

DOCUMENTS

Interpreting Alternative Viewpoints
in Primary Source Documents

The Indian Ocean

A Trading Network in Transition

*Europeans transformed a long-established trading network
in the Indian Ocean and East Asia. How did they do it?*



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Debating the DOCUMENTS

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in Primary Source Documents

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The 2017 World History Course and Exam Description of the College Board Advanced Placement Program* lists five themes that it urges teachers to use in organizing their teaching. Each World History *Debating the Documents* booklet focuses on one or two of these five themes.

The Five Themes

- 1. Interaction between humans and the environment.** (demography and disease; migration; patterns of settlement; technology)
- 2. Development and interaction of cultures.** (religions; belief systems, philosophies, and ideologies; science and technology; the arts and architecture)
- 3. State-building, expansion, and conflict.** (political structures and forms of governance; empires; nations and nationalism; revolts and revolutions; regional, transregional, and global structures and organizations)
- 4. Creation, expansion, and interaction of economic systems.** (agricultural and pastoral production; trade and commerce; labor systems; industrialization; capitalism and socialism)
- 5. Development and transformation of social structures.** (gender roles and relations; family and kinship; racial and ethnic constructions; social and economic classes)

This Booklet's Main Themes:

- 1** Interaction between humans and the environment.
- 4** Creation, expansion, and interaction of economic systems.

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Teacher Introduction

★ Using Primary Sources

Primary sources are called “primary” because they are first-hand records of a past era or historical event. They are the raw materials, or the evidence, on which historians base their “secondary” accounts of the past.

A rapidly growing number of history teachers today are using primary sources. Why? Perhaps it's because primary sources give students a better sense of what history is and what historians do. Such sources also help students see the past from a variety of viewpoints. Moreover, primary sources make history vivid and bring it to life.

However, primary sources are not easy to use. They can be confusing. They can be biased. They rarely all agree. Primary sources must be interpreted and set in context. To do this, students need historical background knowledge. *Debating the Documents* helps students handle such challenges by giving them a useful framework for analyzing sources that conflict with one another.



*“Multiple,
conflicting
perspectives are
among the truths
of history.
No single
objective or
universal account
could ever put an
end to this endless
creative dialogue
within and
between the past
and the present.”*

From the 2011 Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct of the Council of the American Historical Association.

INTRODUCTION

★ *The Debating the Documents Series*

Each *Debating the Documents* booklet includes the same sequence of reproducible worksheets. If students use several booklets over time, they will get regular practice at interpreting and comparing conflicting sources. In this way, they can learn the skills and habits needed to get the most out of primary sources.

Each *Debating the Documents* Booklet Includes

- **Suggestions for the Student and an Introductory Essay.** The student gets instructions and a one-page essay providing background on the booklet's topic. A time line on the topic is also included.
- **Two Groups of Contrasting Primary Source Documents.** In most of the booklets, students get one pair of visual sources and one pair of written sources. In some cases, more than two are provided for each. Background is provided on each source. *Within each group, the sources clash in a very clear way.* (The sources are not always exact opposites, but they do always differ in some obvious way.)
- **Three Worksheets for Each Document Group.** Students use the first two worksheets to take notes on the sources. The third worksheet asks which source the student thinks would be most useful to a historian.
- **One DBQ.** On page 20, a document-based question (DBQ) asks students to write an effective essay using all of the booklet's primary sources.

★ *How to Use This Booklet*

1. Have students read “Suggestions for the Student” and the Introductory Essay.

Give them copies of pages 5–7. Ask them to read the instructions and then read the introductory essay on the topic. The time line gives them additional information on that topic. This reading could be done in class or as a homework assignment.

2. Have students do the worksheets.

Make copies of the worksheets and the pages with the sources. Ask students to study the background information on each source and the source itself. Then have them take notes on the sources using the worksheets. If students have access to a computer, have them review the primary sources digitally.

NOTE: If you are using these materials with an AP world history class, an honors class, or some other group of advanced and/or more knowledgeable students, you may want to make more written sources available to them on this topic. Do a basic Internet search for sources that provide additional perspectives and then add to the sources provided here.

3. “Debate the documents” as a class.

Have students use their worksheet notes to debate the primary source documents as a class. Urge students to follow these ground rules:

- Use your worksheets as a guide for the discussion or debate.
- Try to reach agreement about the main ideas and the significance of each primary source document.
- Look for points of agreement as well as disagreement between the primary sources.
- Listen closely to all points of view about each primary source.
- Focus on the usefulness of each source to the historian, not merely on whether you agree or disagree with that source’s point of view.

4. Have students do the final DBQ.

A DBQ is an essay question about a set of primary source documents. To answer the DBQ, students write essays using evidence from the sources and their own background knowledge of the historical era. (See the next page for a DBQ scoring guide to use in evaluating these essays.)

The DBQ assignment on page 20 includes guidelines for writing a DBQ essay. Here are some additional points to make with students about preparing to write this kind of essay.

The DBQ for this Booklet (see page 20):

Compare and contrast the Indian Ocean trading network before and after the Portuguese arrived in 1498.

- Analyze the question carefully.
- Use your background knowledge to set sources in their historical context.
- Question and interpret sources actively. Do not accept them at face value.
- Use sources meaningfully to support your essay’s thesis.
- Pay attention to the overall organization of your essay.

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★ *Complete DBQ Scoring Guide*

Use this guide in evaluating the DBQ for this booklet. Use this scoring guide with students who are already familiar with using primary sources and writing DBQ essays.

Excellent Essay

- Offers a clear answer or thesis explicitly addressing all aspects of the essay question.
- Does a careful job of interpreting many or most of the documents and relating them clearly to the thesis and the DBQ. Deals with conflicting documents effectively.
- Uses details and examples effectively to support the thesis and other main ideas. Explains the significance of those details and examples well.
- Uses background knowledge and the documents in a balanced way.
- Is well written; clear transitions make the essay easy to follow from point to point. Only a few minor writing errors or errors of fact.

Good Essay

- Offers a reasonable thesis addressing the essential points of the essay question.
- Adequately interprets at least some of the documents and relates them to the thesis and the DBQ.
- Usually relates details and examples meaningfully to the thesis or other main ideas.
- Includes some relevant background knowledge.
- May have some writing errors or errors of fact, as long as these do not invalidate the essay's overall argument or point of view.

Fair Essay

- Offers at least a partly developed thesis addressing the essay question.
- Adequately interprets at least a few of the documents.
- Relates only a few of the details and examples to the thesis or other main ideas.
- Includes some background knowledge.
- Has several writing errors or errors of fact that make it harder to understand the essay's overall argument or point of view.

Poor Essay

- Offers no clear thesis or answer addressing the DBQ.
- Uses few documents effectively other than referring to them in "laundry list" style, with no meaningful relationship to a thesis or any main point.
- Uses details and examples unrelated to the thesis or other main ideas. Does not explain the significance of these details and examples.
- Is not clearly written, with some major writing errors or errors of fact.

Suggestions to the Student

★ *Using Primary Sources*

A primary source is any record of evidence from the past. Many things are primary sources: letters, diary entries, official documents, photos, cartoons, wills, maps, charts, etc. They are called “primary” because they are first-hand records of a past event or time period. This *Debating the Documents* lesson is based on two groups of primary source documents. Within each group, the sources conflict with one another. That is, they express different or even opposed points of view. You need to decide which source is more reliable, more useful, or more typical of the time period. This is what historians do all the time. Usually, you will be able to learn something about the past from each source, even when the sources clash with one another in dramatic ways.

★ *How to Use This Booklet*

1. **Read the one-page introductory essay.**

This gives you background information that will help you analyze the primary source documents and do the exercises for this *Debating the Documents* lesson. The time line gives you additional information you will find helpful.



2. **Study the primary source documents for this lesson.**

For this lesson, you get two groups of sources. The sources within each group conflict with one another. Some of these sources are visuals, others are written sources. With visual sources, pay attention not only to the image’s “content” (its subject matter) but also to its artistic style, shading, composition, camera angle, symbols, and other features that add to the image’s meaning. With written sources, notice the writing style, bias, even what the source leaves out or does not talk about. Think about each source’s author, that author’s reasons for writing, and the likely audience for the source. These considerations give you clues as to the source’s historical value.

3. **Use the worksheets to analyze each group of primary source documents.**

For each group of sources, you get three worksheets. Use the “Study the Document” worksheets to take notes on each source. Use the “Comparing the Documents” worksheet to decide which of the sources would be most useful to a historian.

4. **As a class, debate the documents.**

Use your worksheet notes to help you take part in this debate.

5. **Do the final DBQ.**

“DBQ” means “document-based question.” A DBQ is a question along with several primary source documents. To answer the DBQ, write an essay using evidence from the documents and your own background history knowledge.

The Indian Ocean

In 1468, Portuguese ships under the command of Vasco da Gama rounded the Cape of Good Hope at the southern tip of Africa and entered the Indian Ocean. After moving up the coast of East Africa to Mombasa, da Gama found a Muslim pilot who helped him cross over to Calicut on the western shores of India. Once there, he announced he was “seeking spices and Christians.”

As Columbus had done six years earlier in the Americas, da Gama’s adventure into the Indian Ocean opened a whole new chapter in human history.

However, it did not create an all-new Indian Ocean trading network. Such a network had existed for centuries. It extended from the coast of East Africa, to Arabia, the Persian Gulf, and India, across to Burma and down through the Malacca Strait that runs between the Malay Peninsula and the Indonesian island of Sumatra. This strait links the Indian Ocean to the Pacific Ocean. At its narrowest point was Malacca, where Indian, Muslim, Javanese, and Chinese merchants resided between trips to and from China, Korea, and Japan to the north or to the Spice Islands (the Moluccas) to the east.

Early in the history of this network, small coast-hugging ships carried silks, spices, pearls, gold, ivory, and slaves. Increasingly after 1000 CE, shipments also included bulk goods for the region’s growing populations—grains, timber, iron, cotton goods, Chinese porcelain, and much more. Spices such as pepper, cinnamon, ginger, nutmegs, or cloves were in especially high demand in Europe as preservatives, medicines, and taste enhancers.

Arab, Persian, and Indian merchants dominated trade west of Indonesia. From there eastward, Chinese, Malay, and other merchants prevailed. Muslims carried spices from the east back through the Red Sea to Cairo and other Mediterranean ports to sell them at very high prices to Venetian and other European merchants. This Muslim control irritated Christian Europe, adding to

the already bitter religious rivalry between the two groups. It was this combination of religious antagonism and commercial competition that moved the Portuguese to seek out a sea route to the Indian Ocean.

This explains their motives, but it hardly explains how they were able to do what they did. Portugal was a small nation of one million people. It was not among the most powerful in Europe. Yet within two or three decades of Vasco da Gama’s voyage, the Portuguese were able to disarm Arab and other Muslim traders in particular, establish forts and port cities, and become a dominant power in the entire Indian Ocean network. How did they do it?

Part of the explanation has to do with China. In the early 1400s, a vast Chinese fleet made several trading voyages to impress others in the Indian Ocean with its power and wealth. Some of its ships were giants, with nine masts—much larger than Portugal’s carracks. Yet in 1433, China suddenly turned away from the sea, allowing its ships to rot in port and losing the knowledge of how to build them. Portugal might not have prevailed against this fleet had its ships remained active.

On the other hand, Portugal’s navigational skills, and its sturdy carracks with up-to-date cannons and guns, still might have given it the advantage over China’s earlier fleet. It is true that some of Portugal’s seagoing technology originated in China (the compass, the rudder, gunpowder, etc.). Yet competition within Europe led to constant improvements that soon put Europe ahead of China in maritime capability. Meanwhile, Portugal’s restless, aggressive, crusading determination gave it the will to prevail as well. Only the Dutch would dislodge Portugal from its dominant position in the Indian Ocean, about a century later. By then, Europe’s imperial powers had opened an entirely new era in the history of the Indian Ocean trading network.

The Indian Ocean Time Line

100s CE

• • • A Greek first-hand account called the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* is written sometime in the first century CE. It describes the trading patterns already in place in the Indian Ocean region.

751

• • • The Abbasid Dynasty unites Muslims under the Caliph in Baghdad. Islamic civilization flourishes, providing a stable and growing market for goods at the western end of the Indian Ocean trading network. While political unity soon fades, cultural unity is maintained and commercial activity flourishes.

848

• • • Vijayalaya reestablishes the Chola kingdom in southern India. The Cholas go on to unite all of southern India in a sizable empire that lasts until the 13th century. Through their naval power and ports in southern India they extend trade ties to Arabs and others in the west and to the Chinese in the east.

960–1279

• • • The Song Dynasty unites China from 960–1279. Merchants and commercial activity thrive, even more than they did during the previous Tang unification (618–907). Chinese silks and porcelain, especially, are in high demand throughout the Indian Ocean networks.

1405–1433

• • • Zheng He, the Muslim eunuch servant of the emperor of China's Ming Dynasty, leads several huge sea expeditions to establish China's influence throughout the Indian Ocean. Enormous nine-masted ships are among the dozens that took part in each expedition. Some sail as far as the Persian Gulf and the coast of East Africa. Having made China's powerful presence known, however, the emperors suddenly abandon sea exploration, ban the use of such ocean-going vessels, and turn their attention inward. Chinese merchants did continue privately as major participants in the Indian Ocean networks.

1488

• • • Bartholomeu Dias completes a long series of Portuguese probes by rounding the southern tip of Africa.

1498

• • • Portugal's Vasco da Gama sails to East Africa and crosses to Calicut in India.

1511

• • • The Portuguese led by Alfonso de Albuquerque seize Malacca on the Malay Peninsula from its Muslim rulers. Malacca was one of the most important exchange points for Indian Ocean merchants. Albuquerque also establishes a major fortified post at Goa, India.

1542–1543

• • • The Portuguese land in Japan. In 1569, Nagasaki is opened to them as a trading port.

1556

• • • The Portuguese establish a trading base in China at Macao.

1600–1602

• • • The British East India Company (1600) and the Dutch East India Company (1602) are formed to compete with Portugal for trade in the Indian Ocean. These combine private merchant capital and the control of trade with the armed backing of a large organization.

1614

• • • Japan expels the Jesuits, and Christian activity is outlawed.

1638

• • • After several thousand Christian Japanese take part in a rebellion in 1637, Japan expels the Portuguese from Nagasaki.

1641

• • • The Dutch trading factory (already at Hirado) is moved to a special island in the bay of Nagasaki. The Protestant Dutch are not seen as promoting their religion actively as much as Catholic Portugal.

DOCUMENTS 1 & 2

Visual Primary Source Documents 1 & 2

Document 1



The Granger Collection, New York

Document 2



The Granger Collection, New York

Information on Documents 1 & 2

Document 1. An Arab ship, around 1237, engaged in the East African trade in the Persian Gulf. This is a miniature from the *al-Maqamat* of al-Hariri, Baghdad. The ship is clearly meant to ply open waters, though it does not show all that clearly the triangular lateen sail that Arab and other ships used, which enabled them to steer against the wind when necessary.

Document 2. A twelfth-century Chinese ship outfitted with sails, oars, and wheels for passage on the land. This is a Chinese woodcut of the twelfth century. Chinese “junks” with square sails were common in the eastern Pacific. They were large and clearly capable of carrying large loads.