

## DOCUMENTS

Interpreting Alternative Viewpoints  
in Primary Source Documents

# Response to the West China, India, and Japan

*In the 1800s, the West came to dominate the world.  
How did other major societies respond to that challenge?*



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# *Debating* the DOCUMENTS

Interpreting Alternative Viewpoints  
in Primary Source Documents

# Response to the West China, India, and Japan

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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:*

- 3** State-building, expansion, and conflict.
- 5** Development and transformation of social structures.

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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 responses of China, India, and Japan to the Western imperialist powers in the nineteenth century. Why do you think responses varied as much as they did?

- 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.



## *Response to the West*

European power began to be felt around the world as early as the sixteenth century. Portuguese, Dutch, and British armed merchants imposed their will in the Indian Ocean and built forts and trading posts along it. In the Americas, Spain and Portugal carved out huge empires, followed by the British and French in North America and the Caribbean. In the mid-eighteenth century, the British East India Company began to win control of parts of India.

However, it was only in the nineteenth century that Europeans extended their reach to just about every region of the globe. The British came to rule all of India. They took control of Burma and other parts of South Asia as well. And they established settler colonies in Australia and New Zealand. The Netherlands ruled the Indonesian archipelago. France took control of Indochina. In the 1880s and 1890s, nearly all of Africa was carved up into European colonies. China and Japan were not conquered, it is true. However, in the mid-1800s, they were forced to open their ports to trade with the West. Then in the late 1800s, Great Britain, France, Germany, Russia, and Japan divided huge portions of China's territory into "spheres of influence" in which each outside power controlled trade, railway construction, and much else.

What made this sweeping imperial domination possible? Key factors were Europe's huge industrial and military superiority, its powerful and highly organized national governments, and its vigorous capitalist business practices. These in turn were based on Europe's remarkable advances in science and technology in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Inside Europe, these factors were humanized by the Enlightenment's values of liberty, individualism, faith in reason, and constitutional government.

Unfortunately, European civilization brought to its colonial empires most of its worst aspects and less of what was positive about it. Subject colonial people encountered Europe's military superiority often. They soon learned that Europeans with a few machine guns could kill thousands while

losing a handful of their own lives at most. Colonial subjects found that powerful industrial organizations could build railroads and port facilities, but often only to disrupt traditional enterprises and extract raw materials. They found Europe's Enlightenment values often led only to an oppressive sense of superiority. In fact, a supposedly scientific form of racism in the 1800s made a mockery of the Enlightenment values of liberty and equal rights for all.

So how did the colonized react to this European political, economic, and cultural domination? In complicated, often highly contradictory ways. Obviously, many reacted with fear and anger. Others attempted to accept and work with their new colonial rulers. Many saw much to admire in what the Europeans had to offer. Even fierce opponents often based their anti-colonial movements on the Enlightenment ideas they learned from their colonial masters.

The sources for this lesson look at the responses of India, China, and Japan. Both India and China reacted violently at times. In India's case, a huge uprising broke out in 1857. Yet a British-educated Indian elite also undertook a fairly peaceful struggle for greater say within Britain's colonial administration, and ultimately for full national independence. In China, outside powers never imposed complete colonial rule. Violence against those imperial powers often erupted. Resentment focused as well on a weak imperial dynasty that refused to reform as a way to restore China's strength.

Only Japan held off Europe, by reforming rapidly and adopting as much as it could of U.S. and European industry, education, culture and constitutional government. Japan may have pointed the way to the future. In time, many other colonial societies would also seek to learn what Europe had to offer in order to escape Europe's imperial grip.

# Response to the West Time Line

1839–1842

Britain goes to war to keep its opium trade to China going despite China's attempt to stop it. The Treaty of Nanking ends this First Opium War in 1842. It forces China to pay the British for opium destroyed, open five ports to British trade, and cede Hong Kong to Britain. This is the first of the so-called "unequal treaties" China will conclude with Western powers in the decades ahead.

1851–1864

The Taiping Rebellion sweeps through China. Up to 20 million die in the disorder. Led by an unorthodox Christian convert, its monotheism and its radical political demands threaten China's traditional Confucian system, even though the rebels are often more Confucian than Christian in their thinking.

1853–1854

Japan isolated itself in the 1600's when the Tokugawa shogunate took control. Only the Dutch and Chinese were allowed to trade there. In two visits, in 1853 and 1854, Commodore Matthew Perry of the U.S. Navy arrives with an imposing fleet. The Japanese sign the Treaty of Kanagawa and begin to open their nation to trade, ending two centuries of isolation.

1856–1860

A second Opium War involving Britain and France ends with the Treaty of Tianjin. This opens ten new port cities to trade and gives foreigners and foreign missionaries free movement within China.

1857–1858

Rumors fly that the British are using animal fat to seal new cartridges which had to be bitten open. This would violate Muslim and Hindu beliefs. It angers the sepoys, Indian soldiers commanded by the British East India Company. It is the final spark igniting rage at growing British cultural and political domination in India. A huge uprising of soldiers takes place and spreads to many parts of India. After it is put down, control of India is transferred from the British East India Company to the British government directly.

1868–1912

Japan overthrows the shogun and restores the emperor as official ruler. The new emperor, Prince Mutsuhito, takes the name Meiji ("enlightened rule"). During this Meiji Restoration, Japan transforms itself by copying much from the West. It emerges as an industrialized Asian powerhouse.

1883

The Indian National Congress is formed. For the next 64 years, it will be the central institution guiding the Indian struggle for independence.

1894–1895

In the Sino-Japanese War, Japan defeats China, sets up a protectorate over Korea, and takes Taiwan and the Liaodong Peninsula in China. France, Germany, and Russia, however, force Japan to give the Liaodong Peninsula back. After this, Russia, Germany, Japan, Britain, and France in particular all seek to extend their control in various "spheres of influence" throughout China.

1898

Guangxu, China's emperor from 1875 to 1908, plans to reform and modernize his country. However, the Empress Dowager Cixi sides with neo-Confucian conservatives, imprisons Guangxu, and thwarts his reforms.

1900–1901

The Chinese "Society of the Righteous and Harmonious Fists" attacks foreigners and Chinese Christians in an uprising known as the Boxer Rebellion. The Western powers send an international force to free their embassies in Beijing. They then impose new restrictions on China.

1904–1905

Japan surprises the world by defeating Russia in the Russo-Japanese War, destroying its fleet at Port Arthur.

## DOCUMENTS 1–3

## Primary Source Documents 1–3

Document 1



Cartoons by Punch

Document 2



The Granger Collection, New York

Document 3



The Granger Collection, New York

## Information on Documents 1–3

**Document 1.** This British cartoon depicts a meek Chinese ambassador just after China had signed a peace treaty with Great Britain to end the First Opium War in 1842. The British fought this war after the Chinese stopped all British sales of opium in China. The treaty forced China to pay an indemnity, open five ports to English trade and cede Hong Kong to the British.

**Document 2.** An anonymous Indian artist's view of the Sepoy Rebellion in India (1857–1858). It began as a mutiny of sepoys, native soldiers of the British East India Company. This uprising revealed the

growing anger of Muslim and Hindu Indians at British political control and cultural influence. Indian nationalists would come to see as one of the first stages of the independence struggle, not the last.

**Document 3.** Discontent with European domination in China grew in the late nineteenth century. This is a Chinese poster. On top, three officials make anti-Christian remarks. Below are a “subhuman” Christian family in animal skins; Jesus Christ, the original “barbarian”; and a missionary whose tongue is being cut out.