DB - I Have a Q:  
A Strategy for Synthesizing Information

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Introduction

When writing DBQ essays, many students tend to rely exclusively on information provided for them in the documents, rather than expanding their writing by including prior knowledge. This prevents the students from being able to produce higher quality responses to the essay question.

Step 1: Identifying the Strategy

This strategy is designed to help students access and include prior knowledge in the construction of a DBQ essay. Students will use a graphic organizer to identify key information from the documents, record and organize prior knowledge, synthesize the information and then draw conclusions from the two components. Students will then outline an essay using the information from the graphic organizer.

Step 2: Modeling the Strategy

Modeling the process with the entire class, the teacher introduces the DB - I have a Q Thinksheet (Addendum A) on the overhead. First, the class discusses what the question is asking and generates possible thesis statements to best answer the question. The class selects what they think is the best statement. This thesis is entered on the thinksheet. Second, class discussions
activate prior knowledge of the subject matter and the most effective pieces of information are selected and entered on the thinksheet for paragraphs 2, 3 and 4. The number of body paragraphs is dependent on the question and the writer's style. For example, a question requiring social, political and economic causes lends itself to a three-body paragraph format like the one on the thinksheet. However, if students choose to use a wider range of information from the documents, the students may choose to use more than three body paragraphs. Third, students independently read the accompanying documents and highlight key ideas to be used in their scaffolded responses. Fourth, students record scaffolded responses, including prior knowledge when appropriate. At this point, students should make a transition to the lower half of the thinksheet. Fifth, students then reread the thesis statement, and if necessary, revise drafted thesis. The revised thesis is entered on the thinksheet. Sixth, the students then use the thinksheet to insert document numbers, specific quotes and explanation of the selected quotes. Seventh, on the thinksheet, students draw lines to highlight connections between prior knowledge (upper half of the thinksheet) and information from the documents (lower half of the thinksheet) forming links for possible paragraph topics. The connections may be formed in any order, across the thinksheet. Students may want to color code, connecting ideas to facilitate the formation of paragraph topics. Eighth, using the information from the thinksheet (Addendum B), students begin to generate and organize an outline using the DB – I have a Q Outline Format (Addendum B) for the essay. Ninth, using the outline as a reference, students draft the essay.

Step 3: Scaffolding the Strategy

After the group practice, the teacher gives the students another DBQ, the DB – I have a Q Thinksheet and the DB – I have a Q outline Format. Students go through the process on their own, utilizing the strategy modeled in class.

Step 4: Providing Additional Practice

Students use the DB – I HAVE A Q Thinksheet and outline until they are confident and comfortable with approaching the documents, including prior knowledge, outlining a DBQ essay and writing a quality essay.
Conclusion

By assessing prior knowledge first, students are drawing on material learned in Global History and Geography 9 and 10. By doing this, students incorporate prior knowledge when responding to the DBQ essay question. The thinksheet offers a useful template for regular use in class. This type of repetition empowers students with a resource strategy to access during an exam setting.

Suggestions for Adapting the Strategy in other Grades or Content Areas

This strategy can be adapted for use at any level of social studies. This can also be used anytime a student needs to activate prior knowledge to make connections with new information or documents.

Thinksheets

Copies are attached.
Thinksheet (Addendum A)

DB – I HAVE A Q
FIRST – Look at the question, form a possible thesis statement.
SECOND – Enter prior knowledge on the chart below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opening</th>
<th>Body Paragraph #2</th>
<th>Body Paragraph #3</th>
<th>Body Paragraph #4</th>
<th>Closing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Draft possible thesis</td>
<td>Brainstorm prior knowledge</td>
<td>Brainstorm prior knowledge</td>
<td>Brainstorm prior knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

THIRD – Read the documents and highlight key ideas.
FOURTH – Answer the scaffolded questions.

TRANSITION TO THE LOWER HALF OF THE THINKSHEET
FIFTH - Revise drafted thesis based on information from the documents and enter it below.
SIXTH – Insert document numbers, specific quotes and explain the quotes on the chart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revised Thesis</th>
<th>DOCUMENT#(S)</th>
<th>DOCUMENT#(S)</th>
<th>DOCUMENT#(S)</th>
<th>DOCUMENT#(S)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quote(s) from the document(s)</td>
<td>Quote(s) from the document(s)</td>
<td>Quote(s) from the document(s)</td>
<td>Quote(s) from the document(s)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain the quote in your own words</td>
<td>Explain the quote in your own words</td>
<td>Explain the quote in your own words</td>
<td>Explain the quote in your own words</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SEVENTH – Highlight - draw lines to make connections between your prior knowledge to the documents.
Thinksheet (Addendum B)

DB - I HAVE A Q: OUTLINE FORMAT

Eighth – Using the information from boxes above, generate an outline prior to writing

I. Opening
   a. Historical background
   b. Thesis statement

II. Paragraph #2
   a. Background information from what you learned in class
   b. Quote from a document to support your background information.

III. Paragraph #3
   a. Background information from what you learned in class
   b. Quote from a document to support your background information.

IV. Paragraph #4
   a. Background information from what you learned in class
   b. Quote from a document to support your background information.

V. Closing
   a. Wrap up your historical data and quotations

Ninth - Using the outline as a reference, draft your essay.