

DBQ: The Changing Relationship between Japan and the West

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When an American fleet commanded by Matthew Perry arrived off Japan's capital city of Edo (now Tokyo) in 1853, few Japanese had seen a Westerner or the types of technology that the American fleet brought with it. Japanese were taken by surprise by every aspect of the encounter. Americans, in turn, had little knowledge of Japan because the country had been closed off, and so were equally surprised by the Japanese. Commodore Perry presented the Japanese government with an ultimatum to open the country to American trade and maritime courtesies. Perry departed, promising to return for the Japanese response to American demands the following year. In 1854, Perry returned and negotiated the Treaty of Kanagawa with Japan. Four years later, with the Harris Treaty, the United States negotiated broad commercial and trade concessions from Japan. Treaty ports—where Westerners could freely conduct business—were established, and Americans and other Westerners flocked to Japan. The treaty port of Yokohama became a boomtown of Japanese-Western trade and interaction.

Question

Document the changing relations between Japan and the West as reflected in Japanese art from 1853 (the arrival of Commodore Perry) to the 1860s and 1870s (the boom period of the Yokohama treaty port). Describe and explain the evolution of these international relations: how and why did Japanese perceptions and attitudes about the West change from 1853 to the 1870s?

Step One: Analysis

To begin your analysis, consider each source document separately. Examine the following texts (click on each to see an enlargement if more detail is needed) and answer the questions that follow each text.

Document 01



[Y0064] *Picture of Western Traders at Yokohama Transporting Merchandise*, by Sadahide, 1861

1. Identify four jobs or roles filled by Japanese in this scene.
2. Identify four jobs or roles filled by Westerners in this scene.
3. Judging by facial expressions, how do you think Japanese view the Westerners?

4. What is the mood reflected in the picture?

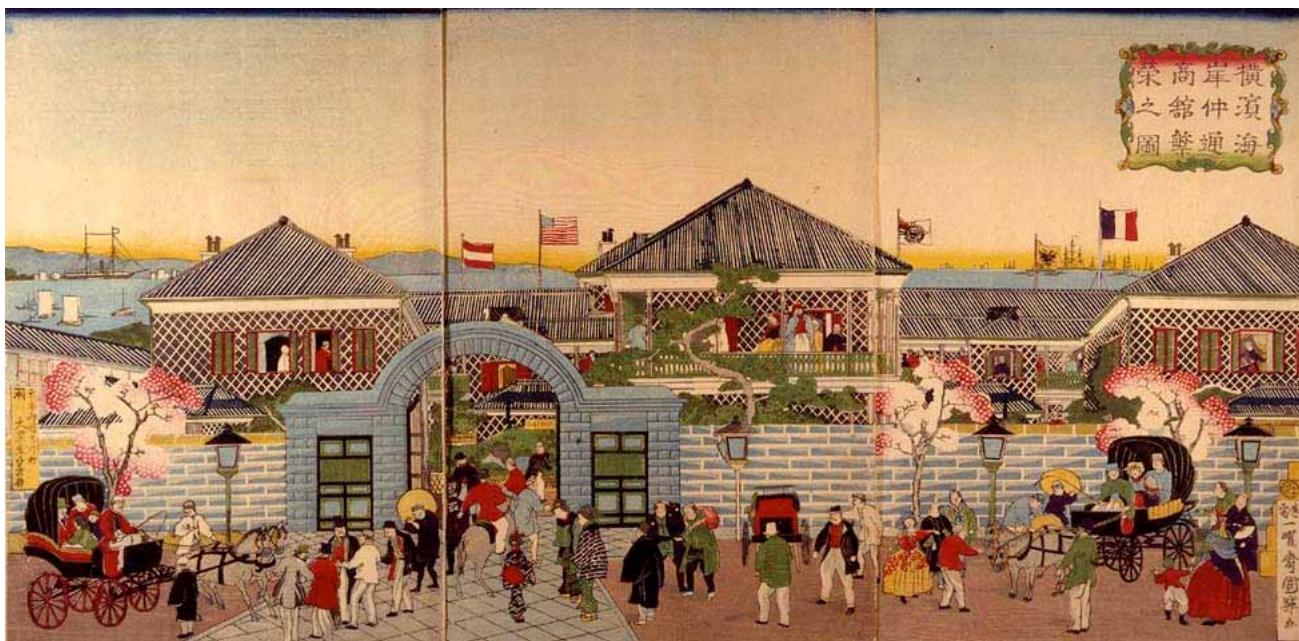
Document 02



[Y0086] *Picture of a Salesroom in a Foreign Mercantile Firm in Yokohama*, by Sadahide, 1861

1. How many Japanese are in this picture? (Note: the person with the long pigtail is Chinese.)
2. Describe two interactions between Japanese and Westerners in this picture.

Document 03



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[Y0090] *Picture of the Prosperity of Mercantile Establishments along Nakad?ri on the Yokohama Waterfront*, by Kuniteru II, 1870

1. List three things that Westerners are doing in the picture (look at all three frames).
2. List three things that Japanese are doing in the picture (look at all three frames).
3. Is this mercantile establishment Japanese- or Western-owned? How do you know?
4. How does the artist portray Yokohama in 1870?
5. How does the artist portray the relationship between Japanese and foreigners in this picture?

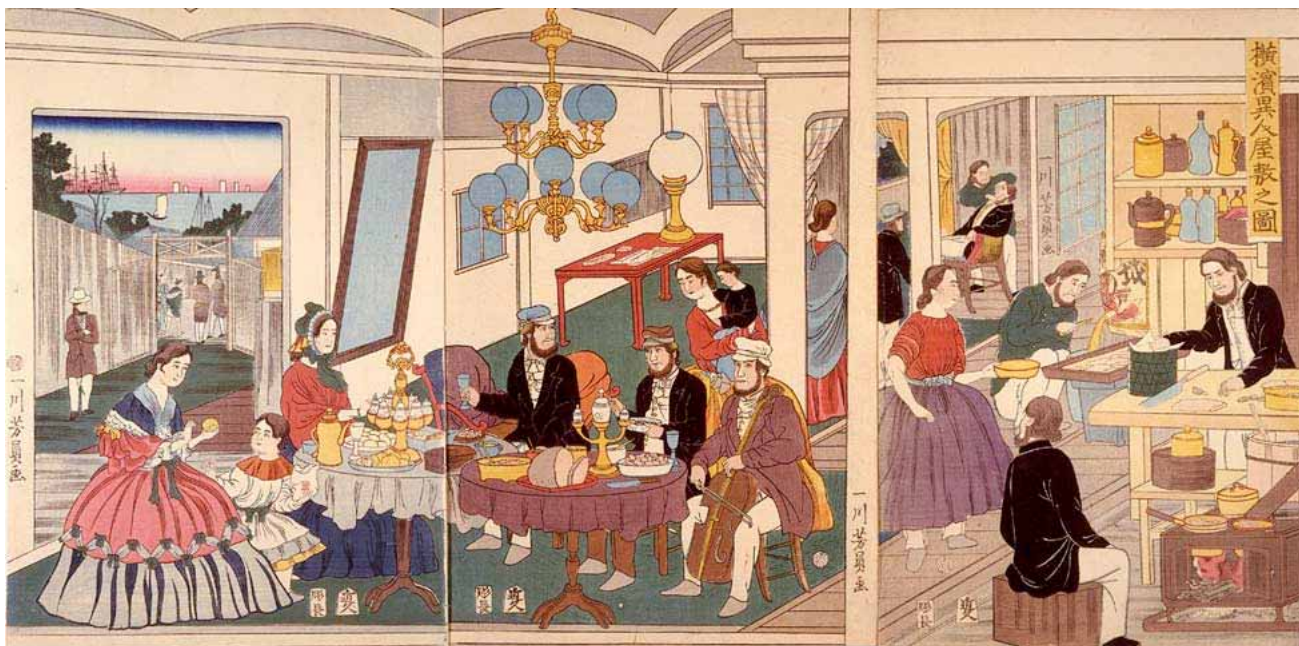
Document 04



[Y0094] *Picture of a Procession of Foreigners at Yokohama*, by Yoshikazu, 1861

1. What are the foreigners doing in this scene?
2. What are the Japanese doing in this scene?
3. What is the relationship between the two groups as depicted in this picture?

Document 05



[Y0099] *Picture of a Foreign Residence in Yokohama*, by Yoshikazu, 1861

1. Find the Japanese people depicted in this scene. What are they doing?
2. Why did the Japanese artist create this picture?

Document 06



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[Y0132] *Picture of a Sunday in Yokohama*, by Sadahide, 1861

1. How are Westerners portrayed in this picture?
2. What do you think the artist's attitude about Westerners is?

Document 07



[Y0144] *Picture of Amusements of Foreigners in Yokohama*, by Yoshitora, 1861

1. In each frame of the woodblock, foreigners are engaged with Japanese culture in some way. Describe the engagement in each frame.
2. Describe the attitude of foreigners towards Japanese culture presented in this picture.

Document 08



[Y0148] *Picture of Foreigners' Revelry at the Gankir? in the Miyozaki Quarter of Yokohama*, by Yoshikazu, 1861

1. What are the foreigners doing in this scene?
2. What are the Japanese doing in this scene?
3. How do the Japanese feel about the Westerners in this scene?
4. How do Westerners feel about Japanese in this scene?

Document 09



[Y0156] *Picture of Great Military Exercises of the Cavalry and Infantry*, by Yoshitoshi, 1861

1. What do you think the artist's attitudes or feelings about the Westerners are, based on this picture? Do you think the artist felt fear, admiration, or something else? Explain your answer.

Documents 10-A and 10-B



A. (left) [02_134a_Perry] *A Portrait of Perry, a North American*, artist unknown, c. 1854

B. (right) [51_031_bsscroll_Adams] *Detail of Commander Adams*, artist unknown, from the c. 1854 *Black Ship Scroll*

1. What features and characteristics does the artist emphasize in these portraits?
2. How would a Japanese viewing the picture feel about the Americans?

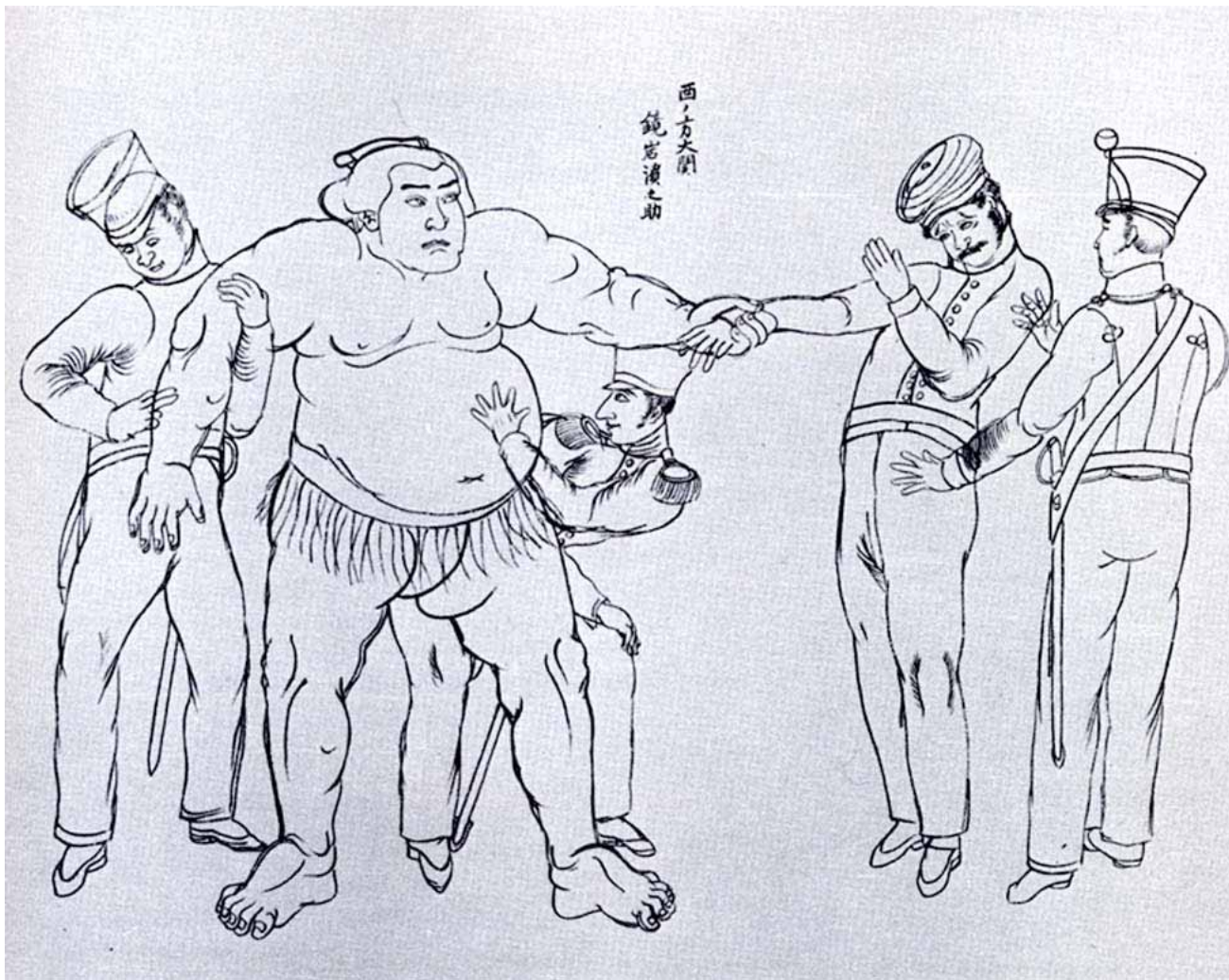
Document 11



[06_065_AmericanWarship] A Foreign Ship, artist unknown

1. What characteristics of the Western ship does the artist emphasize in this picture?
2. How would a Japanese viewing the picture feel about the Americans?

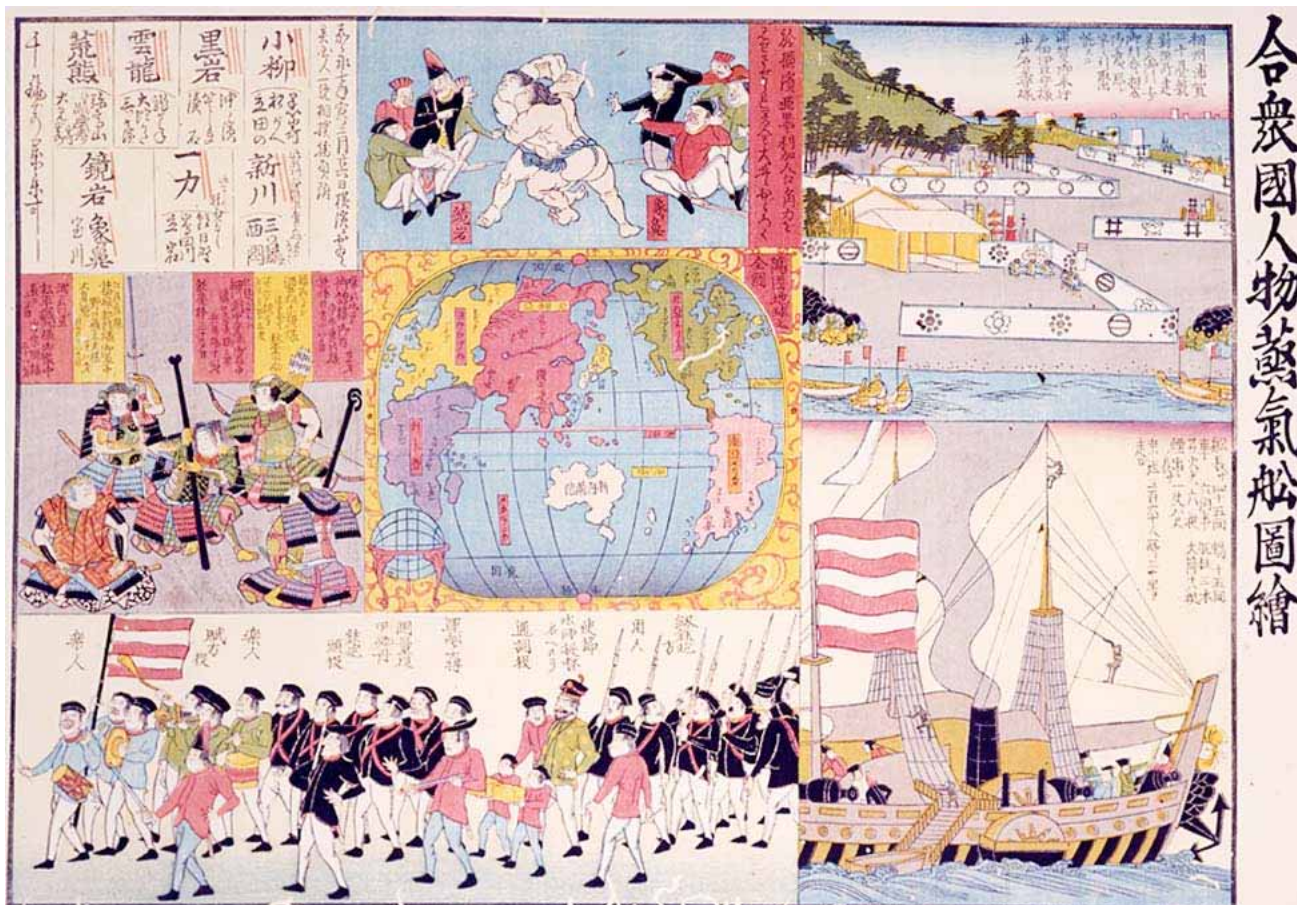
Document 12



[18_192_Sumo_marines] *Marines Examine Sumo Wrestler*, artist unknown, 24 March 1854

1. Examine the postures and expressions on the people's faces. What are the marines' reactions to the sumo wrestler?
2. What is the sumo wrestler thinking?
3. What is the artist saying about the relationship between Japan and America?

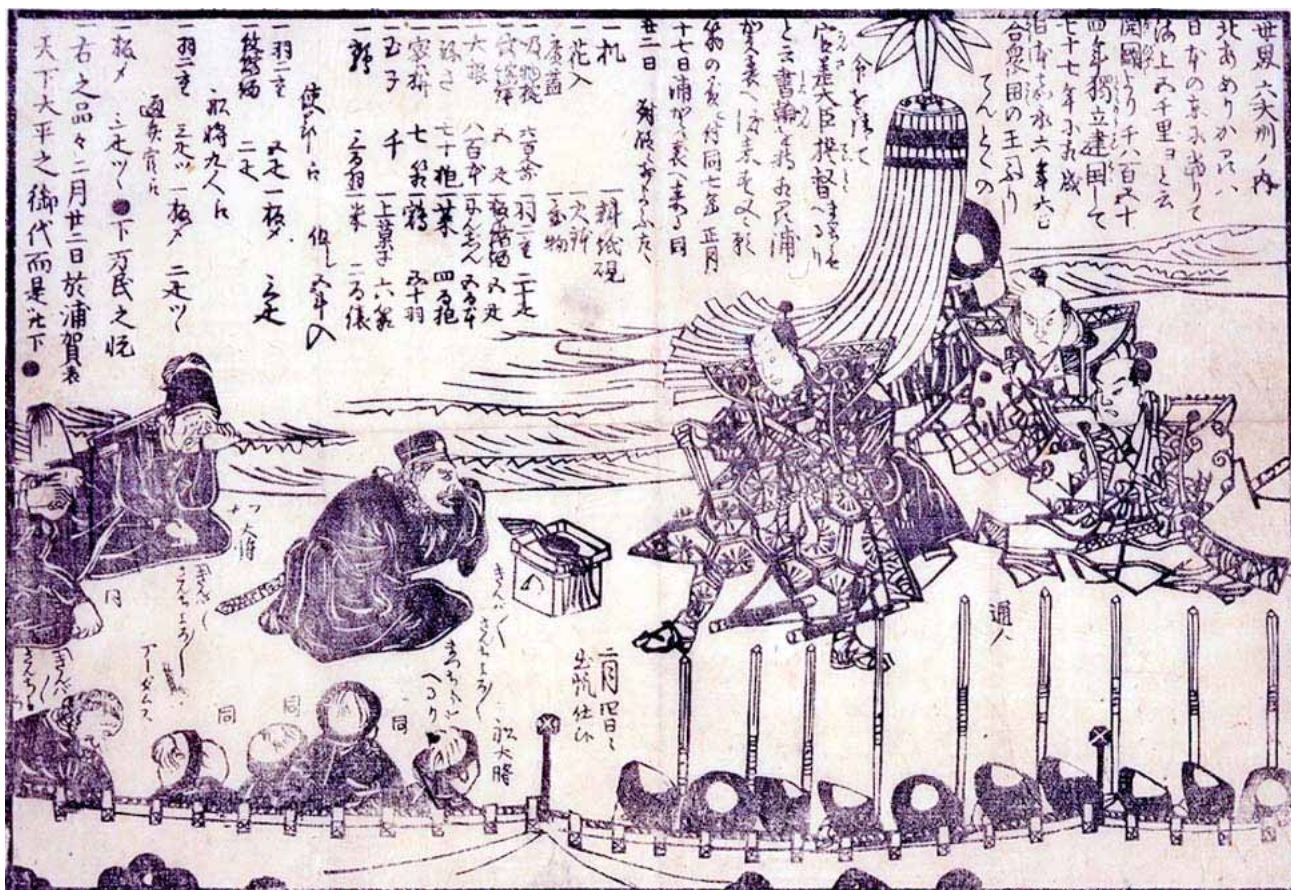
Document 13



[30_012b_pictorial] *Pictorial Description of American People and Steamship*, artist unknown, c. 1854

1. Give words to this pictorial description of American people. How does the artist see the Americans? List at least three adjectives.
2. Japanese are pictured in two frames of the picture—upper middle and left middle. List three adjectives to describe the Japanese sumo wrestlers and soldiers.

Document 14



[30_026e_Perry_bow] Perry Taking a Bow to the Japanese Magistrate, artist unknown, 1854

1. According to the scene depicted, which nation is more powerful?
2. List three words to describe the Japanese.
3. List three words to describe the Americans.

Document 15



[51_102_bsscroll_part2] Detail Part 2 of the Black Ship Scroll, artist unknown, c. 1854

1. What are the American seamen doing in this picture?
2. Why do you think the artist chose this as a subject?
3. Identify the picture with a comparable subject in the Yokohama images you viewed.

Step Two: Categorization and Organization

The second step in a DBQ is to put similar ideas together. Think about the question posed at the beginning of this DBQ:

Document the changing relations between Japan and the West as reflected in Japanese art from 1853 (the arrival of Commodore Perry) to the 1860s and 1870s (the boom period of the Yokohama treaty port). Describe and explain the evolution of these international relations: how and why did Japanese perceptions and attitudes about the West change from 1853 to the 1870s?

Look at your analysis of each of the visual texts in step one. Can you now organize your visual source material so that pictures with similar themes and information are put together? Use the spaces below to categorize and identify your documents. Place the reference number of similar documents together below. Create at least four groupings. Don't leave any documents out; every document should fit together with at least one other.

Note: because you are comparing across time periods, you should have images from the Perry encounter (1853–1854) and from the Yokohama boomtown period (1860s–1870s) in the same group. Divide each grouping by time period, if applicable.

Group One

Document Numbers:

Group Two

Document Numbers:

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Group Three

Document Numbers:

Group Four

Document Numbers:

Group Five

Document Numbers:

Step Three: Synthesis

Synthesis means bringing ideas together to create meaning. What is the main idea that holds each of your groupings together? Put another way, what did you see that made you combine the prints into each group? In your own words, write the main idea for each grouping in the section below.

Main Idea

All the images in Group One show that:

All the images in Group Two show that:

All the images in Group Three show that:

All the images in Group Four show that:

All the images in Group Five show that:

Step Four: Logical Ordering

Examine your main ideas. Do any of them overlap or fit together in some way? Look for items in common. Do some main ideas address similar elements or similar points? Create a new order for your groups based on the main idea you wrote for each one. At the end of this exercise, your main ideas should progress so that you have an argument or evidence that unfolds in a logical way. Remember the question:

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In answering this question:

This main idea should go first:

This main idea should go next:

This main idea should go next:

This main idea should go next:

This main idea should go last:

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Step Five: General Statement/Thesis

Create a final thesis statement. Using the very specific statements in Step Four, your next step is make a generalization that will answer the DBQ question:

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Look at your main ideas and the order in which you have arranged them in Step Four. Ask yourself: what one general idea or position about the DBQ do all of these specific ideas, taken together, support? For an introduction to writing a general statement, go to the practice exercise.

Write your general statement or position statement here. This is your thesis statement for your DBQ essay.

Step Six: Generating an Outline

You already have the parts of the outline you need for your essay.

Your thesis statement is the generalization you made in Step Five.

To support your thesis statement, simply write your Logical Ordering main ideas down as your topic sentences. You are ready to write a well-thought out and well-supported essay.

Step Seven: Writing the Essay

Japanese perceptions, attitudes, and relations with Western countries evolved dramatically between the arrival of U.S. commodore Matthew Perry in 1853 and the boom period of the Yokohama treaty port in the 1860s and 1870s.

Use the visual documents provided to document the changing relations between Japan and the West from 1853 to the 1870s. Describe and explain the evolution of these international relations: how and why did Japanese perceptions and attitudes about the West change from 1853 to the 1870s?