essay

The Vietnam War was fought between 1964 and 1975. Ground fighting took place in South Vietnam, and the bordering nations of Cambodia and Laos. Bombing runs took place over North Vietnam. Fighting on one side was a coalition of forces including the United States, the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam), Australia, New Zealand, and South Korea. Fighting on the other side was a coalition of forces including the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam), and the National Liberation Front (Viet Cong)—a communist-led South Vietnamese guerilla group. The U.S.S.R. provided military aid to the North Vietnamese and to the NLF, but was not one of the military combatants. More than 1.4 million military personnel and an estimated 2 million civilians were killed in the war. The war was part of a wider United States strategy of *containment*; a policy in which the U.S. attempted to stop the spread of communism. The U.S. was involved in this struggle starting in 1950 when military advisors were sent to South Vietnam.

In August of 1964, a U.S. warship was attacked by North Vietnamese torpedo boats in the Gulf of Tonkin. Following this attack, Congress passed the Southeast Asia Resolution, which allowed President Lyndon Johnson to conduct military operations in the region without a declaration of war. On March 2, 1965, U.S. aircraft began bombing targets in Vietnam and U.S. troops won victories over enemy forces all through that summer. The troops were largely made up of young men who were conscripted (drafted) into service in the military. The draft exempted college students and skilled laborers. This meant that a disproportionate number of draftees were unskilled workers and minorities. The war quickly became viewed as a “rich man’s war, but a poor man’s fight.”

Following these defeats, the North Vietnamese avoided fighting conventional battles and focused on engaging U.S. troops in small unit actions (guerilla warfare) in the sweltering jungles of South Vietnam. In January of 1968, the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong launched the massive Tet (Vietnamese New Year) Offensive. Beginning with an assault on U.S. Marines at Khe Sanh, the offensive included coordinated attacks by the Viet Cong on cities throughout South Vietnam. Though the North Vietnamese were beaten back and suffered heavy casualties, the Tet Offensive shook the confidence of the American people and media. The U.S. government had led them to believe that the war was going well, when it clearly was not.

As a result of the Tet Offensive, and a strong decline in public support, President Lyndon Johnson opted not to run for reelection, and was succeeded by Richard Nixon, who took office in January of 1969. Nixon’s National Security Advisor, Dr. Henry Kissinger, saw the Vietnam war as a mistake, and pushed for disengagement. Not long into his term, President Nixon announced a

new policy of Vietnamization—to gradually withdraw more than 500,000 American soldiers from Vietnam and return control of the war to the South Vietnamese Army.

The U.S. came under fire in 1971, when the *New York Times* published a series of secret American documents that showed Congress and the American people had been misled about the level of American involvement in Vietnam, dating back to the Truman Administration in the 1940s. Publication of these so-called Pentagon Papers caused uproar in the United States and pushed an already unpopular war into even murkier territory. Public distrust of the government grew even deeper.

President Nixon's policy of Vietnamization called for troops to be slowly withdrawn, to the point where only American advisors would be present. The U.S. would still fund, supply and train the South Vietnamese Army. Nixon announced his doctrine in which he proclaimed that the U.S. would honor its current commitments, but that it would not commit troops anywhere else with the aim of containing communism. This move was an effort to appease the American public. It was clearly a reversal of American policies that had been in place since the Truman administration. Nixon believed that the political cost of more dead U.S. servicemen was simply too great.

By this point, the Vietnam War had become the longest war in U.S. history. 50,000 U.S. servicemen had been killed, and another 200,000 were wounded. In addition, countless men were being held as prisoners of war, and others were missing in action. Additionally, troops began to strike out against the Vietnamese on their own, slaughtering innocent civilians, Morale had fallen to an all-time low both at home, and with the men in the field. Drug use by soldiers had become rampant in an effort to cope with the emotions of war. Protest groups throughout the nation became increasingly vocal about the American policy. In addition, servicemen came home to a face a large portion of the public who were angry at them for prosecuting what they viewed as an unjust war. Unlike the soldiers of World War II, who came home to a hero's welcome, Vietnam vets were often greeted by angry mobs who jeered them as baby killers, and spat upon them.

Because of these American government policies and events, as the war progressed, an increasing number of young men refused to serve in the military when they were drafted. Some were conscientious objectors: men who refused to be drafted because of their personal religious beliefs against participating in wars. Others fled the country in order to avoid being drafted. The majority of these "Draft Dodgers" fled to Canada (estimates are 20,000 – 30,000); still others fled to Mexico and Sweden—nations that would shelter these young men.

Background Essay Questions

1. What was the goal of the American policy of “*containment*”?
2. Why did many Americans feel that this was a “rich man’s war, but a poor man’s fight.”
3. How did the events of the Tet Offensive change the way many Americans felt about the war in Vietnam?
4. After the Tet Offensive, American troops began acting out in frustration. Describe their behavior changes.
5. Explain the two different ways that men could avoid serving in the military, even though they had been drafted into service.
6. Compare and contrast the difference in how World War II veterans and Vietnam War veterans were welcomed home by the American public.

7. Define or explain each of these terms:

a. Viet Cong

b. Conscripted

c. Public Confidence

d. Doctrine

e. Morale

f. Rampant

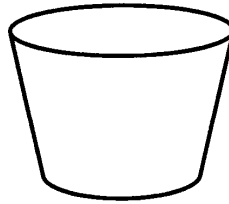
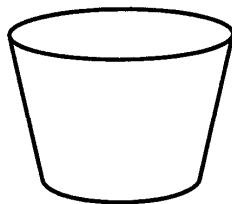
g. Jeered

h. Conscientious Objector

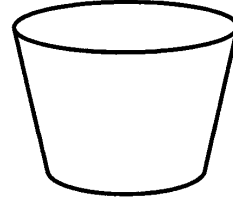
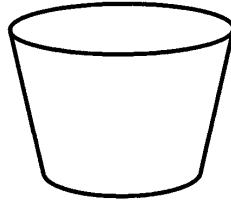
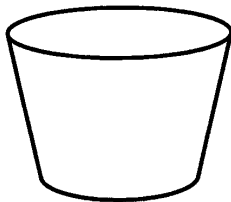
Understanding the Question and Pre-Bucketing

1. What is the analytical question asked by this DBQ?
2. In this DBQ, what is the meaning of the term "Draft Dodger"?
3. Restate the question so that your interpretation of the term "Draft Dodger" is clearly understood.

Pre-Bucketing: Using any clues from the DBQ question and the document titles on the cover page, guess the analytical categories and label the buckets.



OR



Document B: Walter Cronkite, CBS *Evening News*

Walter Cronkite, anchorman for the CBS *Evening News* was one of America's most respected journalists. He traveled to Vietnam in February of 1968, as the Tet Offensive was winding down. Upon his return, CBS broadcast a special news report about the war. During that report, Cronkite delivered a stunning editorial (excerpted below).

"It seems now more certain than ever that the bloody experience of Vietnam is to end in a stalemate... for every means we have to escalate, the enemy can match us, and that applies to invasion of the North, the use of nuclear weapons, or the mere commitment of one hundred, or two hundred, or three hundred thousand more American troops to the battle. And with each escalation, the world comes closer to the brink of cosmic disaster.

To say that we are closer to victory today is to believe, in the face of the evidence, the optimists who have been wrong in the past. To suggest we are on the edge of defeat is to yield to unreasonable pessimism. To say that we are mired in stalemate seems the only realistic, yet unsatisfactory, conclusion. On the off chance that military and political analysts are right, in the next few months we must test the enemy's intentions, in case this is indeed his last big gasp before negotiations. But it is increasingly clear to this reporter that the only rational way out then will be to negotiate, not as victors, but as an honorable people who lived up to their pledge to defend democracy, and did the best they could."

President Lyndon Johnson was reported to have said, *"If I have lost Walter Cronkite, I have lost Mr. Average Citizen."*

Document Analysis

6. What does Cronkite mean when he predicts the war will end in a stalemate?
7. What do you think Cronkite means when he says *"with each escalation, the world comes closer to the brink or cosmic disaster"*?
8. Do you agree with Cronkite's assessment that the only course for America was to negotiate a peace treaty (with the Viet Cong)?
9. Explain what Lyndon Johnson meant when he said *"If I have lost Walter Cronkite, I have lost Mr. Average Citizen."*
10. How could you cite what you read in this document to support your decision not to dodge the draft?
11. How could you cite what you read in this document to support your decision to dodge the draft?

Document C: Ron Kovic, *Born on the Fourth of July*

Ron Kovic was a natural athlete, a shy teenager who dreamed of girls, an All-American working-class kid who loved his country. At age 19, Kovic shipped out to Vietnam with the Marines. He didn't come marching home; at age 22, he was wounded and paralyzed permanently from the chest down. He wrote of his experiences in his autobiography "Born on the Fourth of July".

"I was in Vietnam when I first heard about the thousands of people protesting the war in the streets of America. I didn't want to believe it at first—people protesting against *us* when we were putting our lives on the line for our country. The men in my outfit used to talk about it a lot. How could they do this to us? Many of us would not be coming back and many others would be wounded or maimed. We swore they would pay, the hippies and draft card burners. They would pay if we ever ran into them.

But the hospital had changed all that. It was the end of whatever belief I'd still had in what I'd done in Vietnam. Now I wanted to know what I had lost my legs for, and why others had gone at all. But it was still very hard for me to think of speaking out against the war, to think of joining those I'd once called traitors."

Document Analysis

12. How did the men in Kovic's unit feel about the people in America who protested the war?

13. What does Kovic mean when he says "How could they do this to us?"

14. What do you think Kovic means when he says "They would pay if we ever ran into them"?

15. Why do you think Kovic struggled with being associated with the people (war protesters) he once called traitors?

16. How could you cite what you read in this document to support your decision not to dodge the draft?

17. How could you cite what you read in this document to support your decision to dodge the draft?

**Document D: “But How To Let Go—Gracefully”
By Vaughn Shoemaker, 1965.**

18. Why do you think the artist use the character of a tiger to identify the nation of Vietnam?

19. Who represents the American people in this drawing?



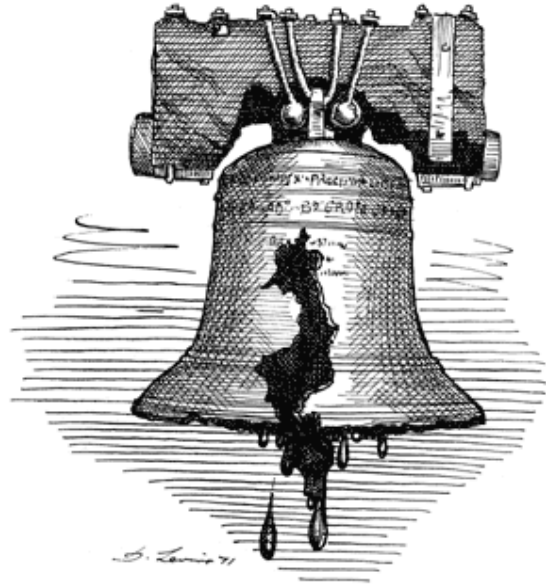
20. What is the artist's message in this drawing?

21. How could you cite what you found in this drawing to support your decision not to dodge the draft?

22. How could you cite what you found in this drawing to support your decision to dodge the draft?

Document E: "The Vietnam Bell"
By David Levine, 1971.

23. What does the Liberty Bell symbolize to Americans?



24. Why do you think the artist is using the outline of the map of Vietnam to represent the crack in the Liberty Bell? What is the artist trying to say?

25. What is the artist trying to say about liberty by drawing blood dripping from the bell?

26. How could you cite what you found in this drawing to support your decision not to dodge the draft?

27. How could you cite what you found in this drawing to support your decision to dodge the draft?

Document F: Feel Like I'm Fixing To Die Rag (Next Stop Vietnam)
By Joe McDonald, 1965

Come on all of you big strong men
Uncle Sam needs your help again
He's got himself in a terrible jam
Way down yonder in Vietnam
So put down your books and pick up a gun
We're gonna have a whole lotta fun

(CHORUS)

And it's one, two, three, what are we fighting for
Don't ask me I don't give a damn, next stop is Vietnam
And it's five, six, seven, open up the pearly gates
Ain't no time to wonder why, whoopee we're all gonna die!

Come on Wall Street don't be slow
Why man this war is a go-go
There's plenty good money to be made
By supplying the army with the tools of its trade
Let's hope and pray that if they drop the bomb,
They drop it on the Viet Cong

Come on generals, let's move fast
Your big chance has come at last
Now you can go out and get those reds
'Cause the only good commie is the one that's dead
And you know that peace can only be won
When we've blown 'em all to kingdom come

Come on mothers throughout the land
Pack your boys off to Vietnam
Come on fathers don't hesitate
Send your sons off before it's too late
And you can be the first ones on your block
To have your boy come home in a box!



28. What is the overall message of this song?

29. Who does McDonald suggest can get rich through this war?

30. While this is clearly an anti-war song, how could you cite what you found in this song to support your decision not to dodge the draft?

31. How could you cite what you found in this song to support your decision to dodge the draft?

**Document G: Oakie From Muskogee
By Merle Haggard, 1969**

We don't smoke marijuana in Muskogee;
We don't take our trips on LSD
We don't burn our draft cards down on Main Street;
We like livin' right, and bein' free.

We don't make a party out of lovin';
We like holdin' hands and pitchin' woo;
We don't let our hair grow long and shaggy,
Like the hippies out in San Francisco do.

And I'm proud to be an Okie from Muskogee,
A place where even squares can have a ball.
We still wave Old Glory down at the courthouse,
White lightnin's still the biggest thrill of all.

Leather boots are still in style for manly footwear;
Beads and Roman sandals won't be seen.
Football's still the roughest thing on campus,
And the kids here still respect the college dean.

I'm proud to be an Okie from Muskogee,
A place where even squares can have a ball
We still wave Old Glory down at the courthouse,
White lightnin's still the biggest thrill of all.



And white lightning's still the biggest thrill of all.
In Muskogee, Oklahoma, USA.

32. What personal qualities does Merle Haggard suggest are associated with being a draft card burner?

33. Being "square" was a 1960s term meaning "overly conservative". How might squares view the issues of the Vietnam War?

34. What does Haggard mean when he says "We like livin' right and bein' free"?

35. How could you cite what you found in this song to support your decision not to dodge the draft?

36. How could you cite what you found in this song to support your decision to dodge the draft?

Document H: Winning Hearts and Minds, 1981.

Many American soldiers and support personnel made efforts to win over the South Vietnamese people. They supplied medical aid, agriculture expertise, engineering knowledge, and other forms of assistance. It was hoped that these efforts would help to show these people the benefits of democracy. American soldiers were taught that they were the guests of these people. The soldiers were taught that they were in Vietnam to help them.

“They were the most patient people... You’d get there about eight in the morning and there would be half a dozen people sitting there with their babies, or injured children, or sitting beside somebody on a stretcher, just waiting for somebody to come... I remember on cute little bright-eyed... kid... who’d been shot through the lung. I operated on him and the dressings were painful. I had nothing for the pain, so I would talk to him... I knew I’d hurt him, I could see the tears in his eyes, by the would not call out... this kid grabbed me around the neck and gave me a big hug and the biggest smile I’ve ever seen.” – Beale Rogers, volunteer doctor.

37. Why do you think American soldiers were trained to think that they were guests in Vietnam?

38. Why is it important to win the “hearts and minds” of the people they were helping?

39. How did actions like this work towards America’s policy of the containment of Communism?

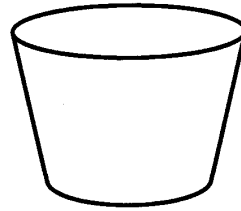
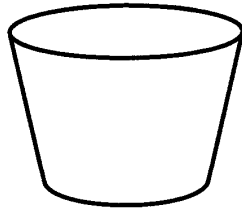
40. How could you cite what you read in this document to support your decision not to dodge the draft?

41. How could you cite what you read in this document to support your decision to dodge the draft?

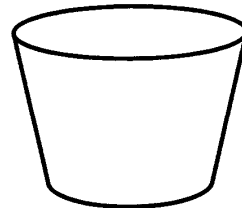
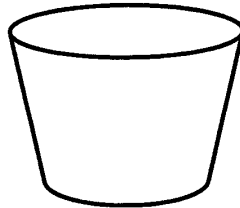
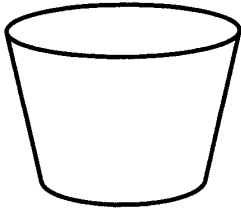
Bucketing – Getting Ready to Write

Bucketing

Look over all the documents and organize them into your final buckets. Write final bucket labels under each bucket and place the letters of the documents in the buckets where they belong. It is legal to put a document in more than one bucket.

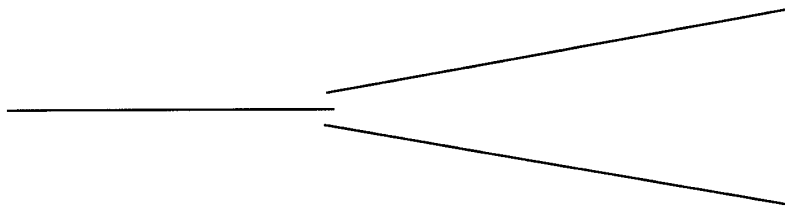


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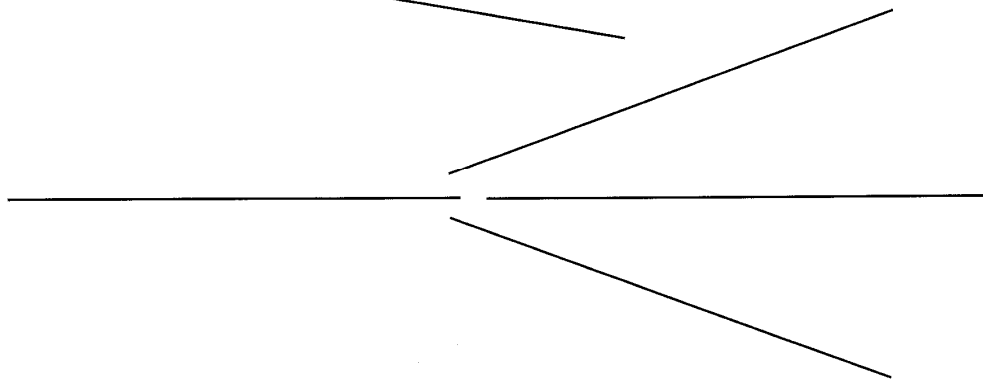


Thesis Development and Roadmap

On the chickenfoot below, write your thesis and your roadmap. Your thesis is always an opinion and answers the Mini-Q question. The roadmap is created from your bucket labels and lists the topic areas you will examine in order to prove your thesis.



OR



From Thesis to Essay Writing

Mini-Q Essay Outline Guide

Working Title

Paragraph #1

Grabber

Background

Stating the question with key terms defined

Thesis and roadmap

Paragraph #2

Baby Thesis for bucket one

Evidence: supporting detail from documents with document citation

Argument: connecting evidence to the thesis

Paragraph #3

Baby Thesis for bucket two

Evidence

Argument

Paragraph #4

Baby Thesis for bucket three

Evidence

Argument

Paragraph #5

Conclusion: Restatement of main idea along with possible insight or wrinkle

Criteria	20	17	15	10	5	0	Score
Thesis / answers question	Strong thesis – responds directly to the question.	Thesis stated – answers the question.	Addresses the question but has weak structure & focus.	Poor focus; fails to answer the question adequately.	Fails to address the question; confusing & unfocused.	No Thesis; no attempt to address the question.	
Use of documents / evidence	Uses documents completely & accurately; weighs the importance & validity of evidence.	Uses documents correctly; recognizes that all evidence is not equally valid.	Uses most documents correctly – simplistic analysis; does not always weigh the importance & validity of evidence.	Some documents used correctly; some only paraphrased or misunderstood; fails to recognize any difference in the validity of evidence.	Fails to use documents correctly; simply paraphrased or misunderstood.	Ignores or misuses the documents.	
Incorporates outside information	Cites considerable relevant information from outside learning.	Cites some relevant information from outside learning.	Includes little relevant information from outside learning.	Includes little information from outside learning – what is included is irrelevant.	Includes no relevant information from beyond the documents.	Includes no information from beyond the documents.	
Understanding of topic	Displays a thorough understanding of the topic & related issues.	Shows an understanding of the topic & related issues.	Shows basic, though simplistic, understanding of the topic & related issues.	Shows little understanding of the topic & related issues.	Shows almost no understanding of the topic or related issues.	Shows no understanding of the topic or related issues.	
Use of language	Well structured, well written; proper spelling, grammar, mechanics.	Clearly written & coherent; some minor errors in writing.	Weaker organization; some errors in writing detract from essay's meaning.	Poorly organized; many errors in standard English.	Disorganized; littered with errors in standard English.	Lacks any organization; little attempt made; blank paper.	
Total Score:							

Student who wrote the essay: _____

Instructor: _____

Instructors Comments:

Resources

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DBQ Graphics and Forms: Pre-Bucketing, Bucketing, Chickenfoot, and From Thesis to Writing outline Retrieved from: The DBQ Project. Mini-Qs in American History – Volume 1. Reproduced with permission.
