

# Grammar Hammer

Vague, Awkward, Unspecific,  
and Ambiguous Language

# The DBQ Question

Evaluate whether the Crusades were caused primarily by religious devotion or by the desire for political and economic gain.

# Sample Quotes

“However, the desire for economic gain caused the Crusades because the participating masses valued wealth over religious devotion.”

“While religious devotion influenced some Christians who partook in the Crusades, the desire for economic gain and greater positions in life motivated more Christians as shown through the Pope’s stressing of the Middle East’s riches...”

# Sample Quotes

“As opposed to economic and political gain, Christian, Islamic, and Jewish beliefs and their differences mainly caused the Crusades...”

“Although rulers claimed they started the war for religious reasons only, they also had political and economic gain they could have gotten from the Crusades.”

# Sample Quotes

“...Their use of false justification, and their selfish actions show how personal gain, rather than dedication to God’s will, motivated the aristocratic Christian elites to initiate the Crusades.”

“Despite the fact that there was a little religious gain, the Crusades were predominantly for economical and political gain.”

# Sample Quotes

“From 1095-1291, Western European Christians engaged in the Crusades[,] a series of wars fought specifically out of religious devotion.”

“The Crusades were caused primarily by religious devotion...”

“The Pope influenced the people who truly believed that they needed to fight for God and later on did they strive for political and economic gain in God’s name”

# Sample Quotes

“With a longlasting relationship between Christians and Muslims, although a deep schism between Christians themselves, all for control over affluent cities, the Crusades were primarily fought for political and economic gain.”

“...in reality the Crusaders sought to gain political power and boost their own economic situation...”

# Sample Quotes

“...Crusaders fought for their own economic gain...”

“However, based on examination of historical records, the Church’s desire for political and economic gain led to the Crusades.”

# Sample Quotes

“Political gain also persuaded citizens to go to war.”

“While the leaders used religious devotion to encourage their troops to fight, the soldiers relied on economic gain as motivation.”

# So, what's the point?

Repetitive

Lacks creativity

Vague, unclear

Awkward, clumsy

Not specific → “political and economic gain” and “religious devotion” are catch-all expressions. Don't regurgitate because you see it in the prompt. *Show* how “political and economic gain” or “religious devotion” express themselves through evidence in the text.

Issues of *Vague, Awkwardness, and  
Wordiness* Relate to Clarity and Creativity

## Sentence Clarity – Awk./Vague

“Although economic gain motivated some people, religious devotion primarily caused the Crusades.”

“Historians argue about whether the initiators of the Crusades did so for religious purposes, or rather for economic or political ones”

“Finally, the knights, who used to be peasants, took advantage of the economic benefits again.”

# Sentence Clarity – Awkward

“The propaganda used to convince people into fighting held so much passion that the address entranced those who heard it.”

“To still feel strongly about reclaiming land after the first Crusade ended captured the passion commoners for their Holy Land, due to the Pope’s words.”

“The animosity shown between both the Orthodox and Catholic Churches lead to a solidified divide between the variations.”

# Sentence Clarity – Awkward

“By portraying the Muslims as an evil force, he strengthened the reason to fight them.”

“By specifically targeting the Muslims, he made the conflict religiously motivated.”

“What Urban II says leads one to believe that, since individuals taking part in the Crusades are wearing crosses, they are singularly doing this for religious reasons.”

# Crusades Reflection

Example: students wrote about a growing Muslim threat at “numerous holy sites.” This *may* be true, but which holy sites? Can we specify? The student writing could be *stronger* if the reader knows which holy sites were claimed by the Seljuk Turks.

Before submission, students should read over their writing to find “vague” or “unspecific” language, and then ask themselves, *can I conduct some research to make sure the writing is narrow and specific?*

# Show, Don't Tell

Here's an example of both "showing" and "telling":

...one historian who documented the First Crusade states that the crusaders expressed greed by "seizing gold, silver, horses, mules, and houses full of all kinds of goods" (Doc. 6).

"Expressed greed" is telling; the quoted portion is "showing."

# Show, Don't Tell

Here's how you would “show” and *not* “tell”:

...one historian who documented the First Crusade referenced crusaders “seizing gold, silver, horses, mules, and houses full of all kinds of goods” (Doc. 6).

Do you *have* to say they were greedy? Can't the quote speak for itself? The quote suggests the Crusaders' greed.