Students may work as a class or in collaborative groups and follow these five steps:

1.Read the question -- that is, the prompt -- three times. Remember that in this instance "AP" stands for "address prompt."

2.Identify the task. State in your own words what you are being asked to write.

3.Circle or underline the main words, especially words of direction, such as "analyze," "explain," "compare and contrast," "evaluate," and "to what extent."

4.Briefly list the main events of the historical time period addressed. Use the acronym PERSIA to help you categorize the political, economic, religious, social, intellectual, and artistic aspects of the period. This is outside information that may be included in the essay. 5.Read each document, noting the source or the title. Briefly write the main point of each document. If the prompt requires you to take one position or another, group the documents on the basis of those positions. For example, in the 1999 DBQ you are asked to evaluate colonial identity AND unity. Note that documents A, C, E, and G are about unity, whereas documents B, D, F, and H deal with identity. Some documents may be used to support both unity and identity.

6.Use the source or the title when referring to the information in the document. Do NOT use the word "document" in the narrative of your essay. (Writing "Document A says," "Document B says," and so on results in a laundry list of documents instead of an essay.) You may use the word "document" in parentheses as a reference to a specific document at the end of the information you have included from that document. These notes help you organize your use of the documents throughout your essay. Essential note to remember: Students write the essay; documents don't write the essay.