Questions for AP Summer Reading

“On Dumpster Diving”
1. What is the effect of Eighner’s attention to language in the first five paragraphs? In other words, is he appealing to logos (logic), pathos (emotion), or ethos (credibility)? Explain.
2. In paragraph 8, Eighner identifies the direction he plans to take in his essay. What is the effect of this information? In other words, how does it change the way he tells his narrative?
3. Identify and explain two examples of irony in the section about the students (pars. 25-30).
4. Paragraph 37 concludes, “I do not want to paint too romantic a picture. Dumpster diving has serious drawbacks as a way of life.” What is Eighner’s purpose in these sentences?
5. Note the careful distinction Eighner makes between the “true scavenger” and the “can scrounger.” What purpose does it serve?

“The Ways We Lie”
1. Identify examples of informal language in this essay. Is it appropriate and effective or is it distracting?
2. Examine one section where Ericsson defines a type of lying. How would you describe this structure? Examine another selection. Is she repeating or varying the structure?
3. What is the intended purpose of the quotations at the start of each type of lie? Are they meant to be humorous, inspirational, ironic?
4. Ericsson uses her personal experience to illustrate some but not all of her categories of lying. Is her allotment of personal reference effective, or does it fragment the essay?
5. Who is Ericsson’s audience for this essay? Is her purpose to accuse them, make them think, dare them to stop lying—or something else?

“The Joy of Reading and Writing: Superman and Me”
1. Explain whether you find the first sentence and effective opening. Why is sentence 2 an important bridge between that sentence and the third one?
2. How does the information in the opening paragraph both acknowledge an ethnic stereotype and challenge it?
3. What is the effect of Alexie’s analogy of a paragraph to a fence in paragraph 3?
4. In paragraph 7, Alexie uses a series of short, simple sentences. What effect does he achieve with this choice of syntax (sentence structure)?
5. Do you think that Alexie’s audience is Indians, non-Indians, or both? Explain by citing specific passages.

*This is the only essay that has questions at the end AS WELL AS these questions. You are to answer #4 ONLY!

“Letter from the Birmingham Jail”
1. What is King’s tone in the opening paragraph? How might you make an argument for its being ironic?
2. Why does he arrange paragraphs 2-4 in the order that he does? How would reversing the order have changed the impact?
3. Why does King go into such detail to explain the basic principles and process of the nonviolent protest movement?
4. King uses various kinds of repetition—repetition of single words or phrases, of sentence structures, and of sounds. Focusing on a passage of one or more paragraphs’ length, discuss the effect of King’s use of repetition.
5. Considering the final three paragraphs of King’s conclusions, discuss whether you believe it is rhetorically effective. In other words, did King use his words effectively to appeal to his audience’s emotions?

“Shooting an Elephant”
1. How does Orwell use his voice in the opening paragraph? Note instances of humor and irony.
2. What is Orwell’s attitude toward the native peoples?
3. What is Orwell’s attitude toward his own position in Burma?
4. Compare and contrast the description of the killing of the elephant as related in paragraphs 10-13 with that of the killing of the Indian as related in paragraph 4. Consider the author’s purpose of the descriptions.
5. The final paragraph presents Europeans’ views of the elephant killing. Explain the differences.

“Shooting Dad”
1. How does Vowell play with political and historical terms (e.g. “house divided”) to characterize the conflict between her and her father?
2. Why do you think Vowell does not begin the essay with paragraph 3 (“I am a gunsmith’s daughter.”)? What does Vowell achieve with those opening two paragraphs?
3. How do the two “territories” (par. 7) of Vowell and her dad reflect the values and personalities of each? Notice the concrete detail.
4. What does Vowell mean when she says that she was not “traumatized” but “decided” (par. 12)?
5. How would you describe the tone of the final paragraph? Explain.