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

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

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

***Oedipus:*** Tiresias’s blindness, beyond ironically emphasizing his “spiritual eyes,” may represent a shield against unpleasant truths which destroy peoples’ safe, somewhat romanticized perceptions of themselves and their realities. His agitated hesitation to answer Oedipus’ questions regarding his parentage indicate Tiresias’s discomfort in his role as a prophet and as a contributor to Oedipus’ downfall.

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.*

***Oedipus:*** The dually intellectual and savage nature of the Sphinx complicates the theme of knowing or pursuing knowledge by suggesting that answers may ultimately empower or devour whoever discovers them. On the other hand, questions may simple beget more questions, as Oedipus outwits the Sphinx only to win the loyalty of the Thebans and the heart of their queen

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.*

***Oedipus:*** Oedipus’ hideous self-mutilation, at first glance, seems senseless; but perhaps self-inflicted punishment is required for the king’s complete vindication from a sense of guilt. Then again, it may be his way defiantly ensuring that fate can no longer play with him—like a cruel child’s broken toy.

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.*

***Oedipus:*** Oedipus declares, while ironically condemning whoever is bringing down the plague, “Children from a common mother might have linked Laius and myself. But as it turned out, fate swooped down onto his head.” The word “swooped” likens fate to a bird of prey, which implies that fate is an arbitrary killer, a terminator, a feeder on men rather than an entity that conscientiously weaves men’s destinies; it may also be comparing fate to a vulture that figuratively cleanses the world of plagued individuals who have, knowingly or unknowingly defiled the gods’ will.

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.*

***Oedipus*** (Cultural): Ironically, when the Greek gods are removed from the equation, Theban society proves to be a mindless and ballistic entity, resorting to arbitrary scapegoating and baby-killing in order to preserve peace and maintain power, as in the case of Laius and Iocasta.