

Organizing Device #2: The DBQ Outline Guide

The DBQ Outline Guide provides students with a clear structure for organizing a “filled-in” essay. See page 594 for reproducible outlines. Below is an example for the Salem DBQ.

Working Title: Battle Between the Haves and “Have - Knots”

Paragraph #1

Grabber and Background

Halloween witches are one thing; witches that lead to the deaths of twenty people are another. In 1692, Salem was a growing Puritan community anchored in the rocky New England soil but facing a problem like it had never faced before.

The question with key terms defined:

What was really behind the witch trial hysteria in Salem?

No terms need defining

Thesis and Road Map

The Salem witch trial hysteria was mostly caused by fundamentalist beliefs, bored teenage girls, and social class tension

Paragraph #2

Baby Thesis reintroducing analytical category number one

A literal belief in every word in the Bible was part of the problem in Salem.

Supporting Detail with reference to specific document(s)

Doc A: Exodus 22:18 Literal belief in “Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.”

Doc C: Cotton Mather preached that “evil spirits are all around.”

Argument connecting evidence to the thesis

Whether or not witches actually exist, the belief in witchcraft in Salem was very real. The hysteria and the hangings would not have occurred without the belief system that permitted it.

Paragraph # 3

Baby Thesis reintroducing analytical category number two

A few young girls were out to have some fun and “get” some old women.

Supporting detail

Doc E: Of 29 documented accusers, 27 were female and 20 of these were under 21.

Doc E: Of 134 documented accused, 110 were female. 73 of 118 accused were 40 +.

Doc F: The young girls faked it in court.

Doc G: I agree with Charles Upham. The “afflicted children” were “great actors.”

Argument (connect evidence to the thesis)

With the belief system in place, young unmarried girls were the agents that tripped the hangman’s trapdoor. The logic is simple and powerful: no girls, no trials, no hangings.

Paragraph #4

Baby Thesis reintroducing analytical category number three

Supporting detail

Argument (connect evidence to the thesis)

Paragraph #5

Conclusion: Statement of main idea, along with a fresh insight or emphasis.

Hysterics and erotism seem too far - fetched. I go with the obvious causes - deep religious beliefs, bored girls, and class war.