Joanne Krajeck posted the following on 06/21/2013 19:17 EDT

<https://apcommunity.collegeboard.org/group/apenglish/discussion-boards/-/message_boards/view_message/17022326>

Advice Q 1 Synthesis

Dear Friends,

As a five-time reader for Lang, Question 1...here are a few tips/hints for students...just some random thoughts!

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**To: Future AP Language Students**

**Fr: 6th year AP Language Reader-  Question ONE (synthesis)**

**A few tips and suggestions:**

**Dear AP Students:**

Here are a few observations/irritations, and/or suggestions to improve your AP writing life...also...these may improve the mood of your current AP teacher (always a GOOD thing!)

1. Avoid being a "surface/FORCED reader" and work toward becoming a careful, analytical "voluntary" reader!  Most of the essay weaknesses could be avoided if students truly read the prompt, directions, and texts.  \* There was a clear asterisk that defined the REAL meaning of the Washington Mall...and trust me, there is NO food court at this Mall!)
2. DO NOT "misread" the texts/photos...What history class told you that Christopher Columbus "deserved a monument in Reston, PA, because that is where he 'lived and worked'?"  Yes, the PHOTO was taken in Reston, PA, but does it state anywhere that Columbus "lived and worked" there?
3. To avoid misreading texts, read the ENTIRE text...most of the weakest essays only referenced the beginnings of the text, hence, misinterpreting the information or point.
4. Pay attention to ITALICS!  The Question One prompt clearly had an italicized "and".... and weakest responses totally ignored that little word.
5. AVOID, AVOID long quotations of complete sentences, and yes, paragraphs!  "Google" the use for  indirect quotations and PRACTICE until it becomes an art form!  (Take a black marker and mark OUT ALL quotations in your practice essays that are longer than five or six words...you will be surprised that there often isn't much left! )\* Integrate one, two, or three quotable words with interpretative "so what" analysis.
6. Get rid of the "you" habit...clearly it lends itself to bland, generic analysis.  Students used so many "you's" in the responses, that after a few hundred essays, I had to think about whether I was the builder of those monuments!  "You" does NOT identify an audience.
7. Practice, practice, practice, quick readings and do the SOAPSTone method for analysis.  It requires practice to read deeply and quickly.
8. Advice:  Students, if YOU have heard it before, do NOT use it!  For example:  "Location, location, location," "In 1492 Columbus sailed the ocean blue..."  UGH!
9. Avoid the repetition of words...this is NOT the place for alliteration:  "memorializing monumental monuments...memorable monuments."
10. Avoid repeated rhetorical questions...Believe your AP teacher...more than one rhetorical question generally means "fluff and filler." These bland, trite questions offer no argumentative value.
11. Annoying beyond belief: My advice is that if a student cannot understand and employ the correct use of contractions...do NOT use them!  Really...the Common Core Standards expects 2nd graders to know the difference and the correct use of  the *its / it's* form.
12. Furthermore, "plethora, superfluous..." and other overused words offer little strength to an argument.  Also "great amount" and other misuses ...know the differences between few/less...get out those grammar usage books and review adjectives.
13. Words to avoid in ANY writing:  *take, have taken, taking* are useless for most writing assignments.  Same thing with "pretty much, pretty often."
14. Okay...I know teachers pound this in...but pay attention one more time..." avoid the summary verbs that also serve no purpose in arguments: "talks, talks about, talks about how, says, discusses, speaks."
15. What is a "prime example" really?  Stay away from this one, too.
16. Then there is the word "how."  Just avoid it...it also lends itself to mediocrity. Instead of saying "The writer talks about how"  just say it!
17. Tips to embrace:  Read for the unique instead of the obvious in the sources.  The obvious information leads to generic responses.
18. A "great example" is NEVER a great example of anything!
19. Nothing sensible "gives off a vibe."  I know the word it popular now, but what is a "vibe"?  Avoid this one, too
20. Instead of stating, "This represents or this is what it represents" just describe the specific "it."
21. To begin the long road toward specificity, try referring to the writer of the text by the LAST name and his/her position instead of the generic "the writer of Source A."  It may lend more to the strength of the argument if the source is a photographer, essayist, historian, etc.  (Photographer Smith...historian Jones)

**Dearest Students,**

Although all of these observations will NOT ensure a rating of 8 or 9, the advice just serves to get rid of trite, overused, or otherwise bad writing habits.  Believe your dedicated teachers! Do what they recommend...NOW!  Think about it. Why would your teachers give bad advice?

Here is a useful link that explains the differences needed for either a summary or argument synthesis response:  [https://www.msu.edu/~jdowell/135/Synthesis.html](https://www.msu.edu/%7Ejdowell/135/Synthesis.html)

Using Google you may find other sources for synthesis advice.  Remember that synthesis is a bit like eating ...you put in a variety of "foods," and then the "synthesis" begins...what comes out is NOT quite what went in!  So...no more summarizing/listing what you "think" you read.  Read CAREFULLY and fully, then do something unique with it by answering the prompt!

I enjoyed every minute of reading the thousand or so essays for Question 1!

Sincerely,

JKrajeck

A tired but hopeful AP Lang reader !