Writing Activity: Understanding the Assignment

Try this exercise after reading the UNC-Chapel Hill handout on understanding the assignment. The following are some sample assignment prompts. Use the bolded key words to determine whether the instructions are asking the student to inform, relate or interpret a subject. Remember:

- Information words ask you to demonstrate what you know about the subject.
- Relation words ask you to demonstrate how things are connected.
- Interpretation words ask you to defend ideas of your own about the subject.

Some sample assignments may have more than one objective.

1. **Analyze** the failure of Reconstruction policies following the Civil War.
2. **Trace** the rise of Hitler and the Third Reich in post-WWI Germany.
3. **Compare** the works of Percy Bysshe Shelley and his contemporary, Lord Byron.
4. **Define** Jean-Paul Sartre’s philosophy of existentialism and **evaluate** its efficacy.
5. **Explain** how the concept of vertical integration applies to Andrew Carnegie’s dominance of nineteenth century steel manufacturing.
6. **Justify** the claim that meat consumption is harmful to the environment.
7. **Summarize** the incidents leading up to the Cuban Missile Crisis and **evaluate** Kennedy’s response to the emergency.
8. **Argue** for or against the use of capital punishment in America.
9. **Explore** how the Gulf of Tonkin Incident caused America’s entry into the Vietnam War.
10. **Compare** the Reign of Terror to the current unrest following the Egyptian Revolution.