## Preparation

* Access the [Comparison](https://www.oerproject.com/OER-Materials/OER-Media/PDFs/Teacher-Resources/WHP-Comparison-Tool), [CCOT](https://www.oerproject.com/OER-Materials/OER-Media/PDFs/Teacher-Resources/WHP-CCOT-Tool), and [Causation](https://www.oerproject.com/OER-Materials/OER-Media/PDFs/Teacher-Resources/WHP-Causation-Tool) tools
* Download the [WHP Writing Rubric](https://www.oerproject.com/OER-Materials/OER-Media/PDFs/Teacher-Resources/WHP-Writing-Rubric)

## Purpose

This assessment will help prepare you for the document-based questions (DBQs) you will probably encounter on exams. It will also give you a better understanding of your skills development and overall progress related to constructing an argument, interpreting historical documents, and employing the historical thinking practices you are using in this course.

## Practices

### Contextualization, sourcing, reading, writing

All DBQs require you to contextualize, source documents, and of course as part of this, read and write.

## Process

### Day 1

1. In this activity, you are going to prepare to respond to a DBQ, or document-based question. In this course, document-based questions give you a prompt or question along with seven source documents, and you’ll use the information in those documents (and any additional knowledge you have) to respond to the prompt. Your responses will be written in essay format, and will usually be five or six paragraphs long.
2. This DBQ asks you to respond to the following prompt: *To what extent was farming an improvement over foraging?* To make sure you’re clear on what you’re being asked, take out the Question Parsing Tool. Work with your classmates to deconstruct the prompt.
3. Take out the DBQ and relevant thinking tool to help you analyze the documents.
4. Take a look at the document library. As you do with the Three Close Reads process, quickly skim each of the documents for gist. Then, do a closer read of each one. For each document, write down the information you think you might use in your essay. If possible, also provide a source analysis for each document. Write your ideas on the relevant tool as you work through the documents. Discuss your ideas with the class.
5. Come up with a major claim or thesis statement that responds to the prompt. Use the information from your thinking tool to help you come up with an idea. What you have written should help you support your claim. One common mistake students make when responding to a DBQ is not directly answering the prompt—so, in creating your thesis, make sure that it directly answers and is relevant to the prompt.
6. Finally, it’s time to contextualize. Remember, that ALL historical essays require you to contextualize. If you need to refresh your memory, contextualization is the process of placing a document, an event, a person, or process within its larger historical setting, and includes situating it in time, space, and sociocultural setting. In this case, you are contextualizing the documents. Contextualization will often come at the beginning of your essay, or at least in the first paragraph, either before or after your thesis statement. As needed, you can use the Contextualization Tool for this part of the process.

### Day 2

1. This second day is your writing day. Feel free to use your tools and notes from any prewriting work you completed as you craft your essay response.
2. Make sure you have a copy of the WHP Writing Rubric available to remind you of what’s important to include in your essay.
3. Don’t forget to contextualize! In doing that, think of the entire time period, not just the time immediately preceding the historical event or process you are writing about.
4. Your teacher will give you a time limit for completing your five- to six-paragraph essay responding to the DBQ.

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| Name: |  | Date: |  |

## Unit 2 DBQ

**Directions:** Write a five- to six-paragraph essay in response to the prompt below. Make sure to use the documents provided to help support your argument. In addition to trying to meet the criteria on the WHP Writing Rubric, make sure to address the most relevant of these historical thinking skills in your response: comparison, causation, or CCOT. Finally, make sure you contextualize (describe the broader historical context relevant to the prompt).

*We suggest you spend 10-15 minutes reading these documents and 35-45 minutes writing. Sources are edited for brevity and clarity.*

**To what extent was farming an improvement over foraging?**

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## Document 1

**Source**: The following passage is from a report about a recent study published in the journal *Nature Human Behaviour* authored by a team of anthropologists. “Farmers have less leisure time than hunter-gatherers, study suggests.” University of Cambridge Research, May 21, 2019. <https://www.cam.ac.uk/research/news/farmers-have-less-leisure-time-than-hunter-gatherers-study-suggests> Full study reference: Dyble, M., Thorley, J., Page, A.E., Smith, D., and Migliano, A.B. “Engagement in agricultural work is associated with reduced leisure time among Agta hunter-gatherers.” *Nature Human Behaviour* 3, no. 8 (2019): 792–96.

For two years, a team [of researchers] … lived with the Agta, a population of small scale hunter-gatherers from the northern Philippines who are increasingly engaging in agriculture. …

While some Agta communities engage exclusively in hunting and gathering, others divide their time between foraging and rice farming.

The study … reveals that increased engagement in farming and other non-foraging work resulted in the Agta working harder and losing leisure time. On average, the team estimate that Agta engaged primarily in farming work around 30 hours per week while foragers only do so for 20 hours. They found that this dramatic difference was largely due to women being drawn away from domestic activities to working in the fields. …

There was also a sexual division of labor with women spending less time working out-of-camp, and more time engaged in domestic chores and childcare than men, even though men and women had a similar amount of leisure time. However, the study found that the adoption of farming had a disproportionate impact on women’s lives. …

## Document 2

**Source:** The below passage is an excerpt of an article written by the anthropologist Marshall Sahlins on foraging societies in Australia and Africa. Sahlins, Marshall. “Hunter-gatherers: insights from a golden affluent age.” *Pacific Ecologist* 18 (Winter 2009). Originally published in Sahlins, Marshall. “Notes on the Original Affluent Society.” In *Man and the Hunter*, edited by R.B. Lee and I. DeVore, 85–9. New York: Aldine Publishing Company, 1968.

[T]he original affluent society was none other than the hunter’s, where all people’s material wants were easily satisfied. …

At face value, Bushman food collecting is more efficient than French farming in the period up to World War II, when more than 20 percent of the population were engaged in feeding the rest. … [Among Bushmen] 65 percent of people “worked 36 percent of the time, and 35 percent of the people did not work at all!”

This means each adult worker, worked about two and a half days weekly … and still had 3 to 5 days available for other activities. … [Anthropologist Richard] Lee writes, “the majority of the people’s time (four to five days weekly) is spent in other pursuits, such as resting in camp or visiting other camps:” …

In Africa … the Hazda interestingly reject the neolithic revolution in order to keep their leisure. Surrounded by cultivators, they have until recently refused to take up agriculture themselves, “mainly on the grounds it would involve too much hard work.” They are like the Bushman, who respond to the neolithic question with another: “Why should we plant, when there are so many mongomongo nuts in the world?” …

## Document 3

**Source:** The following is an excerpt of an essay by anthropologist David Kaplan, where he challenges the ideas and research of Marshall Sahlins. Kaplan, David. “The Darker Side of the Original Affluent Society.” *Journal of Anthropological Research* 56, no. 3 (2000): 301–24.

Throughout much of the history of anthropology, the way of life of hunter-gatherers has been depicted as an unenviable one: toiling from dawn to dusk just to make ends meet … having no leisure time to devote to culture building. …

All this began to change in the 1960s … when anthropologists showed a renewed interest in hunter-gatherers … But the idea of “primitive affluence” is most closely identified in the literature with Marshall Sahlins …

Several investigators have commented on the “artificial circumstances” under which the data in the entire study were collected … all the Australian foragers have, in varying degrees, made the foodstuffs available at mission states (e.g., flour, rice, sugar) a normal part of their diet and thus the participants in the experiment had to be cajoled into avoiding such nontraditional foods. …

… this study has additional drawbacks. First, it was conducted over a short period of time [two weeks] making any extrapolation to the full seasonal cycle highly questionable. …

… during this dry season, “the San must resort to increasingly arduous tactics in order to maintain a good diet … It is during the three lean months of the year that the San life approaches the precarious conditions that have come to be associated with the hunting and gathering way of life.” …

… the data suggest “chronic or seasonal calorie insufficiency may be the major reason why San do not reach the same adult stature as most other people.” …

**Document 4**

**Source:** Below is an excerpt from historian Kevin Reilly’s book *The West and the World: A History of Civilization: From the Ancient World to 1700*, where he describes “civilized life” after farming. Reilly, Kevin. *The West and the World: A History of Civilization: From the Ancient World to 1700*. Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1997.

[In the] productive river valleys of Mesopotamia around 3500 BCE … large villages … built irrigation systems that increased farm production enormously. Settlements … were able to support … ten thousand people, and still allow something like 10 percent of the inhabitants to work full- time at non-farming occupations. …

A change of this scale was a revolution, certainly the most important revolution in human living since the invention of agriculture five thousand years earlier. …

Civilized life is secure life. … [it] gives the feeling of permanence. It offers regularity, stability, order, even routine. Plans can be made. Expectations can be realized. People can be expected to act predictably, according to the rules.

The first cities … provided far greater variety: More races and ethnic groups were speaking more languages, engaged in more occupations, and living a greater variety of lifestyles. …

Security plus variety equals creativity … the possibility of a more creative, expressive life was available in the protected, semipermanent city enclosures that drew, like magnets, foreign traders and diplomats, new ideas about gods and nature, strange foods and customs, and the magicians, ministers, and mercenaries of the king’s court.

## Document 5

**Source:** The following passage is taken from an interview of political scientist James Scott by the writer Sean Illing. Illing, Sean and James Scott. “Why a Leading Political Theorist Thinks Civilization in Overrated.” *Vox*, November 22, 2017. <https://www.vox.com/conversations/2017/11/22/16649038/civilization-progress-humanity-history-technology>.

[The] standard narrative is that once we had domesticated plants, then we immediately shifted to an agricultural society so that we could stay in the same place. People also assume that before the agricultural revolution, humans had to wander around as foragers and hunter-gatherers.

But that’s not quite right. Four thousand years passed between the first firm evidence of domesticated plants, cereals, and the beginning of truly agrarian communities that are living largely by agriculture. …

… staying in one place, which is what civilization more or less forced us to do, wasn’t all that healthy for us, and our human ancestors resisted [it] strongly for a very long time. …

… once we had sedentary agriculture, we then had investment in land and therefore property that could be taxed. We then had the basis for inherited property and thus the basis for passing wealth from one generation to another.

… it led to these embedded inequalities that were enforced by the state protection of property. This wasn’t true for hunter and gatherer societies, which regarded all property as common property to which everyone in the tribe had equal access. So the early agricultural societies created the basis for systematic class distinctions that could be [passed down] between generations, and that’s how you get the kinds of massive hierarchies and inequalities we see today.

## Document 6

**Source:** The following is from an essay by economist Brad deLong, where he debates whether farming was beneficial or a mistake. deLong, Brad. “Agriculture is the Worst Mistake in the History of the Human Race?: Today’s Economic History.” *Equitable Growth* (blog). June 6, 2016. <https://equitablegrowth.org/agriculture-the-worst-mistake-in-the-history-of-the-human-race-todays-economic-history/>.

The invention of agriculture and the domestication of animals provide an enormous technological boost to humanity both in terms of the number of calories that can be harvested by an hour of work …

So what goes wrong with quality of life among agriculturalists? … for agriculturalists—without the hazards to adults of travel and hunting, and without the hazards a mobile lifestyle imposes on the very young—that standard of living is a lot lower than among hunter-gatherers. Lifespan looks about the same looking across hunter-gatherers and agriculturalists. Biomedical and fitness indicators are much, much higher for hunter-gatherers.

Whether this is a “disaster” or not depends on the answer to … whether it is better to have a few people who live very well or a lot of people who live very poorly. … only the density of population that comes with agriculture can generate enough human brains thinking to allow us to … create a truly human world in the long run.

… I cannot judge whether there was either a positive or a negative change across the boundary of the Neolithic Revolution. More inequality and domination, certainly. But you also have many more interactions between humans … It is not at all clear to me that the hunter-gatherer epoch had less murder, rape, kidnapping and enslavement of women, and so forth than did the agricultural epoch.

The hunter-gatherer age was not a kumbaya-singing age. Where, after all, are the Neanderthals today?

## Document 7

**Source:** The following is an excerpt from the historian Yuval Noah Harari’s book *Sapiens*, where he discusses the beginnings of grain farming. Harari, Yuval Noah. *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind.* Harper Collins, 2015.

Think for a moment about the Agricultural Revolution from the viewpoint of wheat. Ten thousand years ago wheat was just a wild grass … Suddenly, within just a few short millennia, it was growing all over the world. …

Wheat did it by manipulating *Homo sapiens* to its advantage. This ape had been living a fairly comfortable life hunting and gathering until about 10,000 years ago, but then began to invest more and more effort in cultivating wheat. Within a couple of millennia, humans in many parts of the world were doing little from dawn to dusk other than taking care of wheat plants. It wasn’t easy. Wheat demanded a lot of them. Wheat didn’t like rocks and pebbles, so Sapiens broke their backs clearing fields. Wheat didn’t like sharing its space, water, and nutrients with other plants, so men and women labored long days weeding under the scorching sun. … Wheat was thirsty, so humans lugged water from springs and streams to water it. Its hunger even impelled Sapiens to collect animal feces to nourish the ground in which wheat grew.

The body of *Homo sapiens* had not evolved for such tasks. … Human spines, knees, necks, and arches paid the price. Studies of ancient skeletons indicate that the transition to agriculture brought about a plethora of ailments, such as slipped disks, arthritis, and hernias. Moreover, the new agricultural tasks demanded so much time that people were forced to settle permanently next to their wheat fields. This completely changed their way of life. We did not domesticate wheat. It domesticated us. …

## Question Parsing Tool

**Directions:** Follow the steps to parse the prompt you are presented with. Use the key at the bottom to help you with the historical reasoning practice and composition questions.

1. **Prompt:**

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1. Rewrite the prompt in your own words:

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1. **Periodization:** What is the time period you are being asked to consider? Write out the years if you are given something in terms of century (for example, twentieth century = 1900s).

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1. **Location:** What areas of the world are included in this prompt?

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1. **Topic:** What is the main topic being asked about in this prompt?

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1. **Historical reasoning practice:** What historical reasoning practice is this prompt asking you to engage in? Provide justification for why you chose the one you did.

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1. **Composition:** What is the prompt stem asking you to do as part of your response? Remember the prompt stem is usually a verb.

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## Key

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| Historical Reasoning Practice | Words/Phrases to Look For |
| Causation | Cause, effect, led to, lead to, emergence, resulted, bring about, give rise to, be the cause of, result in, produce, generate, spawn, precipitate, prompt, induce, promote, foster, provoke, trigger |
| Comparison | Similarities, differences, compare, contrast, set side-by-side, juxtapose, differentiate, liken, equate |
| CCOT | Continuities, changes, continuation, persistence, consistent, over time, two points in time |
| Prompt Stem Examples | **What It’s Asking in Simpler Language** |
| To what extent | Weigh, evaluate, assess |
| Evaluate, assess | How much—needs a quantitative answer/thesis/claim (Note: A quantitative answer is one that includes an amount or a number. For example: a lot, a little) |
| Analyze, develop | Describe and explain |
| Argue, argument | Make a claim |