

USING THE L•A•W APPROACH

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Notice that document-based essay questions have the following parts:

- (1) directions on what to do;
- (2) a historical generalization that sets the stage for the essay question;
- (3) a task you must perform, stated in the form of a question;
- (4) Part A, with up to 8 documents that must be analyzed; and
- (5) Part B, with directions for writing your essay.

You need to focus on three areas: (1) look at the task; (2) analyze the documents; and (3) write the essay. To remember this three-pronged approach, think of the word "L•A•W."

"L" — LOOK AT THE TASK

First look at the "Task" part of the question on page 14. Focus on (1) the "action word," in this case *discuss*, and (2) the topic **statement**—that political and social changes were caused by the French Revolution. These determine how you will answer the question.

"A" — ANALYZE THE DOCUMENTS

As you read each document, think about (1) who wrote it; (2) the time period when it was written; (3) the purpose for which it was written; and (4) what it says. Then answer the question that follows each document.

An **Analysis Box** will help you to analyze the documents. Remember, the key to answering this type of question is *linking the documents to the topic statement*. In the Analysis Box, be sure you show how information in the document supports the topic statement. Also include other related information at the bottom, since the question requires you to supply some information not contained in the documents.

Document	Main Idea	Political	Social
Rights of Man	<i>This excerpt states that people are born free with equal rights, and that the purpose of government is to protect these rights. It also states that the source of political power is the nation (the people).</i>	✓	✓
National Assembly Decree	<i>This decree abolished hereditary nobility in France.</i>		✓
Execution of Louis XVI	<i>In 1793, Louis XVI was beheaded. There was no turning back now. Republican spirit spread throughout France.</i>	✓	✓
Additional related information:			
• <i>During the Revolution, chaos and violence erupted throughout France.</i>		✓	
• <i>In the "Reign of Terror," many nobles and priests were beheaded by revolutionaries.</i>			✓
• <i>Revolutionary France became involved in a war against the monarchies of Europe.</i>		✓	
• <i>All French people called each other "citizen," and aristocratic fashions were replaced by simpler clothes.</i>			✓

Let's look at the information in the Analysis Box:

- ❖ In the **Document** column, you should write a brief term or phrase to identify each document. For example, since the first document was a quotation from the *Declaration of the Rights of Man*, you might simply write "Rights of Man" in the first box.
- ❖ In the **Main Idea** column, briefly describe the main idea of each document.
- ❖ The final column depends on what you have to cover in your essay. Here, in the *Political* and *Social* columns, a check (✓) is put in the column if the information in the document deals with that topic. For example, since the first document deals with political aspects of the French Revolution, a check is placed in the political column.
- ❖ The directions ask you to include **additional information** about the topic, based on your knowledge of global history. Here, for example, you might add information about the "Reign of Terror."

"W" — WRITE THE ESSAY

In writing your essay answer, the key points to remember are:

- ❖ **Opening Paragraph.** The opening sentence should identify the topic and set the time and place for the reader. The next sentence should identify the main idea of your essay. Remember, you can take this from the statement found in the directions that appear in "Part B — Essay." Next, write a transition sentence to lead the reader to the supporting paragraphs.
- ❖ **Supporting Paragraphs.** These paragraphs provide evidence to support the topic statement. They must include references to the documents as well as additional related information from your knowledge of global history.
- ❖ **Conclusion.** How you close the essay depends on the action word used in the question:
 - If the question asks you to **discuss**, your conclusion should restate the topic statement. For example, "We can see that the French Revolution brought about many political and social changes." You might add a brief summary from the body of your essay showing that it is an accurate thesis, such as: "Doing away with the monarchy and the nobility demonstrated the extent of these changes."
 - If the question asks you to **evaluate**, your conclusion should compare and contrast the positive and negative effects, and then make a judgment. For example, if you were asked to "evaluate" the political and social impact of the French Revolution, you might compare the advantages of abolishing the monarchy, nobility, and feudalism with the disadvantages of war and violence. Then sum up: "On balance, the Revolution was worth the costs. It created a society based on merit, not inherited privilege."