



Formulate Manageable Questions

Writing is about answering questions, but sometimes the single question posed feels too big, which can lead to writer's block. Ask students to formulate more localized questions to begin writing. Students feel more comfortable answering short-answer questions, so breaking down a longer prompt into shorter questions can help them begin writing with less pressure.

For instance, if your history essay prompt is "Compare the approaches of Marx and the Utopian Socialists to the problems presented by the Industrial Revolution," students can begin simply: What was the Industrial Revolution? What was Marx's approach? What was the Utopian Socialists' approach? Those three short answers, which don't require tremendous effort, eliminate the blank page and can prompt more interesting questions, leading to a more compelling argument: What shaped each side's thinking? Which argument is best? Why? Beginning with even basic knowledge in small, achievable chunks prepares students to expand and develop their ideas.