The M.E.A.T. (also referred to as M.E.A.L. ) analytical writing strategy. You can use this writing strategy whenever you are analyzing an issue (for example in Chapter 4 of a five chapter essay or a five chapter thesis).

1ST - MAIN POINT or MAIN IDEA

2ND - EVIDENCE

3RD – ANALYSIS (plus evidence) [Decide if you agree / disagree / or if you are neutral (both sides have strong as well as arguments) regarding the “point” or “idea” and use evidence to support your viewpoint].

 [You should have at least four or five points or ideas in your essay or thesis]

4TH - TRANSITION (OR “LINK”)

EXAMPLE QUESTION

1. ***What were the Opium Wars? Critically analyse their impact and their significance for China in the years from 1839 to 1860.***

YOU SHOULD THINK ABOUT **FOUR OR FIVE POINTS OR IDEAS** WHEN WRITING YOUR ESSAY. Regarding the Opium Wars, points might include 1) the Opium Wars, 2) China’s domestic political situation before the Opium Wars, 3) China’s international power and position before the Opium Wars, 4) Conflict and Wars inside China, 5) the influence of natural disasters, famine, and ethnic division inside China before the Opium Wars etc.

EXAMPLE ESSAY STRUCTURE

***PARAGRAPH 1*** – INTRODUCTION (BRIEF ESSAY OUTLINE, AND DESCRIPTION OF THE OPIUM WARS)

***PARAGRAPH 2*** – AGREE WITH THE ESSAY QUESTION I.E. SHOW VIEWPOINTS THAT SUGGEST THE OPIUM WARS WERE VERY SIGNIFICANT AND IMPORTANT (IN CHINA’S DECLINE AND HUMILIATION). USE EVIDENCE AND SOURCES (BOOKS, ARTICLES, STATISTICS ETC.) TO REINFORCE THE PARAGRAPH.

***PARAGRAPH 3*** – DISAGREE WITH THE ESSAY QUESTION I.E. SHOW VIEWPOINTS THAT SUGGEST THE OPIUM WARS WERE NOT VERY SIGNIFICANT AND IMPORTANT. FOR EXAMPLE, VIEWPOINTS THAT SHOW THAT OTHER ISSUES (LIKE DOMESTIC INSTABILITY, WARS, NATURAL DISASTERS ETC. WERE MORE OR EQUALLY AS IMPORTANT AS THE OPIUM WARS). USE EVIDENCE AND SOURCES (BOOKS, ARTICLES, STATISTICS ETC.) TO REINFORCE THE PARAGRAPH.

***PARAGRAPH 4 -*** IN THIS PARAGRAPH, YOU DECIDE IF YOU AGREE, DISAGREE, OR ARE NEUTRAL REGARDING THE ESSAY QUESTION. PLEASE SEE BELOW AN EXAMPLE OF A M.E.A.T. ANALYTICAL WRITING FORMAT.

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1ST - MAIN POINT or MAIN IDEA

2ND - EVIDENCE

3RD – ANALYSIS (plus evidence) [Decide if you agree / disagree / or if you are neutral (both sides have strong as well as weak arguments) regarding the “point” or “idea” and use evidence to support your viewpoint].

 [You should have at least four or five points or ideas in your essay or thesis]

4TH - TRANSITION (OR “LINK”)

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Numerous historians and sources view the Opium Wars [*THE MAIN POINT HERE IS THE OPIUM WARS. POINT OR IDEA NUMBER 1*] as the most important factor in contributing to China’s decline in the 1800s. HISTORIAN’S NAME OR OTHER SOURCE for instance, argues that the Opium Wars ………….. HISTORIAN’S NAME OR OTHER SOURCE use the example of …(DATA)…. to present evidence of why the wars were so significant. This essay contends that such viewpoints are generally correct. For example, ANOTHER SCHOLAR – GIVE NAME asserts that the wars …[USE DATA AS EVIDENCE]. However, despite being generally correct, such viewpoints should also acknowledge the key influence of other factors such as domestic conflicts such as the Taiping Rebellion in weakening China and making it easier for outside powers to more steadily exert influence inside China. For example, HISTORIAN’S NAME OR OTHER SOURCE contends that even without the Opium Wars, China was both domestically and internationally in a weak position. HISTORIAN’S NAME OR OTHER SOURCE cites the [DATA] as evidence of this. The essay will now examine another key issue, China’s domestic political situation before the Opium Wars.