Instructions for Analyzing the DPE

1. Read the preferred passage (traditional and / or critical).

2. Create a single paragraph using either a direct quote or a paraphrased passage where you analyze the data.

3. Use the following format:
> **a. Introduce the paragraph <u>in your own words.</u>**
> **b. Next, the quote or paraphrased passage.**
> **c. Your final analysis of the passage.**

4. Your analysis could include:
> **a. Agreement / disagreement with *how* the author interprets the data and *why.***
> **b. What the passage means in a larger theoretical sense.**
> **c. Your thoughts on whether this passage strongly or weakly supports the author's position.**
> **d. Counterfactuals.**

Paul, R. & Elder, L. (2007). *How to study and learn a discipline: Using critical thinking concepts and tools.* **Dillon Beach, CA: Foundation for Critical Thinking.**

**Part I
Laying the Foundation**

How to Analyze the Logic of an Article, Essay, or Chapter

One important way to understand an essay, article, or chapter, is through the analysis of the parts of the author's reasoning. Once you have done this, you can then evaluate the author's reasoning using intellectual standards. Here is a template to follow:

1) The main **purpose** of this article is _____.

(Here you are trying to state, as accurately as possible, the author's purpose for writing the article. What was the author trying to accomplish?)

2) The key **question** that the author is addressing is _____.

(Your goal is to figure out the key question that was in the mind of the author when s/he wrote the article. In other words, what was the key question that the article addressed?)

3) The most important **information** in the article is _____.

(You want to identify the key information the author used, or presupposed, in the article to support his/her main arguments. Here you are looking for facts, experiences, and/or data the author is using to support his/her conclusions)

4) The main **inferences / conclusions** in this article are _____.

(You want to identify the most important conclusions that the author comes to and presents in the article)

5) The key **idea(s)** we need to understand in this article is (are) _____. By these ideas the author means _____.

(To identify these ideas, ask yourself: What are the most important ideas that you would have to understand in order to understand the author's line of reasoning? Then briefly elaborate what the author means by these ideas)

6) The main **assumption(s)** underlying the author's thinking is (are) _____.

(Ask yourself: What is the author taking for granted (that might be questioned). The assumptions are generalizations that the author does not think s/he has to defend in the context of writing the article, and they are usually unstated. This is where the author's thinking logically begins)

7a) If we take this line of reasoning seriously, the **implications** are _____.

(What consequences are likely to follow if people take the author's line of reasoning seriously? Here you are to follow out the logical implications of the author's position. You should include implications that the author states, but also include those that the author does not state)

7b) If we fail to take this line of reasoning seriously, the **implications** are _____.

(What consequences are likely to follow if people ignore the author's reasoning?)

8) The main **point(s) of view** presented in this article is (are) _____.

(The main question you are trying to answer here is: What is the author looking at, and how is s/he seeing it? For example, in this guide we are looking at "education" and seeing it "as involving the development of intellectual skills." We are also looking at "learning" as "the responsibility of students")

If you truly understand these structures as they interrelate in an article, essay, or chapter, you should be able to empathically role-play the thinking of the author. Remember, these are the eight basic structures that define all reasoning. They are the essential elements of thought.