TIPS FOR APPROACHING WRITING TOPICS

The words that follow are frequently used in essay assignments and examinations:

SUMMARIZE:

Sum up; give the main points briefly. Summarize the ways in which man preserves food.

EVALUATE:

Give the good points and the bad ones; appraise; give an opinion regarding the value of; talk over the advantages and limitations. Evaluate the contributions of teaching machines.

CONTRAST:

Bring out the points of difference. Contrast the novels of Jane Austen and William Makepeace Thackeray.

EXPLAIN:

Make clear; interpret; make plain; tell "how" to do; tell the meaning of. Explain how man can, at times, trigger a full-scale rainstorm.

DESCRIBE:

Give an account of; tell about; give a word picture of. Describe the pyramids of Gaza.

DEFINE:

Give the meaning of a word or concept; place it in the class to which it belongs and set it off from other items in the same class. Define the term "archetype".

COMPARE:

Bring out points of similarity and points of difference. Compare the legislative branches of the state government and the national government.

DISCUSS:

Talk over; consider from various points of view; present the different side of. Discuss the use of pesticides in controlling mosquitoes.

CRITICIZE:

State your opinion of the correctness or merits of an item or issue; criticism may approve or disapprove. Criticize the increasing use of alcohol.

JUSTIFY:

Show good reasons for; give your evidence; present fact to support your position. Justify the American entry into World War II.

TRACE:

Follow the course of; follow the trail of; give a description of progress. Trace the development of television in school instruction.

INTERPRET:

Make plain; give the meaning of; give your thinking about; translate. Interpret the poetic line: "The sound of a cobweb snapping is the noise of my life.

PROVE:

Establish the truth of something by giving factual evidence or logical reasons. Prove that in a full-employment economy, a society can get more of one product only by giving up another product.

ILLUSTRATE:

Use a word picture, a diagram, a chart, or a concrete example to clarify a point. Illustrate the use of catapults in the amphibious warfare of Alexander.