

ANALYZING A TOPIC

Analyzing a topic involves dividing up a subject into its component parts - with each part being treated separately; their relationship to the whole is then examined. In order to help you generate ideas about a topic, consider the following examples:

A. If the topic is an **event**, such as a federal election, Confederation, or the Olympics, ask the following questions:

- ✓ **WHO** was directly involved? **WHO** was in charge? **WHO** was affected? **WHERE** did the event take place?
- ✓ **WHAT** was the background? **WHAT** exactly happened? **WHAT** were the causes or the consequences? **WHAT** was the role of the media...the public...the politicians? **WHAT** were the financial considerations? **WHAT** were the problems involved? To **WHAT** other events was it connected? **WHAT** are the short and long-term solutions? **WHAT** were the advantages/disadvantages? **WHAT** influenced this event? **WHAT** effect did this event have on future events? **WHAT** changes occurred because of this event?
- ✓ **HOW** valuable was this event? **HOW** important and significant was this event from an historical perspective...a literary perspective?

B. If the topic is a concept or an **issue**, such as capital punishment, democracy or art, ask the following questions:

- ✓ **WHAT** other concepts have been associated with it? **WHAT** are the general attitudes toward it? In **WHAT** way has it affected the lives of the people? **WHAT** new uses and applications are there? **WHAT** opposing concepts are used to clearly illustrate its advantages/disadvantages. (For example, democracy vs. communism?) **WHAT** are the specific attitudes or sub-groups of our society toward the concept or issue? (For example, where do the politicians, law enforcement agencies, media, victims, general public stand on the issue?) **WHAT** are the alternatives? **WHAT** is the socio-cultural background of this concept or issue? **WAS** it prevalent in a particular literary genre? **WHO** popularized it? **WHO** wrote about it?
- ✓ **HOW** has the term been historically defined? **HOW** do you define the term? **HOW** might the concept or issue be changed to work better? **WHERE** does it work well now?
- ✓ **IS** the concept or issue associated with a particular region...country ...religion...philosophy? **IS** a particular person associated with it? **IS** the concept "ideal" or "real"? **WHY**?

C. If the topic is an **object**, such as a painting, sculpture, or form of transportation, ask the following:

- ✓ **WHO** is associated with the popularization of this object? **WHO** or **WHAT** produced it? **WHERE** and **WHEN** has it been produced? **WHO** uses it? For **WHAT**?
- ✓ **WHAT** is the significance of the object?
- ✓ **WHAT** other objects is it similar to? **WHAT** are the problems...the advantages...the disadvantages? **WHAT** are the practical precursors of this object? **WHAT** future trends can the development of this object lead to? **WHAT** were the problems that this object was meant to ameliorate? **WHAT** problems evolved from this object? **WHAT** are the outstanding characteristics of this object? **IS** it obsolete? **WHY**? With **WHAT** has it been replaced?

Just remember...these examples give you only an idea of what you can ask. The number and range of your questions will depend on the length and scope of your essay.