

# ANALYZING BIAS/POINT OF VIEW IN A DBQ

## WHAT IS MEANT BY ANALYZING BIAS/POINT OF VIEW IN HISTORICAL SOURCES?

Simply put, your task is to act as an historian sifting through sources. Part of this job involves you reviewing the source of the document and understanding why the sources said or wrote what is in the document. In other words, you are analyzing **what it is about the source that made them say or write what is in the document**. In the end, you are measuring the credibility, legitimacy, reliability, and pertinence of the source. The crucial skill a DBQ demands of students is the awareness that documents are not statements of facts, but descriptions, interpretations, or opinions of events and developments made by particular people at particular places and times, and often for specific reasons. Too often, students write essays in which they take the documents at face value. Instead, students should be applying critical thinking skills to documents, evaluating whether they are likely to be accurate and complete, and in what ways the author of the document may be revealing bias.

## WHY DO YOU NEED TO KNOW IT?

Aside from becoming a better thinker, it is part of the rubric for doing a DBQ. It is worth 9 points on the DBQ rubric and can potentially earn you expanded core points as well.

## HOW MANY TIMES DO YOU NEED TO ANALYZE OF BIAS/POINT OF VIEW?

You must **analyze** bias/point of view in at least 3 separate documents, although you get expanded core credit for doing it in more.

## WHERE DO YOU FIND BIAS/POINT OF VIEW IN THE DOCUMENTS?

One will find bias/point of view in the documents by **looking at the source** of the document. Look for sources that, by their nature, may be of interest. Remember, what is in the document will verify whether the source's point of view is of interest.

## HOW DO YOU PRESENT BIAS/POINT OF VIEW IN YOUR ESSAY?

After citing the document using parenthetical citation and connecting the document to your grouping and to your thesis, give in the next few sentences your analysis of bias/point of view. You can do this in three different ways:

- **Authorial point of view:** Show awareness that the gender, occupation, class, religion, nationality, political position, or ethnic identity of the author may well have influenced the views that are expressed.
  - For example: George Marshall, the American Secretary of State, was naturally concerned with the chaos and poverty in Western Europe in 1947, as it was his duty to protect American interests abroad. The potential spread of Communism into Western Europe would have threatened these interests.
- **Reliability and accuracy of the source:** Critically analyze a source for its reliability and accuracy by questioning whether the author of the document would be in a position to be accurate and/or would be likely be telling the truth. You can also evaluate the type of source, such as a letter or official report, showing an understanding that different types of sources vary in their probable reality.
  - For example: George Kennan's telegram reporting on the nature of the post-war Soviet Union is probably accurate because, as an American ambassador living in Moscow, Kennan would have first-hand insight into the Soviet government.
  - OR: George Kennan's telegram reporting on the nature of the post-war Soviet Union is probably inaccurate because, as an American, Kennan would have only a limited understanding of the inner-workings of the Soviet government, despite his presence in Moscow.
- **Tone or intent of the author:** In this case, you examine a document to determine its tone (satire, irony, indirect political commentary) or the intent of the author. This may be particularly useful for visual documents.
  - For example: Dr. Seuss drew his World War II era cartoons to mock Americans who still supported isolationism for their ignorance and to warn Americans of the dire consequences of not becoming involved in European affairs.

## WHAT CAN I SAY WHEN I AM PRESENTING BIAS/POINT OF VIEW?

- One should approach this document with caution because the source...
- The point of view expressed in this document is of interest because...
- The source of this document possesses a unique point of view because...
- One should take into account the point of view of this source because...