

Highlighter color to coordinate
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ie → yellow ^{Period} highlighter = analysis

1. 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?

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.

In the first century C.E. Buddhism first spread into China from its place of origin in India. People responded to its spread in many different ways. Some openly accepted Buddhism as a path to salvation from suffering. Others had the opposite response and viewed Buddhism as a dangerous foreign threat to China. Still others responded by showing that Buddhism was not that different from other wise teachings.

The positive responses to the spread of Buddhism in China can be seen in the writing of scholar Zhi Dun and in the teachings of the Buddha himself. Zhi Dun describes how Buddhism can offer enlightenment to people who commit to it (doc 2). By following the Buddhist commandments and reciting the scriptures a person

This is the thesis. Notice how it answers the prompt directly by organizing responses into three categories evident in the documents. (Note it does not merely say there were positive, negative, and neutral responses. Don't do that!) These categories will be the body of the essay.

Here is the topic sentence of the first paragraph. Note how it introduces a category of responses to the spread of Buddhism and links that response to two of the documents. This indicates grouping and also shows understanding of the documents by accurately showing how they answer the prompt.

Now that understanding of the docs has been established, information from each document is brought into the essay as evidence. This "sample" from the doc is evidence that people responded positively by seeing Buddhism as a way of salvation.

will see the Buddha and enter Nirvana. Dun is writing this in a time period of sensual pleasures, suggesting that material things don't bring real satisfaction. This is confirmed by the sermon of the

Now evidence from the second document from this group is "sampled" into the essay. Note that this is a very difficult document to deal with on this essay, as it is not specifically a response to Buddhism's spread.

Buddha on the Four Noble Truths (doc 1). Buddha says that craving things leads to sorrow. Both of these documents show that some people in China accepted Buddhism as a positive force that could

This sentence reinforces the analysis by explicitly pointing both documents back to the thesis and telling (aka analyzing) how they answer the prompt.

bring true enlightenment and salvation to people especially during times of sorrow.

Topic sentence for the second paragraph. By correctly linking the two documents with a response to the spread of Buddhism, we have grouping and understanding.

The Tang Emperor Wu and scholar Han Yu strongly

disagreed and saw Buddhism as a dangerous problem that threatened China. Han Yu emphasized the foreign aspect of

Evidence from the document brought into the essay to show a response to the spread of Buddhism.

Buddhism, saying that Buddha was a barbarian who did not speak Chinese. He responded with hatred by showing that Buddhism was not fit for China's ideas of family relations (doc 4). His strong

It's a good idea to put doc numbers next to the sources in your essay, it will be easier to make sure you have used them all and that a tired grader sees them as well!

opinion is obviously shaped by Confucian values. By 819 C.E. China

was centralized and the imperial structure was restored. China's bureaucracy depended on Confucianism to outline proper human

Point of View analysis. How is content of the document affected by its source?

relationships which were thought to be critical to the operation of

the government. It is not surprising that during a time of political unity a Confucian scholar would have such strong negative

opinions of Buddhism and consider it a threat. The Tang Emperor Wu would agree, as he sees Buddhism poisoning the customs of

Evidence from doc 6 brought into the essay --a response to the spread of Buddhism.

the nation (doc 6). He also emphasizes the foreignness of Buddhism. He wants this evil eradicated. Both Han Yu and

Summaries like this ensure you have pointed the documents back to the prompt and have properly analyzed them.

Emperor Wu responded harshly to the spread of Buddhism and did not want it in China.

Topic sentence for third paragraph. Grouping and understanding.

Not all responses were as extreme as these. Two Chinese scholars (docs 3 and 5) responded to the spread of Buddhism by saying it was no different than other good teachings by wise

people. In *The Disposition of Error* (doc 3) an anonymous Chinese scholar argues that not all truth has to have Confucius at its

Evidence from doc 3.

source. It doesn't matter at all that the Buddha isn't mentioned in the Confucian Classics because many true things were not. He

Using the doc as evidence. How does it show a response to the spread of Buddhism?

responded to Buddhism by defending it against accusations that it wasn't Chinese, something that Han Yu complained about three centuries later (doc 4). The anonymous scholar would not write

this if the questions he answered were not real questions people were asking at the time. This is helpful in analyzing responses to the spread of Buddhism by showing that it was probably a common criticism people had about the non-Chinese origin of Buddhism. Zong Mi, another Chinese scholar, also argued that the Buddha was wise just like Confucius and Laozi (doc 5). This shows that some people responded to Buddhism's spread by blending its teachings with other Chinese schools of thought. Because this comes from a Buddhist scholar favored by the ruling dynasty, we can say that blending Buddhism with other beliefs could not have been seen as dangerous by the government at this point. Since he was probably a man of influence, we can also infer that his belief was held by other people, indicating that this was a common response to the spread of Buddhism. To be more certain of this, a historian might look for evidence from common people such as farmers or merchants. A letter or diary from someone in this group could tell us if this response to Buddhism did actually exist outside of elite or educated classes of Chinese people.

Evidence from doc 5.

Analyzes the doc by explicitly pointing it back to the prompt. It shows how the content of the doc demonstrates a response to the spread of Buddhism.

Point of view analysis. How is the source of this document relevant to answering the prompt better?

Additional document discussion. It must identify a potential document AND explain how that document would help answer the prompt more thoroughly.

Concluding Notes:

- 1) There are several ways these documents could have been grouped. A more sophisticated way of grouping them would be eras of political instability as evidenced in the Historical Background. You are treading on thin ice if you merely group them as positive, negative, and neutral. Do more.
- 2) Note how redundant the phrase "responses to the spread of Buddhism" is. It keeps the writing focused on the prompt. This essay is not about Buddhism, it is not about the spread of Buddhism; it's about responses to the spread of Buddhism. Merge all the components of this complex prompt together in your mind as a single idea when you read the documents and write the essay. Burn it into your brain. "Responses to the spread of Buddhism." Many students break off a more manageable part of this idea and write only about that (i.e., "Buddhism" or the "spread of Buddhism"). If you do this all of your writing will be off topic.
- 3) If you have time, write a conclusion that restates your thesis. After writing the essay you probably know the topic better. Rephrase the thesis accordingly. If the one at the beginning doesn't work you may get the thesis point at the end.
- 4) The topic sentences are not mandatory but are a habit of good writing and help focus your paragraphs and organize your grouping. But understand that no "blanket" statement about a group of documents will count as evidence. You still have to deal with each document individually. Bring in a sample from each document in the context of the prompt (demonstrate understanding) and then point it back to your thesis (use as evidence to answer the prompt).