

Point of View on the DBQ

How to Analyze Point of View (POV) Effectively

When studying historical sources you need to be aware of documents' sources and their authors' points of view. The Document Based Question (DBQ) rubric requires you to analyze point of view in the documents

- **Basic Core #5 from the DBQ Rubric:**
“The student analyzes point of view or bias in at least three documents.”
- **What is P.O.V.?**
It is one’s perspective toward a particular person or issue that has been shaped over a period of time due to one’s...
 - **experiences or motives**
 - **race / ethnic origins**
 - **nationality**
 - **class status**
 - **ideological position**
 - **gender**

Analyzing Point of View

- Students often mistakenly feel documents in a DBQ are restatements of historical facts; they often do not critique the documents for bias, accepting the statements at face value and as absolutely accurate.
- In order to effectively analyze point of view, the student must treat the documents as personal interpretations and not facts.

Analyzing POV

1. The first question you should ask yourself when analyzing the author's POV is "who produced the document?" – gender, age, ethnicity, social status, religion, intellectual beliefs, etc.

example: an English historian writing about Indian independence vs. an Indian nationalist writing about Indian independence vs. a Pakistani Muslim writing about Indian independence.

- Source: Isocrates, Greek philosopher; description of Artaxerxes II, a Persian king who gained control over Greek city-states in 387 BCE

“He is a despot to whose course we sail to accuse each other. We call him the Great King, as though we were subject prisoners of war, and if we engage in war with each other, it is on him that our hopes are set, though he would destroy both sides without hesitation.”

POV - Speaker

- As a Greek, Isocrates would have ill-will towards his conquerors and would thus be inclined to describe him harshly with such terms as “despot” or “subject prisoners of war” and “without hesitation.”

Analyzing POV

2. The second question you should ask yourself is “who was the **intended audience**?” – written privately, written to be read/heard by others (who?), official document for a ruler to read, commissioned painting, etc.

Generally, a speaker chooses a particular audience because **that audience has the power or capability to accomplish what the speaker wants.**

The intended audience can affect the document’s reliability.

example: diary entry or personal letter vs. public proclamation/decrees

- Source: Emperor Qianlong, Qing Emperor of China, addressing the British sovereign.

You, O King, from afar have yearned after the blessings of our civilization, and in your eagerness to come into touch with our converting influence have sent an Embassy. Your Ambassador has put forward requests which completely fail to recognize the Throne's principle to 'treat strangers from afar with indulgence,' and to exercise a pacifying control over barbarian tribes the world over. Nevertheless, I do not forget the lonely remoteness of your island, cut off from the world. I have therefore commanded my minister to enlighten your Ambassador on the subject.

POV - Audience

- When addressing what in his mind was an inferior culture, Qianlong condescends: “the lonely remoteness of your island, cut off from the world.”
- The speaker and his/her audience can also affect the **TONE** of the document:
- Qianlong’s belief that Chinese civilization was superior to all others is indicated in his use of phrases such as “the blessings of our civilization,” “our converting influence,” “barbarian tribes” etc.

Analyzing POV

4. The fourth question, as any good attorney knows, would be "why?"

What is the **MOTIVE** of the author of the document? What is it they want to accomplish? Is there anything they would like to change? Do they stand to benefit somehow?

- Source: Marx and Engel's Communist Manifesto in 1848

"The bourgeoisie has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations. It has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his 'natural superior,' and has left remaining no other nexus [link] between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous 'cash payment.' It has drowned the most heavenly of ecstasies of religious fervor, of chivalrous enthusiasm in the icy water of egotistical calculation. In one word, for exploitation, veiled by religious and political illusions, it has substituted naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation."

POV - Purpose

- Marx and Engel are trying to inspire a revolution and therefore are trying to arouse negative feelings about the bourgeoisie and capitalism in general by describing them with such words as "pitiless," "egotistical" and "exploitation."

SOAPS-Tone

Analyzing Point of View

SPEAKER	<i>V</i> <i>a</i> <i>b</i>	<i>e</i> <i>l</i>
OCCASION	<i>V</i> <i>h</i> <i>T</i> <i>h</i>	<i>s</i> <i>?</i> <i>s</i>
AUDIENCE	<i>F</i> <i>n</i>	<i>v</i> <i>p</i>
PURPOSE	<i>V</i> <i>h</i>	<i>r</i>
SUBJECT	<i>V</i> <i>t</i>	<i>e</i>
TONE	<i>V</i> <i>a</i>	<i>e</i>

More Good Examples of P.O.V.

- “Balthasar Rusow, as a Lutheran Pastor, was naturally upset by the celebration of a saints day because Lutherans don’t venerate saints.”

SPEAKER

- “Since Benjamin Disraeli was writing a speech to the House of Commons, he probably chose his words carefully to persuade members to support his political agenda.”

PURPOSE

- “It is not surprising that the resolution from the German Social Democratic Party Congress was extremely critical of the capitalist agenda.”

TONE

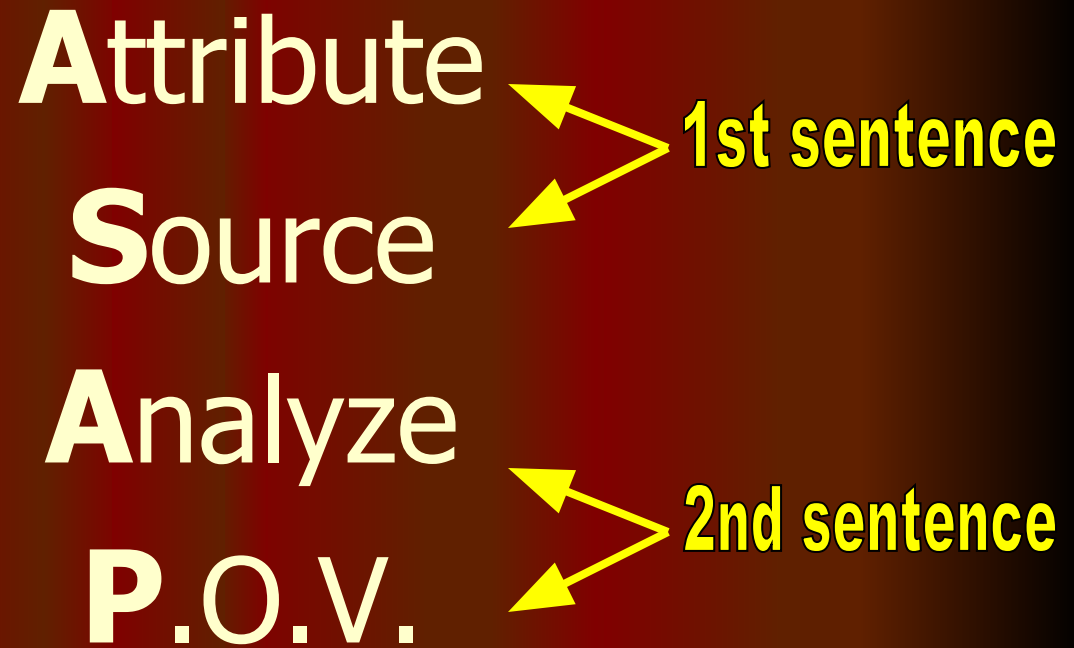
Including P.O.V. in Your Essay

Each time you include point of view analysis in your essay, you will write a **two sentence** combination.

We need to learn this combination

A.S.A.P.!

A.S.A.P.!



1st sentence: Attribute the Source!

- The background information about the author is always given to you in the “box” of the document
 - A. Name of the person**
 - B. Time period when he/she lived**
 - C. Profession or social position**
 - D. Gender**
- You must use this info to connect the author’s personal background to their point of view. This is the easy part since this information is already given to you!

Information
about the author
given to you.

Example...

Read the source
information first – what
can you determine
about the author before
reading the document?

Document 6

Source: Thomas Müntzer, preacher and theologian, open letter to the people of Allstedt, April 27, 1525.

How long are you going to resist God's will? The whole of Germany, France, and Italy are awake. Four abbeys were laid waste during Easter week. More peasants in the Black Forest have risen, 3,000 strong! Hammer away on the anvils of the princes and lords, cast down their towers to the ground!

Attribute the source: your first sentence should include
the author's personal background and what he believes.

Document 6

Source: Thomas Müntzer, preacher and theologian, open letter to the people of Allstedt, April 27, 1525.

How long are you going to resist God's will? The whole of Germany, France, and Italy are awake. Four abbeys were laid waste during Easter week. More peasants in the Black Forest have risen, 3,000 strong! Hammer away on the anvils of the princes and lords, cast down their towers to the ground!

Example Attribution Sentence:

“Thomas Muntzer, a German preacher and theologian during the 16th century, believed that the peasants would be justified in overthrowing the rule of their princes and lords (doc.6).”

parethetical citation...

why important?

2nd sentence: Analyze the POV!

- After you have written your attribution sentence, you are ready for the next step: **Analyzing the author's POV:**
 - **Why do they have a particular opinion?**
 - **How is the author's point of view influenced by their occupation or background?**
 - **Is the source reliable? Why or why not?**

Document 6

Source: Thomas Müntzer, preacher and theologian, open letter to the people of Allstedt, April 27, 1525.

How long are you going to resist God? The people of Germany, France, and Italy are awake. Four abbeys were laid waste and the Forest have risen, 3,000 strong! Hammer down their towers to the ground!

Interesting fact: Thomas Müntzer was an early Reformation-era German theologian and Anabaptist. He turned against Martin Luther and became a rebel leader during the Peasants' War. During the rebellion Müntzer and his farmers were defeated. **He was captured, tortured and decapitated.**

Let's finish our exam

“Thomas Muntzer, a German theologian in the 16th century, believed that the peasants were justified in overthrowing the rule of their princes and lords (doc.6).”

Despite the fact that Muntzer is a Christian preacher who may feel sympathy for the plight of poor peasants, he would most likely feel a greater sense of anger for the destruction of the abbeys and want to encourage uprisings against the princes to gain revenge for their offenses. Further, Muntzer may stand to gain more power in his parish if the political authority of the lords were reduced.

A.S.A.P.

- When you put your attribution sentence and analysis sentence together, you **connect the author's background to their opinion or point of view.**
- As a historian you are then in a position to evaluate how much you "trust" the information in the document.

Another Example Document

Source: Pope Urban II, at the Council of Clermont, calling for the first Crusade, November, 1095.

“Your brethren who live in the Middle East are in urgent need of your help... For, as most of you have heard, the Turks and the Arabs have attacked them and have conquered the territory of the Byzantine Empire... They have occupied more and more of the lands of the Christians...They have killed and captured many, and have destroyed the churches and devastated the Empire...”

A.S.A.P. Example:

Pope Urban II, leader of the Roman Catholic Church during the 11th century, characterized Muslims in the Middle East as destructive and hostile peoples (**doc.4**).

Obviously, as Pope, he would want to portray the Arabs as warlike in order to gain support for a Crusade to liberate and restore Christian title to the "Holy Land", which would increase his political and religious authority in addition to providing the Church with increased tax revenue from lucrative eastern trade routes.

When Writing Point of View

1. Make at least FOUR attempts at P.O.V. (preferably five or more).
2. Choose **OBVIOUS** documents in your P.O.V. attempts
3. Begin with a formulaic sentence if necessary...

POV Formulaic Phrases

- “It is not surprising that Source X would make this statement because”
- “Person X most likely has this opinion due to the fact that he/she is ...”
- “Obviously because of his [occupation, gender, class, religion, nationality, political position, ethnic identity] ... he would most likely have this opinion.”
- “Because Document 5 is a diary entry, the author is most likely not seeking to gain publicity or influence opinions.”

Point of View

If you get stuck - remember the word

OBVIOUSLY!

A Final Note on Bias vs. POV

- Bias or point of view is not inherently “bad.”
- EVERYBODY has a point of view, which usually affects their description or perception of an event at least subtly.
- Generally Point of View is not deliberately (or even unconsciously) inaccurate or misleading, just not quite completely 100% neutral, maybe implying a little more weight on one side of a question, or leaving a possible alternative perspective.

Bias vs. POV

- Bias, on the other hand, is a point of view taken far enough to be actually false or misleading, whether conscious or unconscious, (to include fraud) and therefore if bias is suspected then the entire document becomes somewhat suspect.
- I believe that very few, if any, of the documents on the DBQ have any real bias, but they all do have a point of view.