Stretching your Cms! (using examples from *Macbeth*):

1. **A stick is never just a stick:**

*Don’t focus on the literal object but on the concept or emotion it may represent.*

***Macbeth:*** The moving forest is not just a cleverly fulfilled prophesy but may reflect Macbeth’s unsettled subconscious, his “mind full of scorpions,” which struggles to distinguish the imaginary from reality. The forest is literally “moving,” but at the same time, it is camouflaging the English and Scottish soldiers advancing toward Dunsinane…thus tormenting Macbeth’s sense of invincibility based on the forecasts of the witches.

1. **Theme it up!**

*You may also identify one or more overarching or “universal” themes to potentially add greater focus and purpose to your essay. You can “theme it up” whether or not “theme” is actually mentioned in the prompt.*

***Macbeth:*** In a hellish tirade, Lady Macbeth screams, “Out damned spot!” This uncoiling of her sanity reflects the theme of entropy in the play—the idea that chaos begets and accelerates chaos in the universe. Lady Macbeth’s crime against the external “establishment” has led to her internal disestablishment, the breaking up of mental and spiritual stability.

1. **Analyze your analysis. Keep asking yourself the question, “So what?!”**

*Question, even contradict your own statements, report and give an explanation for tensions or complications in your logic or your discoveries.*

***Macbeth:*** Macbeth is the prisoner of his own deranged dreams. Then again, to suggest that he is a victim undermines his agency and the fact that, while the consequential circumstances of Duncan’s murder outweigh the protagonist, he did indeed create them with chilling premeditation.

1. **Word Isolation:**

*Rather than always speaking of the author’s diction as a whole, hyper-focus on a word and milk it for all it’s worth in the way of connotations and associated meanings.*

***Macbeth:*** Macbeth exasperatedly moans, “Dear wife, my mind is full of scorpions.” Scorpions may foreshadow a death that comes unsuspectingly, as scorpions’ stingers dally behind the arachnid before suddenly striking; likewise, Macbeth has been lured by the dance of supernatural forces into the radius of death. In mythology, a scorpion was dispatched to destroy Orion for his pride—again, a sign that the gods have exhausted a vain hero’s usefulness, have had their entertainment, and now can eat the unwitting puppet.

1. **Critical Approaches (all filters) and Defense Mechanisms (psychological filter).**

*Examining works of literature in the context of traditions, e.g. Naturalism (God and Nature are indifferent or hostile toward mankind; people are animals in struggle for survival); Romanticism (man is godlike and can draw inspiration and power from Nature); Post-Modernism (no right or wrong; the quest is making sense out of the senselessness of modern life) to name a few.*

***Macbeth*** (Archetypal/Psychoanalytical): Lady Macbeth represents a “dark anima,” that is, the projection of Macbeth’s feminine side gone sour which has come to govern Macbeth. Usually, the feminine principle encompasses nurturing, spiritual qualities; alternatively, it may present the calculating, devilish side of human nature as revealed in Lady Macbeth’s sinister plea to the the dark spirits to “unsex me here…and fill me with direst cruelty.”