

Section I: The Question:

Based on the following documents, analyze the responses to the spread of Buddhism in China. What **additional kind of document(s)** would you need to evaluate the extent of Buddhism's appeal in China?

1. What is the question asking you to *do*? (What's the *verb* in the question? Restate the verb in your own words.)

Guided Document Analysis Questions

Buddhism in China

May 12, 2006

Section II: Examining the Evidence

Historical Background: Buddhism, founded in India in the sixth century B.C.E., was brought to China by the first century C.E., gradually winning converts following the collapse of the Han dynasty in 220 C.E. Buddhist influence continued to expand for several centuries, Between 220 C.E. and 570 C.E., China experienced a period of political instability and disunity. After 570 C.E., the imperial structure was restored.

1. Try to summarize the Historical Background (HB) paragraph above. *What* does it say?

2. Based on the information in the HB, how are you going to read the documents any differently than you would if you hadn't read the HB? Are there any hints in the HB paragraph that will influence how you read and interpret the documents?

Document #1

Source: According to Buddhist tradition, “The Four Noble Truths,” the first sermon preached by the Buddha (563 B.C.E.-483 B.C.E.), India, fifth century B.C.E.

The First Noble Truth is the Noble Truth of Sorrow. Birth is sorrow, age is sorrow, disease is sorrow, death is sorrow, contact with the unpleasant is sorrow, separation from the pleasant is sorrow, every wish unfulfilled is sorrow.

The Second Noble Truth is the Noble Truth of the Arising of Sorrow, it arises from craving. which leads to rebirth, which brings delight and passion, and seeks pleasure-the craving for sensual pleasure, the craving for continued life, and the craving for power.

The Third Noble Truth is the Noble Truth of the Stopping of Sorrow. It is the complete stopping of that craving, so that no passion remains, leaving it, being emancipated from it, being released from it, giving no place to it.

The Fourth Noble Truth is the Noble Truth of the Way that Leads to the Stopping of Sorrow.

1. Summarize the document above. WHAT does it/the author say?

2. WHO produced this document? Discuss the author’s gender, age, ethnicity, social status, religion, intellectual or political philosophy, etc. (You won’t know ALL this information, but give as much detail as possible.)

3. WHEN was it produced? Can it be connected with a significant historical event? (Think back to the Historical Background information.)

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4. Who was the intended AUDIENCE? Was the document written privately, written to be read or heard by others (who?), an official document for a ruler to read, commissioned painting, etc.

5. WHY was this document produced? What was the purpose or motivation of the writer/producer of the document, based on what you can surmise about them?

6. What is the TONE or “Voice” of the document like? Is it filled with any apparent emotion? (e.g. anger, disdain, admiration, satire, etc.)

Document #2

Source: Zhi Dun, Chinese scholar, author, and confidant of Chinese aristocrats and high officials during the period when northern China was invaded by central Asian steppe nomads, circa 350 C.E.

Whosoever in China, in this era of sensual pleasures, serves the Buddha and correctly observes the commandments, who recites the Buddhist Scriptures, and who furthermore makes a vow to be reborn without ever abandoning his sincere intention, will at the end of his life, when his soul passes away, be miraculously transported thither. He will behold the Buddha and be enlightened in his spirit, and then he will enter Nirvana.*

*Nirvana: the extinction of desire and individual consciousness

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Document #3

Source: Anonymous Chinese scholar, "The Disposition of Error," China, circa 500 C.E.

Question: If Buddhism is the greatest and most venerable of ways, why did the great sages of the past and Confucius not practice it? In the Confucian Classics no one mentions it. Why, then, do you love the Way of the Buddha and rejoice in outlandish arts'? Can the writings of the Buddha exceed the Classics and commentaries and beautify the accomplishments of the sages?

Answer: All written works need not necessarily be the words of Confucius. To compare the sages to the Buddha would be like comparing a white deer to a unicorn, or a swallow to a phoenix. The records and teachings of the Confucian classics do not contain everything. Even if the Buddha is not mentioned in them, what occasion is there for suspicion?

Question: Now of happiness there is none greater than the continuation of one's line, of unfilial conduct there is none worse than childlessness. The monks forsake wives and children, reject property and wealth. Some do not marry all their lives.

Answer: Wives, children, and property are the luxuries of the world, but simple living and inaction are the wonders of the Way. The monk practices the Way and substitutes that for worldly pleasures. He accumulates goodness and wisdom in exchange for the joys of having a wife and children.

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Document #4

Source: Han Yu, leading Confucian scholar and official at the Tang imperial court, "Memorial on Buddhism," 819 C.E.

Your servant begs leave to say that Buddhism is no more than a cult of the barbarian peoples spread to China. It did not exist here in ancient times.

Now I hear that Your Majesty has ordered the community of monks to go to greet the finger bone of the Buddha [a relic brought to China from India], and that Your Majesty will ascend a tower to watch the procession as this relic is brought into the palace. If these practices are not stopped, and this relic of the Buddha is allowed to be carried from one temple to another, there will be those in the crowd who will cut off their arms and mutilate their flesh in offering, to the Buddha.

Now the Buddha was a man of the barbarians who did not speak Chinese and who wore clothes of a different fashion. The Buddha's sayings contain nothing about our ancient kings and the Buddha's manner of dress did not conform to our laws; he understood neither the duties that bind sovereign and subject, nor the affections of father and son. If the Buddha were still alive today and came to our court, Your Majesty might condescend to receive him, but he would then be escorted to the borders of the nation, dismissed, and not allowed to delude the masses. How then, when he has long been dead, could the Buddha's rotten bones, the foul and unlucky remains of his body, be rightly admitted to the palace? Confucius said: "Respect ghosts and spirits, but keep them at a distance!" Your servant is deeply ashamed and begs that this bone from the Buddha be given to the proper authorities to be cast into fire and water, that this evil be rooted out, and later generations spared this delusion.

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Document #5

Source: Zong Mi, a leading Buddhist scholar, favored by the Tang imperial household, essay, “On the Nature of Man,” early ninth century C.E.

Confucius, Laozi and the Buddha were perfect sages, They established their teachings according to the demands of the age and the needs of various beings. They differ in their approaches in that they encourage the perfection of good deeds, punish wicked ones, and reward good ones; all three teachings lead to the creation of an orderly society and for this they must be observed with respect.

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Document #6

Source: Tang Emperor Wu, Edict on Buddhism, 845 C.E.

We have heard that the Buddha was never spoken of before the Han dynasty; from then on the religion of idols gradually came to prominence. So in this latter age Buddhism has transmitted its strange ways and has spread like a luxuriant vine until it has poisoned the customs of our nation. Buddhism has spread to all the nine provinces of China; each day finds its monks and followers growing more numerous and its temples more lofty. Buddhism wears out the people's strength, pilfers their wealth, causes people to abandon their lords and parents for the company of teachers, and severs man and wife with its monastic decrees. In destroying law and injuring humankind indeed nothing surpasses this doctrine!

Now if even one man fails to work the fields, someone must go hungry; if one woman does not tend her silkworms, someone will go cold. At present there are an inestimable number of monks and nuns in the empire, all of them waiting for the farmers to feed them and the silkworms to clothe them while the Buddhist public temples and private chapels have reached boundless numbers, sufficient to outshine the imperial palace itself.

Having thoroughly examined all earlier reports and consulted public opinion on all sides, there no longer remains the slightest doubt in Our mind that this evil should be eradicated.

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Section IV: The Thesis

OK, so now you've spent considerable time reading, sifting, and analyzing these documents. Can you still remember the QUESTION? Only when you remember the question can you decide which information from the documents is important, and which can be ignored or thrown away.

Based on the following documents, analyze the responses to the spread of Buddhism in China.

- Your task is to write an essay that answers this question, drawing on all the documents you've read and analysis you've already done. The hardest part is actually coming up with a good thesis statement.

Here's a guide to the most common mistakes students make when attempting to write a thesis.

	Mistake	Example	How to Fix It
1 Thesis	No Thesis		Pre-writing organization. Read the question, then plan/outline your response <u>before</u> you begin to write.
	Thesis not related to the question	<i>Most Chinese are Buddhists. China has over a billion people today. Buddhists like to meditate ...</i>	<u>Read the question.</u> Focus on the language of the question: <u>verbs</u> , <u>adjectives</u> , and <u>time frame</u> . Analyze ≠ Describe ≠ Justify ≠ Trace. If the question asks about <u>economic</u> issues, make sure you confine your response to economics. If it asks about 1450-1750, don't write about 1375 or 1800.
	Thesis repeats or just paraphrases the question	<i>There were many responses to the spread of Buddhism in China.</i>	Try to "argue" your thesis. Could you take an "opposite" position? If not, then the thesis doesn't really <i>say</i> anything. Avoid the "thesis killer" words ¹ (very, many, things, a lot, big, large, huge, etc.).
	Thesis is too vague	<i>Buddhism had a large impact on China.</i>	Remember all those SAT vocabulary words you've been learning in English class? Here's your chance to use 'em!

¹ I have a rule in my classroom, "Any thesis that contains the words 'very,' 'many,' or 'things' is automatically vetoed." Possibly the hardest skill to learn is the ability to form a sophisticated, complex thesis. One trick I've learned (from Geri McCarthy of Barrington, RI) is to require students to begin their thesis with either "While", "Although", or "Despite/In spite of." These words strongly encourage students to formulate a mature thesis that helps structure the rest of their essay. Once students can consistently write a competent thesis sentence, then I concentrate on having them develop an essay preview/outline of later paragraphs. The result should be a thesis paragraph that is several sentences long (the paragraph should NOT just be a single sentence).

OK, now pull together everything you've done: your reading & understanding of the documents; their content; author's characteristics; etc. Write your thesis statement.

My Thesis

The rest of the Thesis Paragraph

Now summarize the main points that you'll use to support your thesis. (The second part of the Thesis Paragraph should preview the topic sentences of your later paragraphs.) This takes some time and a lot of practice to do well, but if you can learn to plan your thesis and outline your essay, it will make the actual writing TONS easier. By the time your reader finishes the Thesis Paragraph, s/he should know WHAT your thesis is, and have an idea of what evidence you will use to prove it.

Main Point / Body Paragraph #1 _____

Main Point / Body Paragraph #2 _____

Main Point / Body Paragraph #3 _____

Main Point / Body Paragraph #4 (if needed) _____

Now you have your thesis paragraph!

Section V: The “Missing Voice”

There’s just one more step. (Phew!) By now, you know the documents well. You’ve analyzed their perspective on the question several ways. The problem is that there are only a handful of documents. They can’t possibly represent EVERY conceivable perspective.

Are there any perspectives that are relevant to the question that AREN’T already represented in the documents? Can you think of any kinds of documents that would help you answer the question more completely? (Is there a “missing voice” that isn’t in the given documents?) You can add this at virtually any point in your essay. It most common to add it at the end of the essay, or at the end of the thesis paragraph. Great writers find a way to weave it into their essay, but that’s something you can work on throughout the year.

Missing Voice / Additional Document	How would this document would help answer the question more completely? (How would an historian use this document?)

Congratulations!! I know this has been TON of work, but you now have all the pieces fully developed, analyzed, sorted, cross-referenced, etc, that you can actually begin to write the essay itself.

Section VI: Suggested Generic DBQ Structure

Thesis Paragraph

- Background/Context (Optional. “Where does this question fall in the larger context of history?”)
- Thesis Statement
- “Road Map” (outline of later categories of document Groupings/Analysis)
- Additional Document (Optional)

Body Paragraph #1 (1st Group of Analyzed Doc’s)

- Topic Sentence (what characteristic do these doc’s share, and how does that support the thesis? See tables on p. 16 -17)
- Evidence Doc #1 (what text from doc #1 supports this paragraph’s topic/thesis?)
POV/Analysis of doc #1 (see the “Who?, When?, Audience?, Why?” questions from pp.3-14)
- Evidence Doc #2 (what text from doc #2 supports this paragraph’s topic/thesis?)
POV/Analysis of doc #2
- Evidence Doc #3 (what text from doc #3 supports this paragraph’s topic/thesis?)
POV/Analysis of doc #3
- How these doc’s relate/compare to each other. (The fullest understanding of any particular document emerges only when that document is viewed within the wider context of all the documents.)
- Additional Doc (be sure to relate how/why this doc would be useful in answering question)
- Conclusion

Additional Body Paragraphs as needed

- Check to make sure that all doc’s are included, with discussion of Evidence and POV from each doc.

Conclusion

- Include Additional Doc (if not included previously)
- Restatement/Summarization of Thesis

Writing Tip: Avoid any sentence in your essay that begins, “Doc #___ says ‘...’” This is merely summarizing the document. Your teacher/reader already knows that information better than you do. Your job is to *interpret* the information in the doc’s to *make an argument* or *draw a conclusion*.