

## U.S. History Document-Based Question (DBQ)

**Total time:** 75 minutes

**Suggested reading period:** 30 minutes

**Suggested writing time:** 45 minutes

**Question:** Historians have often treated the World's Columbian Exposition as an event that either promoted inequality, exclusion, and stereotypes or offered new opportunities to protest and challenge injustices. Evaluate which of these is a more accurate characterization of the exposition.

Use the following documents (edited for this exercise) and your knowledge of the period 1880-1900 to compose your answer.

**Document 1:** Rodolfo Morgari, [Depiction of Chicago World's Fair in lower left, allegorical figures on the right, historical figures in the upper center of the print], 1893, chromolithograph, <https://www.loc.gov/resource/ppmsca.44793/>.



**Document 2:** Simon Pokagon, *The Red Man's Greeting* (Hartford, MI: C. H. Engle, 1893), [http://digcoll.newberry.org/#/item/nby\\_eeayer-5659](http://digcoll.newberry.org/#/item/nby_eeayer-5659).

In behalf of my people, the American Indians, I hereby declare to you, the pale-faced race that has usurped our lands and homes, that we have no spirit to celebrate with you the Great Columbian Fair now being held in this Chicago city, the wonder of the world.

No; sooner would we hold high joy-day over the graves of our departed fathers, than to celebrate our own funeral, the discovery of America. And while you who are strangers, and you who live here, bring the offerings of the handiwork of your own lands, and your hearts in admiration rejoice over the beauty and grandeur of this young republic, and you say, "Behold the wonders wrought by our children in this foreign land," do not forget that this success has been at the sacrifice of *our* homes and a once happy race.

**Document 3:** Ida B. Wells-Barnett, Preface to "The Reason Why the Colored American is Not in the World's Columbian Exposition: The Afro-American's Contribution to Columbian Literature," (Chicago: 1893), <https://archive.org/details/reasonwhycolored00unse>.

To the seeker after the truth:

Columbia has bidden the civilized world to join with her in celebrating the four-hundredth anniversary of the discovery of America, and the invitation has been accepted. At Jackson Park are displayed exhibits of her natural resources, and her progress in the arts and sciences, but that which would best illustrate her moral grandeur has been ignored.

The exhibit of the progress made by a race in 25 years of freedom as against 250 years of slavery, would have been the greatest tribute to the greatness and progressiveness of American institutions which could have been shown the world. The colored people of this great Republic number eight millions – more than one-tenth the whole population of the United States... The wealth created by their industry has afforded to the white people of this country the leisure essential to their great progress in education, art, science, industry and invention.

Those visitors to the World's Columbian Exposition who know these facts, especially foreigners will naturally ask: Why are not the colored people, who constitute so large an element of the American population, and who have contributed so large a share to American greatness, more visibly present and better represented in this World's Exposition? Why are they not taking part in this glorious celebration of the four-hundredth anniversary of the discovery of their country? Are they so dull and stupid as to feel no interest in this great event? It is to answer these questions and supply as far as possible our lack of representation at the Exposition that the Afro-American has published this volume.

**Document 4:** “Vestibule of the White City,” E. Gately & Co., 1893, Chicago History Museum, IChi-093575, <https://images.chicagohistory.org/asset/105752/>.



Photo caption: ... To merely walk through the Midway without lingering at any of the attractions affords no end of amusement. Here there is such variety of life, such bustle and animation! Here are all the nations of the earth represented. In one and the same minute the visitor meets the fair-haired Laplander or Scandinavian from the north and the black-eyed and swarthy-faced descendant of Latin stock or native of South Africa. The Arabs of the desert here mingle with the cultured and refined denizens of the Paris salon and Mongolian jostles Caucasian in the hurly-burly throng. Above is a noonday scene at the west end of Midway... Ranged along on either side are the various places of entertainment, the Chinese Joss house on the left, “Old Vienna” at the right...

**Document 5:** *Seattle (WA) Post-Intelligencer*, Aug. 25, 1893, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045604/1893-08-25/ed-1/seq-8/>.

The department of Indian affairs for British Columbia will probably be heard from in connection with the performance of the tamanawas, or torture dance, by the Quackahl Indians at Chicago on the 17th [of this month]. When the Indians from this province were permitted to go to Chicago it was the understanding that they were to illustrate the habits and mode of life of

their fellow-countrymen, not the barbaric customs practiced by their ancestors centuries ago, and which, the torture dance being especially mentioned, are now prohibited by British law.

The understanding was given also that the Indians would be well cared for, and the superintendent general of the Indian department holds that to permit the Indians to engage in the tamanawas was a violation of the spirit of the agreement, both on the part of George Hunt, who has the tribe in charge, and of the fair authorities. While so holding the department believes the accounts published of the hideous dance have been much exaggerated, the British Columbia Indians being remarkably clever in the production of the weird spectacular effects which are a feature of their dances.

**Document 6:** "Closing Address" by Mrs. Bertha Honoré Palmer, in *The Congress of Women: Held in the Woman's Building, World's Columbian Exposition*, ed. Mary Kavanaugh Oldham Eagle (Chicago: Monarch Book Company, 1894), 820-824, <https://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/eagle/congress/congress.html>.

Not only have the material exhibits drawn attention to the skill of women and shown the degree of development which has been reached by them, but their interests, their capabilities, their needs and their hopes have been brought before the public and thoroughly discussed from every point of view...

No attempt has been made to demonstrate any theory, or to realize Utopian ideals which we would wish to see prevail. Our only desire has been to present the actual conditions existing, which will give us a basis to build upon for future improvement. This conservative course may have caused us to be censured by many holders of the two opposite extremes of opinion... On the other hand are those who disapprove heartily what has been accomplished by the adventurous spirits who lead in invention, manufactures, literary and professional pursuits, etc. These pessimistic souls see with dismay the walls of the old "sphere" being battered down; walls within which women have been held for centuries willing prisoners; the light of a new day and a new common sense shining upon the inmates, revealing their antiquated and ignorant helplessness and their incapacity to meet the many demands pressing upon them from the new needs of today.

**Document 7:** *Ketchum (ID) Keystone*, May 6, 1893, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86091095/1893-05-06/ed-1/seq-2/>.

The strike of the Esquimaux at the World's Fair seems to be a most justifiable move on their part. They were brought down from the polar region by speculators, and to make them more interesting to visitors the manager forced them to wear their thick, heavy furs all the time, without regard to weather. They sweltered a few weeks and then rebelled. Now Mr. Esquimau can robe himself in a cool, linen duster, and his best girl wear a décollette summer gown and hose.