

Writing Identifications

Here are some suggestions for writing identifications. In general, identifications consist of factual knowledge (answer the question “What?”) and information that shows your understanding of the significance of the people, events, and concepts in the context of their times. Identifications are usually three to four sentences long (though an identification could, and sometimes should, be longer).

Keep the following principles in mind as you identify and analyze the significance of a person, event, or concept:

- 1) Define the term (or name, or concept), saying who or what it was.
- 2) If you are identifying an event, explain who or what was involved and under what circumstances (including any relevant background information).
- 3) Tell me where and how an event happened. Provide just enough information to demonstrate your familiarity with events.
- 4) If you can, identify when an event happened or when a person lived.
- 5) Identify the term’s significance. Tell me why the event, person, or concept is important, both in itself and in a broader sense. What were the short- and long-term consequences and influences? Who or what was affected, and in what ways? Think in terms of “cause and effect,” “impact upon,” and “connections” or “relationships” as you determine the significance. This is by far the most important component of an identification.

Ultimately, identifications should show that you are familiar with the term and, more importantly, that you understand why the person, event, or concept is historically significant (in the context of the time period or area we may be studying).

***Remember, if a term is not fully “identified” in your textbook, try the Red Book.**