

Contextualization Historical Thinking: The ability to connect historical events & processes to specific circumstances of time and place as well as broader regional, national, or global processes.

- Situate historical events, developments, or processes within the broader regional, national, or global context in which they occurred in order to draw conclusions about their relative significance.
- Seeing the connections between the particular & the general.
- *What was happening at the time the event happened or the document was created that might have had an influence?*

Questions - Levels of Investigation:

- *What was happening at the specific place where an event occurred?*
- *In the country as a whole?*
- *In the larger region?*
- *In the world?*

Pan/Zoom, Levels of Focus:

- *How does a specific event relate to larger processes?*
- *How do larger processes shape a specific event?*
- *How does the context in which a source is read or viewed inform how it is understood?*

Historians examine the historical context of events to understand why things happened the way they did. **Context is different from causation** in that instead of focusing on specific events or actions that may have caused another event to occur, historians refer to *context as the larger constellation of developments and processes that may not have served as a specific cause but may still have influenced an event.*

In other words, the context of an event often influences its course, even if it did not cause the event. **Context can operate on many different levels, from the local to the global.** For example, the violence, dislocation, & instability associated with the fall of the Han and Roman empires provides important context for understanding the appeal and spread of religions such as Mahayana Buddhism and Christianity.

Context is crucial in making sense of primary sources. For example, to more deeply comprehend the travel narratives of Ibn Battuta, we need to understand the intellectual and cultural currents of his time and circumstance to understand both *what he states & chooses not to tell the reader.* It is also important to remember that a source may have *different meanings in different contexts*; for example, when read by the wealthy or the poor, or by people in different countries or time periods.

The point for ‘Contextualization’ on the DBQ rubric requires a 3-4 sentence analysis that introduces a context that is an influence on the main topic of the prompt, or the time period of the prompt. Your analysis should explain the way in which the context you introduce influenced events or developments; in other words, **explain how the context is relevant to the topic, time period, and also the arguments you will present to answer the prompt.** (*side note: as a relevant influence on events a context is in a way a contributing ‘cause’ of events.*)

Why Important on DBQ: Each document was created at a specific moment in time and a specific place. Identifying this time & place helps us understand purpose, but in order to understand the context we need to go beyond simple identification. When a historian talks about context, he or she is referring to specific historical processes & events that can explain both the author’s reasons for writing the document and the ways in which contemporaries understood the document.

For example, Ho Chi Minh, the founder of the Indochinese Communist Party, delivered a speech in Hanoi on September 2nd, 1945 that came to be the Vietnamese Declaration of Independence. The speech was delivered the same day that the Japanese formally surrendered to the United States. International attention was now focused upon tensions between the Soviet Union and the United States. In the Atlantic Charter (1941), the United States and Britain had declared their support at the war’s conclusion for self-government to those deprived of it. Unaware that President Truman had decided to support the French reoccupation of Vietnam from the Japanese, Ho Chi Minh’s

declaration drew upon the language and tone of Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of Independence. Knowing this context helps us understand Ho Chi Minh's purpose as well as his presumed audience and content.

'Isms' are great for earning the DBQ point for contextualization.

In executing a contextualization in a way that will earn a point on the DBQ rubric use an '-ism' in a sentence. Then in a couple additional sentences explain how events or developments were impacted by the context.

Write something like:

“ ____ happened within the context of _____ism”;

or

“The big context in which ____ happened was within _____ism”.

1st Blank: **Topic, or period, of the prompt** you are contextualizing,

2nd Blank: **The 'ism' you will explain as the context.**

Go on to explain how/why the context you offer, the '-ism', shapes the topic or time period. Tell how events or developments were impacted by the context.

Monotheism	Animism	Anti-imperialism	Fascism
Polytheism	Pastoralism	Social Darwinism	Totalitarianism
Zoroastrianism	Feudalism	Nativism	Pluralism
Hinduism	mercantilism	Rationalism	Marxism
Judaism	Feminism	Isolationism	Communism
Confucianism	Expansionism	Capitalism	Socialism
Buddhism	Nationalism	Colonialism	Modernism
Daoism	Racism	Consumerism	
Neoconfucianism	abolitionism	Liberalism	
Shamanism	Imperialism		

The DBQ also offers a point if you successfully analyze documents by noting the ways in which certain features significantly shape the contents of a particular document. **Noting how a document is shaped significantly by an historical context is one of the ways to earn this point.** The same approach used above to earn a point for contextualization also works when doing an 'historical context' for a document.

To earn the point for document analysis a student must execute at least four analyses correctly.

4 ways to extend the analysis include correctly analyzing:

Historical Context, **A**udience, **P**urpose, and **P**oint of View. **HAP-P** (say 'happy') represents a useful acronym you can employ to help yourself remember the four methods of extended document analysis specifically listed in the DBQ rubric.

Additionally, **'-ation' words**, that is to say, words ending with the suffix "-ation" **indicate action, and often processes**. Many of these processes go on for significant lengths of time. The big processes, very much like the 'isms', make great Contextualizations, and also historical contexts for executing document analysis.

Migration	Specialization	State formation	Segregation
Domestication	Intensification	Codification	Monetization
Urbanization	Colonization	Industrialization	Decolonization
Stratification	Subjugation	Adaptation	Deforestation
Desertification	Immigration	Mobilization	Global integration
Irrigation	Civilization	Liberalization	Commercialization
Innovation	Centralization	Diversification	

Contextual Ideas: Non-'isms & Non-'tions

You can also work with contexts that are not 'isms' to execute either Contextualization or to analyze a document by noting the influence of a relevant historical context. You can use words to make developments into contexts when you can't think of an '-ism' or '-ation' that fits.

Make the terms in the lists below work as contexts by using words such as "***continuing***", "***ongoing***", or "***trend***". When used well these words transform an event or development into a long-term, persisting, and relevant context.

“ ____ happened in the **continuing** context of ____ ”

“ ____ happened in the context of **ongoing** ____ ”

“ ____ happened in the context of the **trend** of ____ ”

ideology of hierarchy expansion of empire exchange of technology ideology patriarchy urban planning Christianity	interregional trade long distance trade Roman rule the Silk Roads record keeping Government by the Han	the Indian Ocean sea lane monumental architecture diffusion Trans-Sahar an Caravans
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