

Analytical vs. Descriptive DBQ Writing

Analysis: Separates material or concepts into component parts so that its organizational structure may be understood. Distinguishes between facts and inferences.

Key Words: analyzes, breaks down, compares, contrasts, diagrams, deconstructs, differentiates, discriminates, distinguishes, identifies, illustrates, infers, outlines, relates, selects, separates.

Descriptive Writing vs. An Analytic or Critical Approach

1. *Descriptive* writing merely says what happened or what another author has discussed; it provides an account of the topic.
2. An *analytic* (or *critical*) approach asks and answers questions, makes comparisons, and presents and defends a thesis or argument. Rather than just stating the facts, this approach explains and interprets them. Why did events take place, what were their consequences, how did they relate to other developments? Why did the authors you read take differing stands? What is your own interpretation of the issues?
3. Few assignments in history courses will be simply descriptive. Rather than just summarizing what happened or what you read, you will usually be asked to provide your own analysis of the topic or issue about which you are writing and to argue a thesis or conclusion. Be sure that you understand what each assignment requires, in terms of the balance between description, analysis, and argument.
4. You must provide evidence and examples to buttress your analysis and arguments.