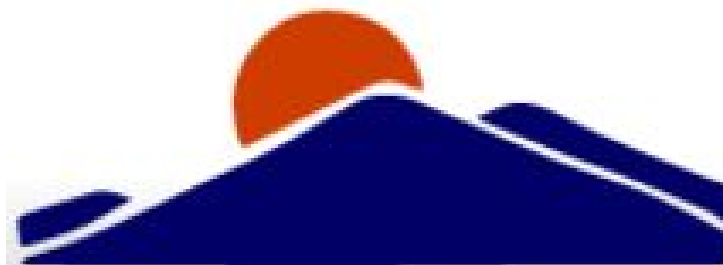


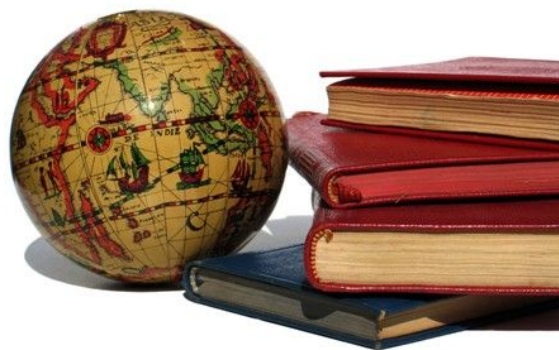
# West Orange Public Schools



## Social Studies Department

### Guide to Document Based Questions

Grades 6-8



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## **Introduction**

The information provided across the following pages serves as an aide for teachers who will be implementing document based questions throughout all social studies classes. The information contained within should be used as a tool for teachers to answer or help to clarify any questions you may have as well as to establish a structure that will be reinforced for all students as they progress from grades six through twelve.

Included among the pages of this guide are information on how to structure a response to a document based question, samples of document based questions with student responses, possible sites to explore to help craft your own document based questions, and an approved rubric to review with your students and to use for proper scoring of their responses.

We hope that the information provided is beneficial to you and helps to place everyone on the same page moving forward in terms of how we look to prepare our students over the coming years.

## **Document Based Questions**

Document-based questions (DBQs) are for all students, from elementary school through high school. They are a type of authentic assessment and a way for students to interact with historical records.

A DBQ asks students to read and analyze historical records, gather information and fill in short scaffolding response questions, assimilate and synthesize information from several documents, and then respond (usually as a written essay) to an assigned task, by using information gleaned from the documents as well as their own outside information.

DBQs help students compare and contrast issues from differing perspectives, reconcile differing positions, evaluate the strength of particular arguments, provide authentic opportunities at a high level of thinking, and develop life skills.

DBQs will be featured on many if not most social studies common assessment tests and teachers are expected to utilize DBQs throughout the course of the school year in all social studies classes.

## **DBQ Skills and Expectations for Grades 6-8**

1. Differentiate between primary and secondary sources.
2. Categorize information in order to analyze and evaluate what the information means.
3. Analyze documents in a variety of formats (photos, letters, political cartoons, etc.).
4. Cite documents in the written response when answering the task.
5. Describe the historical context of the documents.
6. Use outside information of history other than what the documents specifically state.
7. Compare and contrast in order to make an argument.
8. Identify points of view of the author.
9. Write a correct thesis specific to the writing task.
10. Construct an essay to answer a task relating to the overall theme of the document.

# Middle School DBQ Grade Level Expectations

## Purpose

This framework is designed to be used by Social Studies teachers at grades 6-8. It is intended to serve as a skill-building program for Document-Based Questions. There are samples of grade-level appropriate DBQs available for each grade.

## Assessments Terminology

**Constructed Response Questions:** consist of a series of questions related to a single document. They are designed to measure application-level cognitive skills as well as content knowledge. Questions should build from the simple to the complex. They should use a range of primary and secondary stimuli and authentic "real world" examples including timelines, maps, graphs, cartoons, charts and short readings. Constructed response questions are graded against a scoring rubric.

**Document-Based Questions:** assess the ability of each student to work with historical sources in multiple forms. They are designed to measure a variety of skills including interpreting primary and secondary sources, evaluating sources, considering multiple points of view, using historic evidence, and developing and supporting a **thesis (i.e. main idea/controlling idea)**. Document-based questions consist of two parts.

**Part A – Scaffolding Questions:** This section requires students to answer 1-2 questions per document. These questions generally involve interpreting the main idea or point of view expressed in the document. Students are expected to respond to the questions using complete sentences.

**Part B – Essay:** This section requires students to write an essay, using the documents, to respond to a specific question. This question will require students to utilize the sources, plus their understanding of history. Students will be expected to move beyond simply quoting the documents. They will need to use the documents as evidence in support of a thesis. Both parts of the DBQ will be graded against scoring rubrics.

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## Document-Based Questions at Grade 6

**Purpose:** The DBQ at 6<sup>th</sup> grade is intended to familiarize students with using historical sources in multiple forms. The skills introduced and refined in 6<sup>th</sup> grade will be used in grade 7 to develop an essay.

Suggested number of documents to be used: 4-6 (half of which should be visuals)

**Part A – Scaffolding Questions:** Each document should have 1-2 scaffolding questions, which involve interpreting the main idea expressed in the document.

**Part B – Essay:** Students will be expected to respond to a specific question that is related to all of the documents. This response should be in the form of a paragraph/short answer. The question should require analyzing the documents and students should be expected to use information from the documents in their response.

**Goal:** For each student to develop 1-2 multi-paragraph essays by the end of 6th grade.

NOTE: The 6<sup>th</sup> grade requirement may be subject to change in response to the work being completed in the elementary grades.

## Document-Based Questions at Grade 7

**Purpose:** The DBQ at grade 7 is intended to build on the skills introduced in 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Students entering seventh grade will have experience writing short answer/paragraph responses to DBQs. During seventh grade students should be given the opportunity to continue to work with multiple sources in preparation for writing an essay. During the year, students in 7<sup>th</sup> grade should receive instruction on the development of the DBQ essay.

Suggested number of documents to be used: 6 (half of which should be visuals)

**Part A – Scaffolding Questions:** Each document should have 1-2 scaffolding questions, which involve interpreting the main idea or point of view expressed in the document.

**Part B – Essay:** This essay should be in response to a question that has a specific focus. The question should clearly identify the specific information that is to be included in each body paragraph. Students should be expected to move beyond simply quoting the documents. The student response should involve using documents as evidence in support of a thesis. This essay should include:

- Planning/Organizing (i.e. categorize, block, mind map/webbing, outline, pre-writing) – including specific references to the documents to be used in the essay
- Introduction and conclusion
- Body paragraphs that cite specific evidence from the documents (short quotes or paraphrases) and incorporate outside knowledge
- Introduction to referencing documents

**Goal:** All students should be expected to complete three DBQ essays in 7<sup>th</sup> grade.

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## Document-Based Questions at Grade 8

**Purpose:** The DBQ in eighth grade is intended to build on the skills introduced in grade 7. During the year, students should continue to receive instruction on the development of the DBQ essay.

Suggested Number of Documents to be used: 6-8 (half of which should be visuals)

**Part A – Scaffolding Questions:** Each document should have 1-2 scaffolding questions, which involve interpreting the main idea or point of view expressed in the document.

**Part B – Essay:** This essay should be in response to a question that has a specific focus. The question should clearly identify the specific information that is to be included in each body paragraph. Students should be expected to move beyond simply quoting the documents. The student response should involve using documents as evidence in support of a thesis. The essay should include:

- Planning/Organizing (i.e. categorize, block, mind map/webbing, outline, pre-writing) – including specific references to the documents to be used in the essay
- Introduction and conclusion
- Body paragraphs that cite specific evidence from the documents (short quotes or paraphrases) and incorporate outside knowledge
- Documentation should be introduced in a variety of ways including parenthetical citation

**Goal:** Students in eighth grade should complete several DBQs during the year that result in an essay.

# Writing a Document Based Question (DBQ)

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## UNDERSTAND THE QUESTION

1. Understand the tasks of all parts of the question
2. Underline the verb in the question and highlight or circle key points of the question
3. Determine what issues need to be addressed
4. Make a list (brainstorm) of anything that you feel is relevant to the question. Pay close attention to the geography of the region as well as the time period.

## ANALYZE THE DOCUMENTS

1. Identify the author of each document and time it was written
2. Identify the point of view. Underline key words. Write notes in the margin summarizing each document.
3. Respond the prompt question(s) after each document.
4. Look at all the documents. How can they be arranged to help address the question?

## FORMULATE A THESIS

1. The thesis must...
  - Explicitly address the issue (answer the question)
  - Be based on the documents
  - Deal with all parts of the question
  - Be clear, analytical, and comprehensive
2. The thesis may be 1-2 sentences and is best located at the end of the introductory paragraph.
3. *REMEMBER*→*What you plan to argue + How you plan to argue it = Thesis*

## PLAN THE ESSAY

1. Outline the major points to be discussed
2. Indicate how the documents can be used as evidence to support your thesis.
3. What background knowledge can be used to address the topic?

## WRITE

1. *Introduction* (Paragraph 1)
  - Write 2-3 sentences that address the question in a general way. Include the time period and the geography of the region. Do not restate the question as it is worded.
  - Write an organizational statement in which you mention 2-3 issues or aspects of the topic about which you are going to write.
  - Write your thesis.
2. *Body paragraphs* (Paragraphs 2, 3, 4)
  - Use separate paragraphs for each topic/issue (2-3) to be discussed.
  - Include specific examples to support generalizations
  - Cite specific evidence from the documents. (Avoid long quotations)
  - Integrate information from the documents and from your background knowledge in responding to the question.
3. *Conclusion* (Paragraph 5)
  - Restate your position and the main ideas presented in the essay.
  - Revisit the introductory paragraph and your thesis but in a more defined way
  - Connect the issue to later historical events or describe the episode as a part of a larger historical trend.

## DBQ Do's & Don'ts

<b><i>Do the following things with a DBQ</i></b>	<b><i>Don't do the following things</i></b>
Read carefully and make sure you understand the question being asked.	Respond to a question that isn't asked.
Quickly jot down the major themes/events/people you associate with this topic or question.	Use "I" statements such as "I think that...", "I believe", or "In my opinion"
Read over the documents, noting the year and author/source of each one. If the document seems to support or oppose a possible perspective or opinion on the question, note that in the margin.	Write in first ( <i>I, me, my, our, us</i> ) or second ( <i>you</i> ) person.
Write out a preliminary thesis and outline of your major points.	Use rhetorical questions in your introduction.
As you begin to write, remember to weave the documents into your answer, always focusing on the thesis.	Summarize the documents. The reader knows the content of the documents and is interested in how you view the document relating to the question.
Include your knowledge of the era along with your analysis of the documents.	String along the documents (e.g. Document 1 says . . . Document 2 says . . . , etc.) OR Quote long passages from the documents. Use an ellipsis "..." if you need to quote.
Be as specific as possible when you include historical information.	Use "In conclusion..."
Be assertive and forceful in making your points.	Begin writing your answer until you have a good sense of your thesis and how you want to approach the question.

### **Student Self Assessment Essay Checklist**

DIRECTIONS: *Review your essay carefully to answer each of the items below. Place a checkmark next to the question if it is true.*

- 1) Did I specifically refer to most of the documents in Part A by using **paraphrases and/or direct quotes**?
- 2) Did I **state my thesis** and introduce the topic/main ideas of this essay in the first paragraph?
- 3) Does the body of my essay **directly answer** or respond to the exact wording of the actual essay question?
- 4) Did I use **paragraphs** to separate key ideas and/or major arguments in the body of the essay?
- 5) Did I use a **topic sentence** to introduce each paragraph?
- 6) Did I include **specific, relevant evidence** to support each argument or main idea? [Relevant evidence means that all the facts, dates, ideas, paraphrases, quotes, etc. in the essay are both correct and directly support your argument.]
- 7) Did I connect my ideas with **transitional words or phrases** e.g.: first, next, finally, on the other hand, another example, however, like/unlike, etc.?
- 8) Did I follow all **other instructions and essay writing guidelines** (DO's and DON'Ts)?

## Understanding Key Words in Writing Prompts

Signal Word	Task
analyze	break the topic down into its parts; show causes and effects
compare	show how two or more things are alike
contrast	show how two or more things are different
defend	support an argument or position with facts, reasons, examples
define	state the meaning of a term; describe the basic nature of something
describe	tell what something is like; illustrate something in words
develop	create something (such as a plan); expand or enlarge something
discuss	examine or make observations about a subject; present a subject in detail
evaluate	judge the significance, condition, or value of a subject, event, or object
examine	observe carefully; study or analyze in detail
explain	make an event, problem, or relationship clear and understandable
explore	conduct a careful examination of a subject; investigate all possibilities
identify	describe something that fits the characteristics indicated in the prompt.
interpret	explain the meaning or significance of a subject; offer an explanation
justify	show that a position is right or reasonable with facts, reasoning, examples
outline	provide a general description covering the main points of a subject
pros and cons	arguments in favor of (pros) and opposed to (cons) a position or action
show	demonstrate or explain by reasoning or step-by-step procedures
state	show, explain, or express in words
summarize	give a condensed description of an issue, event, or sequence of events
support	provide evidence for; show to be true with facts, reasons, examples
take a stand	state a position or an opinion you are prepared to support and uphold
trace	describe a train of events; follow the development or progress of a subject



## How To Write A Thesis Statement

A thesis statement is the position a student is going to take, the argument that is going to be made. It is therefore the answer to the question being asked. As such, the thesis statement is not a fact; it is an informed interpretation of the facts. Neither is the thesis statement just an opinion. Rather the thesis is the reasoned judgment of the student. Most good questions allow for a range of possible answers. In other words, a continuum exists and students can generally feel free to choose a response along that continuum. However, students should avoid crafting an extreme response at either end of the continuum. Most questions require a response that is not black or white but instead some shade of gray. That does not mean, however, that students should attempt to respond in the middle of the continuum. Such an attempt usually results in a failure to articulate a clear position. Students should also beware of the fallacy of “positive response bias.”

Unfortunately, many students are inclined to answer a question in the affirmative. Students always need to carefully weigh all of the historical evidence and then craft a response that best articulates their understanding of the historical record. In other words, students should not feel free to argue any side simply because they can believe they can support it. Instead, they should feel compelled to support the side with the most evidence behind it.

### Examples of thesis statements:

**Bad:** George Washington set many important precedents as president. This is a fact not a position.

**Good:** The precedents that Washington set as America’s first president greatly benefited the American political system. This is a clear position that can be supported or opposed.

**Weak:** The Revolutionary War brought about change in American society. This is, technically, a position. But, it is vague and not really debatable.

**Strong:** The Revolutionary War ushered in a slew of wide-ranging and permanent social changes in American society. This is a clear, strong, and debatable thesis.

**Sample Prompt:**

Jacksonian Democrats viewed themselves as the guardians of the United States Constitution, political democracy, individual liberty, and equality of economic opportunity. In light of your knowledge of the following documents and your knowledge of the 1820's and 1830's, to what extent do you agree with the Jacksonians' view of themselves?

**Types of Thesis Statements:**

**Direct:** This is a straightforward statement that clearly and directly answers the question.

*To a remarkable degree Jacksonian democrats succeeded in implementing their vision of American society.*

**Compound:** Use this approach when trying to prove two main points. Use the word "and."

*Jacksonian democrats successfully portrayed themselves as guardians of American ideals and did indeed achieve a remarkable degree of success in protecting those ideals.*

**Split:** This approach splits the thesis into several categories. In essence it combines the thesis statement with the plan of attack/themes of the essay. This works best when the prompt itself provides the essay categories.

*To a large extent Jacksonian democrats were not effective guardians of the United States Constitution, political democracy, individual liberty, and equality of economic opportunity.*

**Complex-Direct:** This type of thesis statement acknowledges that contrary evidence exists and addresses the complexity inherent in most essays prompts. A well executed complex thesis offers students the best opportunity to earn a high score. Key words such as "although" are helpful in constructing this type of thesis.

*Although Jacksonian Democrats truly believed that they were the guardians of American ideals, their actions betrayed other priorities and rarely lived up to either their rhetoric or intentions.*

**Complex-Split:** This approach splits the thesis into several categories, acknowledges that contrary evidence exists and tackles the complexity inherent in most essays.

*Even though Jacksonian Democrats failed in their self-appointed roles as the guardians of the United States Constitution and individual liberty, they achieved great success in strengthening political democracy and the equality of economic opportunity.*

OR

*Despite a few notable lapses, in general, Jacksonian Democrats were good stewards of the United States Constitution, and oversaw an expansion of individual liberty, political democracy, and economic opportunity.*

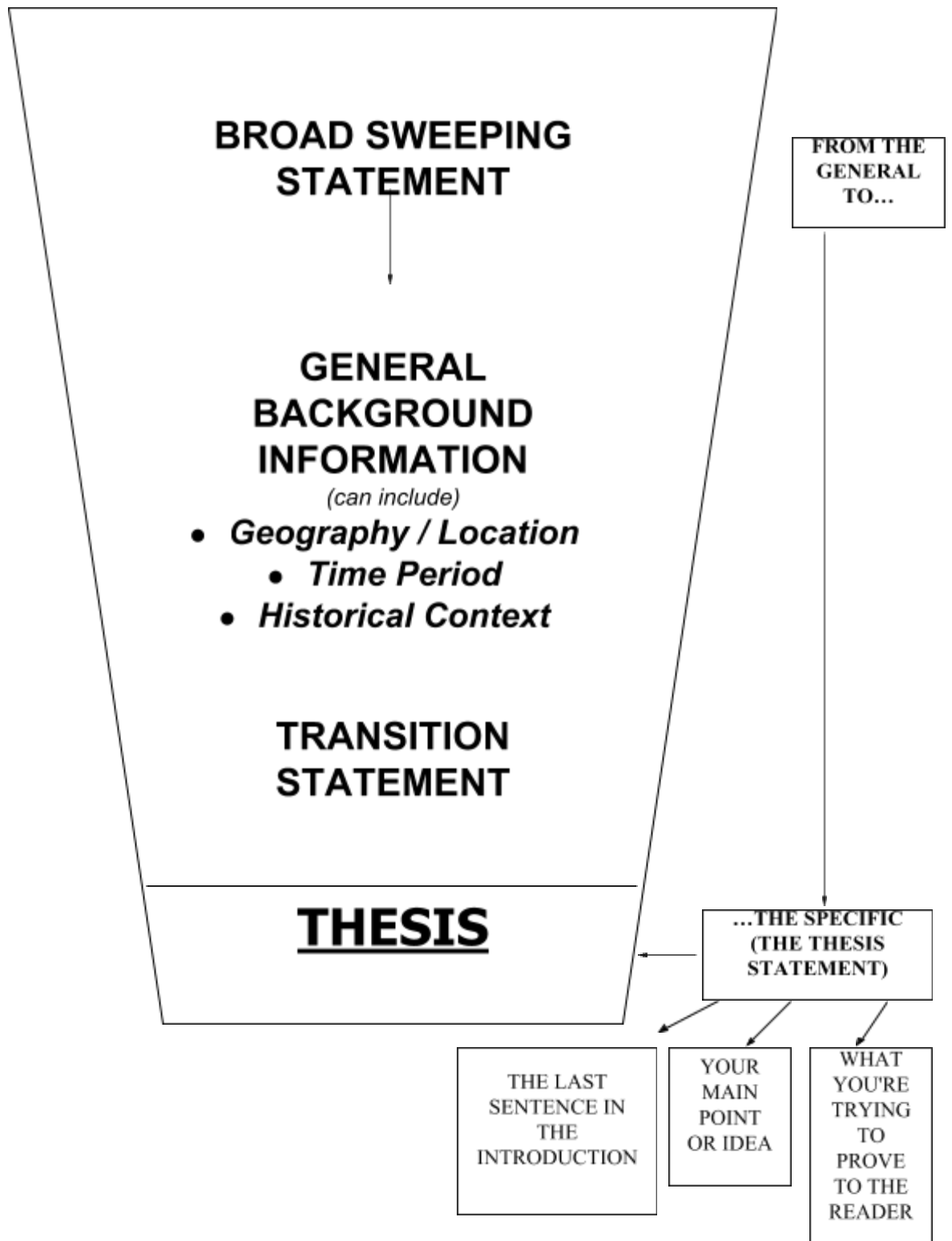
# “Thesis Killer”

## Words



- very
- many
- things
- lots
- a lot
- stuff
- ways
- really

# THE INTRODUCTION:



# POWER WORDS FOR WRITING

When writing essays, you can convey your message more forcefully if you use more powerful words. The first column displays verbs which demonstrate conviction and purpose on the part of the writer. Following are two columns which deal with the most common form of essay, the compare / contrast. Consider using these words to more forcefully get your point across. These words should become a standard part of your essay writing skill.

DESCRIPTIVE VERBS	COMPARE	CONTRAST	CAUSATION
<p>Asserts Compliments Criticizes Demonstrates Embraces Exemplifies Illustrates Indicates Portrays Reflects Reveals Signifies Strengthens Symbolizes Undermines</p>	<p>Agree Also As well Both/all In addition In common In comparison Shares the view Similarly Too Similar to... Both... Compared to... In the same way... One connection between...</p>	<p>Conversely Differently Disagree However In contrast None/either On the other hand Unlike One difference between... Unlike... Whereas... Though... In contrast to...</p>	<p>One reason that explains...  One cause of ...was...  One effect of...  Because of...  Consequently...  As a result of...</p>

## TRANSITIONAL PHRASES

The use of transitional phrases help to clarify the meaning and guide the reader from point to point throughout the essay. Additionally they provide the appearance of organization. Some helpful phrases follow:

**To clarify a sequence of events:** first, second, third, next, finally, last

**To show a similar relationship:** similarly, in like manner, likewise

**To point out dissimilarity:** in opposition to, in contrast to, on the other hand

**To emphasize a point:** indeed, in fact, surely, certainly

**To show or point out a result:** consequently, as a result, therefore, hence

**To summarize a position:** in summation, finally, in conclusion, in short

**To illustrate a point:** for example, by way of illustration, for instance

**To contrast a position:** on the other hand, however, but, yet, despite, although

**To record time:** now, gradually, later, eventually, immediately, at once, at this point, next, afterward, soon, then

Note how the transitional phrases affect the following paragraphs.

Lenin modified Marxism in several ways. He posited a tightly organized cadre of committed revolutionaries in place of the proletariat. He telescoped the agrarian and industrial revolutions so that they could both take place in a limited time frame. With NEP he retreated on communism when expediency required that he make a partial regression. He was able to adapt Marxism to the unique conditions facing him in Russia. The November 1917 revolution and its success could not have been achieved without his revision.

Lenin modified marxism in several ways. First, he posited a tightly organized cadre of committed revolutionaries in place of the proletariat. Second, he telescoped the agrarian and industrial revolutions so that they could both take place within a limited time frame. And last, with nep he retreated on communism when expediency required that he make a partial regression. In short, he was able to adapt marxism to the unique conditions facing him in russia. Without such adaptations, the november 1917 revolution and its success could not have been achieved.

# DBQ Planning Sheet

## DBQ Question:

## INTRODUCTORY ¶:

*Thesis Statement* →

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*Time Period* →

*Geographic Location* →

*Relevant background ideas/events/concepts to set up thesis*

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## "MEAT" ¶ #1:

**Main Topic of this ¶** →

<b>Document Information</b> <i>Document Information:</i> Information from the document packet that illustrate the topic of this ¶	<b>Outside Information</b> <i>"O. I."</i> Bullet ideas, names, terms, people, places—any "outside information" that can illustrate the topic of this ¶

**"MEAT" ¶ #2:**  
**Main Topic of this ¶**

→ \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Document Information</b> <i>Document Information:</i> Information from the document packet that illustrate the topic of this ¶	<b>Outside Information</b> <i>"O. I."</i> Bullet ideas, names, terms, people, places—any "outside information" that can illustrate the topic of this ¶

**"MEAT" ¶ #3:** (if necessary)  
**Main Topic of this ¶**

→ \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Document Information</b> <i>Document Information:</i> Information from the document packet that illustrate the topic of this ¶	<b>Outside Information</b> <i>"O. I."</i> Bullet ideas, names, terms, people, places—any "outside information" that can illustrate the topic of this ¶

**CONCLUDING ¶:**

Restate thesis (*in a different way than the intro*) → \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

So what? (*Historical significance or connection to future events*)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_