

NAME:

DATE:

### Evaluating Documents in a DBQ

**Objective:**

Students will practice evaluating and categorizing documents for a Document Based Question response.

**Background and Directions:**

One of the most challenging parts of the DBQ is quickly analyzing and categorizing a number of documents. We will practice using historical thinking skills on the sources in our upcoming DBQ. Additionally, we will practice categorizing a document so that it addresses the prompt at the beginning of the DBQ.

The 1992 DBQ prompt was:

To what extent did the natural environment shape the development of the West beyond the Mississippi and the lives of those who lived and settled there? How important were other factors? Use BOTH evidence from the documents AND your knowledge of the period from the 1840's through the 1890's to compose your answer.

Each group will be assigned a source. Each group will categorize and analyze its source. Each group should be prepared to present on its findings.

### *Part I- Grouping*

“Group” your document as it relates to the prompt.

Look at the prompt. Do you see YOUR document as supporting the environment as the primary factor shaping western development, and/or does it support “other reasons”?

Explain in three to six sentences. Use the model below to help.

#### Document B

- This source suggests that the natural environment did play some part of attracting Americans to the West, as Polk does mention the natural advantages the Oregon territory would give American traders.
- On the other hand, this desire for natural resources is couched in language that suggests political motivations as well- if the US doesn't acquire the territory, will Britain do so instead?
- Without looking at the other sources, one could possibly interpret this source as supporting the notion that the environment did play an important role in the settlement of the West, especially because control over its resources was a political imperative for America's political class.

## *Part II- Historical Thinking Skills*

On the DBQ, you need to analyze at least three documents using historical thinking skills. For this exercise, analyze your document using at least one of the four historical thinking skills. Use the model below to help.

### Point of View and Audience:

- This document was written by James K. Polk, a president, in the 1840s. Congress was his audience.
- Polk is firmly associated with the promotion of Manifest Destiny, or the divine injunction for Americans to settle and “civilize” the west. He was also a slave owner and did not try to stop its expansion.
- Congress as the audience is also significant- he had promised to, among other things, take California and Oregon for the US, so he had an incentive to justify expansion into the West.

### Context:

- This document was written in 1845, shortly before the Mexican-American War but during an increased clamor for western expansion justified by Manifest Destiny.
- America was competing with Britain for the Oregon Territory.

### Purpose:

- Polk is addressing Congress to garner support for American annexation of the Oregon Territory, and wants to highlight the benefits of doing so in order to accomplish this.

### *Part III- Share Out*

While listening to your peers present, complete the T Chart below. Additionally, I recommend annotating the documents in your document packet.

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