

# Introduction to Sourcing

One of the key aspects of the document-based question (DBQ) in AP World History is the recognition that the document is not neutral information (like a dictionary or phone book). The evaluation of the documents as reliable and credible resources is a key to a successful score on the DBQ essay.

A very important part of analyzing a document is determining the sourcing of the document. This means that the student must describe the point of view (POV) of the creator of the document or describe the purpose of the document. A person's POV is made up of their personal frame of reference and the historical context in which they live.

**Frame of Reference:** This is influenced by a person's gender, occupation, class, education, religion, personal interests and other aspects of their being. Examples: supporting the Yankees baseball team, being a Texas Longhorn or Texas Aggie, passing the Bar exam, being a nun, being the only daughter, growing up wealthy/poor, etc.

**Historical Situation:** This is made up of the society's influences on a person. It can be societal values, economic pressures, political conditions or other things which influence the society. Examples: gas prices, war, theocratic government, revolution, etc.

There are many aspects of a document that can be considered when determining its reliability as a source. The SOAP formula for analysis will focus your thoughts on analyzing a document.

Reading for SOAP:

- S = Speaker** Who is the speaker? **CORNPEG** - class, occupation, religion, nationality, political position, ethnic identity, gender. Are they an insider or an outsider?
- O = Occasion** Is there a current situation of importance (revolution, famine, prison, etc.)? This must tie the document to the prompt.
- A = Audience** To whom is the piece addressed? It may be a large or small group or one person.
- P = Purpose** What is the reason for the text, cartoon, etc.? Why was it Created? How does it affect the situation for the prompt?

By applying the SOAP formula to each document, you will quickly learn to consider the POV of the author and assess the document for its reliability and credibility as a source. Not every document will encompass every category. Practice makes perfect.

*Often, students will write that an author is credible because he saw the event firsthand.*

**NOTE:** The act of **seeing something**, by itself, does not make one credible to write/speak about that event. For example, a world history teacher and his 8-year-old son take a trip to the Taj Mahal and both write about the trip one year later. Would they write the same thing just because they were there to witness the building? The answer is no, the teacher might write about the historical wonder, the architecture and the influence of cultures outside India on the building. The 8-year-old boy might write about the heat, the smell and the horrible pollution, including all the sewage. Both people "saw" the same things, but their individual POV influenced what they wrote. **The POV is what influenced them to say/write what they did.**

## Warm-up Activity: First Day of School POVs

The following four quotes (documents) are from 10<sup>th</sup> grade teachers and students after the first day of school. Read each quote and ask yourself, “Why are they saying what they did?” They all experienced the same event, but the reactions vary greatly.

**Kate Nocca, an experienced AP World History teacher who has worked for many years in the prestigious Bellaire High School teaching history to sophomores, in an email to her co-teacher Mr. Peek.**

What a day! The students this year seem so much younger and so immature compared to the ones we’re used to. Their knowledge of history is lamentable, and when I told them they had to read a chapter of the textbook by Friday they looked visibly shocked. This bodes ill for the rest of the year.

**Chris Peek, a long-time AP World History teacher in a conversation with Kate Nocca, his teaching partner, as they are leaving Bellaire High School at the end of the first day of the school year.**

Cheer up, Kate. I remember having this same discussion last year and the year before. The students seem weak, but you know it will work out in the end and they’ll love the class by Thanksgiving. We can mold their young minds and make a load of little history buffs out of them. We can do it! Yes we can!

**Sarah Michelson, a sophomore student at Bellaire who has always been considered an “A” student, in a text message to her friend Lindsay after her first AP World History class.**

Bummer! I can’t believe we have hmwk in WHAP on the first day of school! This blows! I’m just gonna switch down to regular World History becuz this is WAY too much work. Ms. Nocca is so weird and her accent is ridiculous! OMG! Let’s go to Chick-fil-a after school, I don’t wanna do my hmwk! ☹

**Andrew Flores, an AP World History student at Bellaire High School in a letter to his grandfather who is a professor of mathematics at Harvard University.**

This school year is looking rather exciting even though I’ve only been back at Bellaire one day. My favorite class today was history. The other students in my class seem pretty bright and I like the animation that Ms. Ortega brings to the class. She was the only teacher who assigned homework on the first day, and I’m sure that is an indication that this class will prepare me well for college and maybe one day a high level academic job like yours.

From the documents it is clear that the event (occasion) was similar for each person, but the audience and purpose of the response is very different. When you can point out WHY the author made the remark (or created the art, or took the photograph), then you are addressing the POV.

# Writing POV Statements: Summary + SOAP

A POV statement is based on your SOAP analysis of the document. A simple way to organize your ideas is to write **two sentences** that are formulated to cover all aspects of the SOAP, this will usually cover the POV requirement. See the following example:

**Prompt: Evaluate the extent that belief systems and philosophies influenced governance.**

**Document 1 Niu Su, a Tang author, from a short story about a local civil servant in rural China, c. 900.**

Reaching manhood, I paid close attention to the [Confucian] classics. But in talent I do not compare with other men, and so far, I have held office only as an officer of the guard. I languish in this out-of-the-way corner beyond the Chien [mountains], close to the haunts of the barbarians. My native place is thousands of miles away, and many passes and rivers lie between. What is more, my term of office here is completed, and I cannot tell when I shall receive my next appointment. So, lacking in talent, I fear I am but poorly fitted to be selected for an official post; far less can I entertain the hope of some meager salary. I can only retire, when old age comes, to some rustic retreat, and turn aside to die in a ditch.

**Sentence 1:** Describe who the speaker (S) is by **expanding** on the information given in the attribution and using your own knowledge (do NOT just reiterate the given attribution), then explain the occasion (O) by providing the context of the location and current

**Example:** *Niu Su was a fiction writer at the time the Tang Dynasty was in decline.*

**Sentence 2:** Explain who the message is designed to reach, the audience (A), and the purpose (P) for which the message is created. Use 'power verbs' when writing about the purpose, e.g. convince, persuade, embarrass, anger, etc. (avoid the verb *inform*).

**Example:** *Niu Su was trying to convince the elite and ruling class of China that the bureaucratic system, based on Confucianism, was failing, and that action needed to be taken to save the government.*

To recap: Sentence 1 = S + O  
Sentence 2 = A + P

## How to fully address a document

- Summarize the document in a sentence that contains one or two facts that are **relevant to the prompt**. Make sure to refer to the document number and either the author OR title.  
**Paraphrase**—never quote the document.
- Write two sentences to cover the POV: in the first sentence, address the subject and occasion, and in the second sentence, address the audience and purpose of the document.

## Example of Complete Summary & POV Statement:

*In Document 1, it is clear that Confucianism played a key role in governance as Niu Su's story describes a bitter bureaucrat who was given a position thousands of miles away from his homeland due to his lack of talent in mastering the Confucian classics. Niu Su was a fiction writer at the time the Tang Dynasty was in decline. He was likely using this example to convince the elite and ruling class of China that the bureaucratic system, based on Confucianism, was failing, and that action needed to be taken to save the government.*

# Simplified Document Sourcing: Summary + OAP

One way to earn points for document sourcing is to focus on the significance of one aspect of a document, specifically the historical occasion (O), audience (A), or purpose (P). In order to earn credit for successful sourcing, you must not simply repeat information given in the document's attribution, but must instead incorporate your own knowledge and analysis.

**Prompt: Evaluate the extent that belief systems and philosophies influenced governance.**

**Document 1. Niu Su, a Tang author, from a short story about a local civil servant in rural China, c. 900.**

Reaching manhood, I paid close attention to the [Confucian] classics. But in talent I do not compare with other men, and so far I have held office only as an officer of the guard. I languish in this out-of-the-way corner beyond the Chien [mountains], close to the haunts of the barbarians. My native place is thousands of miles away, and many passes and rivers lie between. What is more, my term of office here is completed, and I cannot tell when I shall receive my next appointment. So lacking in talent, I fear I am but poorly fitted to be selected for an official post; far less can I entertain the hope of some meager salary. I can only retire, when old age comes, to some rustic retreat, and turn aside to die in a ditch.

**O = Occasion**, or historical context, of the document. Students must ask themselves, what is going on that influenced the creation of the document AND WHY?

A summary of the document with just the occasion (O) might look like this:

In Document 1, Niu Su illustrates that philosophies like Confucianism were at times questioned, when he writes that government officials were not being used well, often being forgotten in remote posts. Writing this during the decline of the Tang Dynasty, Niu Su's critical story draws attention to the problem in order to get the government to act.

**A = Audience** of the document. Who is the intended audience of the document AND WHY?

A summary of the document with just the Audience (A) might look like this:

In Document 1, Niu Su illustrates that philosophies like Confucianism were at times questioned, when he writes that government officials were not being used well, often being forgotten in remote posts. Niu Su writes his critical story knowing that the elites and government officials will be the only ones who can read the work, inspiring them to force the government to correct the failing bureaucratic system.

**P = Purpose** of the document. **WHY** did the creator of the document take time to create it?

A summary of the document with just the purpose (P) might look like this:

In Document 1, Niu Su illustrates that philosophies like Confucianism were at times questioned, when he writes that government officials were not being used well, often being forgotten in remote posts. Niu Su writes his critical story in an attempt to strengthen the Chinese government and reverse its decline.