

## Getting the Contextualization Point

# CONTEXT MATTERS

### What is Contextualization?

Contextualization is an AP Historical Reasoning Skill that involves the ability to connect events and processes to specific circumstances of time and place as well as broader regional, national, or global processes. It's a skill that is important beyond just "earning the point" in AP. © The best essays, books, and papers will all provide background information to "set the stage" for their main arguments.

The College Board says the skill of contextualization involves:

- Describe an accurate historical context for a specific historical development or process.
- Explain how a relevant context influenced a specific historical development or process.
- Use context to explain the relative historical significance of a specific historical development or process.

### So how is it done?

Your goal is to "situate" (position or place) your answer to the question (DBQ or LEQ) among historical events, developments, or processes within the broader regional, national, or global context in which they occurred. That means that contextualization is a "lead in." Think about what the reader needs to know to understand the historical significance of this topic.

This should be in your introduction prior to your thesis. So what will you do?

- Write 3-4 content or **fact rich, analytical sentences**. (It must include specific details!)
- Describe events or processes that happened before the time period of the question or in another region that's relevant.
  - Example Different Period – if the question is about Period 3, use information from the end of Period 2 as a lead in (Dynasties and Empires fell, so...).
  - Example for AP Euro – if the question is about France, discuss a similar situation in another country that is relevant to the topic at hand (Could discuss the American Revolution if the topic is the French Rev).
  - Example for AP World – if the question is about Post-Classical East Asia, discussing Post-Classical Europe and Africa could be relevant, if you're discussing what's going on globally.
- Make a **connection to the question** that is asked! Information cannot be random. You may not simply spew out unrelated facts. Why does this matter to the question at hand? How does this lead into your thesis?

### Let's Look at a Sample Prompt:

Analyze the political and economic effects of New Imperialism in the late nineteenth century.

*European nations like Great Britain, France, Belgium, and Germany all competed with one another for land and influence in Africa and Asia in the late 1800s. This was spurred, in part, by a rapid increase in industrialization which led to mass produced goods like clothing and interchangeable parts. It also produced a competitive spirit that led to even more industries, like steel production and mass-produced rifles and machine guns. The steam engine revolutionized transportation when it was applied to boats and trains. This allowed Europeans to have the technological dominance to sail upstream on the Niger River in Africa and to dominate the shores of Japan and China.*