

Words Commonly Found in Essay Questions:

- Analyze:** Break into separate parts, discuss, examine or interpret each aspect.
- Compare:** Examine two or more issues. Identify similarities and differences.
- Contrast:** Show differences. Set in opposition.
- Define:** Explain the exact meaning. Determine the precise limits of the term to be defined. Definitions are usually short.
- Describe:** A detailed account. Make a picture with words. List characteristics and qualities.
- Discuss:** Consider, debate or argue the pros and cons of an issue. Compare and contrast.
- Evaluate:** Offer an opinion or cite the opinion of an expert. Include evidence to support the evaluation.
- Explain:** Make an idea clear. Show how a concept is developed. Give reasons for an event.
- Illustrate:** Give concrete examples. Explain clearly by using comparisons or examples.
- Justify:** Proof or reasons for decisions or conclusions, be convincing.
- List:** Enumerate, write an itemized series of concise statements.
- Outline:** Describe main ideas, characteristics, or events. (Does not necessarily mean write a Roman numeral/letter outline.)
- Prove:** Support with facts, especially facts presented in class or in the text.
- Relate:** Show connections between ideas or events. Provide a larger context.
- Summarize:** A brief, condensed account. Include conclusions. Avoid unnecessary details.
- Trace:** Show order or progress of a subject or event.