A Three-Step Strategy for Tackling Essay Questions

Here is a strategy that will help answer the question, "But what should I say about the text?"

Step 1: Underline the key nouns or noun phrases in the statement of the essay question.

Step 2: Determine a priority order for those concepts.

Step 3: Place those concepts into the appropriate areas of the triangle diagram.

Practice Example: Poetry Instructions (from the 1995 AP Exam)

Read the following poem carefully. Then, in a well-organized essay, analyze how the speaker uses the varied imagery of the poem to reveal his attitude toward the nature of love.

Main Idea

Strategy or Approach

Supporting Evidence

his attitude toward the nature of love

how the speaker uses the varied imagery

use key examples from each major section of the text.