

DOCUMENTS

Interpreting Alternative Viewpoints
in Primary Source Documents

Europe's Scramble for Africa Why Did They Do It?

*Was it for money and trade, glory and
humanitarian idealism, or power and pride?*



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Debating the DOCUMENTS

Interpreting Alternative Viewpoints
in Primary Source Documents

Europe's Scramble for Africa Why Did They Do It?

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.
- 3** State-building, expansion, and conflict.

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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):

List in order of importance what you see as the major reasons for Europe’s “scramble for Africa” and explain your choices.

- 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.

INTRODUCTION

★ *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.

Europe's Scramble for Africa

Otto von Bismarck was the statesman who united Germany as a single nation in 1871. When other European countries began their rush to seize most of Africa in the 1880s, Bismarck was skeptical. He doubted that Germany needed African colonies at all. He also hoped to avoid conflict with Britain and feared he would get into such conflict if he competed with it for colonies in Africa. Yet pressure from the press and pro-imperialist groups began to mount. Bismarck resisted the pressure for a time, but finally told one German official, "All this colonial business is a sham, but we need it for the elections."

As a result, Germany by 1885 had acquired four colonies in Africa, none of very much value to Germany in any economic sense.

This story about Germany touches on many of the themes that make the European "scramble for Africa" so complicated and so hard to fully understand. As late as the 1860s, very little of Africa was under European control. Portugal held two colonies in southern Africa. France had begun to rule in Algeria. The British held the Cape Colony at the southern tip of Africa. France, Portugal, and Great Britain held several other small African coastal areas. Yet the vast interior was still largely unknown to Europeans. Starting in the 1870s, Europe rapidly conquered almost all of Africa; a look at a map of Africa in 1914 shows just how rapidly. By then, the entire continent was carved into European-controlled colonies, except for Ethiopia and Liberia. Why?

No one clear reason or factor seems able to explain fully the frenzy for empire building that seized Europeans in the late 1800s. The scramble for Africa was only part of a much larger imperial drive that led Europeans into many other regions of the world as well. In no other region, however, was so much land seized—land whose value to Europe was so questionable.

A desire for profits was clearly a driving force for some. In 1876, King Leopold II of Belgium began acquiring land that would become the Congo Free State, a territory he controlled privately for a time. Millions may have died because of

his terrible exploitation of forced labor there to produce rubber, ivory, and other goods. Even other European imperialists were horrified by the atrocities. But profit was also a motive for many of them as they followed Leopold's lead and set out to carve up Africa's interior. Certainly this was the case for Cecil Rhodes, who made a fortune monopolizing South Africa's diamond trade. There were others like Rhodes, though perhaps not many with as grandiose a vision as his.

Yet as Bismarck's statement suggests, much of Africa was not that valuable from an economic standpoint. In the 1890s, for example, Great Britain's trade with tiny Belgium was greater than its trade with all of Africa.

Much of the European support for empire was no doubt motivated by missionary idealism and humanitarian concerns. Of course, a powerful and arrogant sense of cultural superiority often shaped this missionary spirit. In any case, European actions in Africa often failed to live up to such idealism. Yet there is no doubt that this idealism was a real and sincere motive for many.

In some ways, the scramble for Africa simply seemed to feed on itself. One nation sought colonies to keep other nations from getting them first or from gaining some other advantage over their rivals. Nationalist pride intensified this sort of political and diplomatic jockeying. The unification of Germany and Italy in the 1860s and 1870s added to such tensions. These new, powerful (but insecure) competitors felt driven to acquire colonies as insurance against facing off against one another in Europe itself. As Bismarck again later put it, "My map of Africa lies in Europe. Here is Russia and here is France, with Germany in the middle; that is my map of Africa."

As you seek to better understand the reasons for Europe's imperial conquest of Africa, the sources for this lesson should give you many other ideas to discuss and debate.

Europe's Scramble for Africa Time Line

1806

• • • Great Britain takes control of Cape Colony in South Africa.

1834

• • • In the "Great Trek," Dutch-speaking farmers, called "Boers," leave the Cape Colony and ultimately found two Boer republics to the north: the Orange Free State and Transvaal, or the South African Republic.

1840s-1870s

• • • European explorers, including David Livingstone, travel through Africa and publish reports on it. The number of European missions in Africa grows.

1870s

• • • King Leopold II of Belgium takes private control of the Congo Basin and its minerals. In 1884, he opens it to settlement as the Congo Free State.

1880-1881

• • • In the First Anglo-Boer War, the Boers restore Transvaal's independence after losing it briefly in 1877.

1882-1885

• • • The British invade and take over Egypt. They then must deal with Muhammad Ahmad in Sudan, already fighting Egyptian control. He calls himself "the Mahdi," the redeemer of Islam. The British send Charles Gordon to withdraw Egyptian and British troops from Sudan. Gordon acts to defeat the Mahdi, who soon besieges Khartoum. Khartoum falls in late January 1885, and Gordon is killed.

1884-1885

• • • At the Berlin Conference, hosted by Otto von Bismarck, the European powers grant Belgian King Leopold's claim to the Congo Basin and set down rules by which a colonizer, to win recognition, must show "effective occupation" and an ability to administer the colony and its economy.

1885

• • • Germany announces a protectorate over a large part of East Africa.

1885-1889

• • • France establishes new protectorates in West Africa, as the British are establishing other protectorates in West, East, and Southern Africa.

1889

• • • Cecil Rhodes' British South Africa Company is granted a royal charter. It soon extends its authority over present-day Zambia, Malawi, and Zimbabwe. Rhodes envisions a "Cape-to-Cairo" railway to help unite all of British-held Africa.

1896

• • • Ethiopia defeats Italy, but the Italians gain control of Eritrea.

1896-1898

• • • The British send Lord Kitchener to reconquer Sudan. At Omdurman, British and Egyptian forces with machine guns defeat the Mahdists, killing 11,000 of them while losing only 48 of their own soldiers. Soon after, the Fashoda Incident occurs when France's drive to link its West African colonies to the Nile clashes with Britain's aim to unite its African holdings from south to north. At Fashoda, the two nations face off. The outnumbered French are forced to withdraw.

1899-1902

• • • In the long Second Anglo-Boer War, the British take control of the Boer republics, which later form parts of the Union of South Africa.

1903-1908

• • • The 1903 Casement Report details massive atrocities in Leopold II's Congo Free State. In 1908, the Belgium parliament takes control of the territory, which will be called Belgian Congo.

1905-1912

• • • In the First Moroccan Crisis (1905-06), Germany tests a new British-French alliance by opposing French plans to make Morocco a protectorate. The alliance holds and Germany has to back down. In a Second Moroccan Crisis (1911-12), the British and French again unite against German pressure, and Germany agrees to French control over Morocco in exchange for land in French Equatorial Africa.

DOCUMENTS 1 & 2

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. Among the explanations Europeans gave for their imperial ambitions in Africa was the claim that they would bring the benefits of civilized life to that continent. This French magazine cover from 1911 suggests that France will bring civilization, peace, and wealth to Morocco. The phrase the French used for this principle was *Mission civilisatrice*.

Document 2. The sincere efforts of missionaries often had a positive impact in Africa, as this photo of a missionary with his students suggests. European nations also often used missionary efforts as reasons for further intervention in Africa, ostensibly to protect the missionaries but also to advance their colonial interests.