Prompt Analysis Questions (PAQs)

1. What is the *central claim/topic* called for?

   Do I have choices to make with regard to this claim/topic? Will I need to focus the claim/topic in order to write a good essay? What arguments can I make for this claim? What do I know about this topic?

2. Who is the intended *audience*?

   If named specifically, what do I know about this particular audience? If the audience is implied or not identified, what can I infer about it or them? In either event, how might the expectations of this audience affect my choices as a writer?

3. What is the *purpose/mode* for the writing task?

   Is the purpose stated or must it be inferred? What is this writing supposed to accomplish (besides fulfilling the demands of the prompt/assignment)? What does the goal of this writing suggest about the mode (narration, exposition, description, argument) or combination of modes that I should consider in responding?

4. What *strategies* will be most effective?

   What does the purpose/mode suggest about possible strategies? Of the strategies I am comfortable using—strategies like examples, definitions, analysis, classification, cause/effect, compare/contrast—which will be most effective here? Are there any strategies—such as number of examples or type of support—that are specified as required?

5. What is my *role* as a writer in achieving the purpose?

   Have I been assigned a specific role like *applicant* or *representative*? If I have not been assigned a specific role, what does the prompt or assignment tell me about the level of expertise I should demonstrate, the stance I should assume, or the approach I should take?