TOK “Watch Fors”: Some notes on the essay ;)

*‘It is dangerous to read about a subject before we have thought about*

*it ourselves . . . When we read, another person thinks for us; we merely*

*repeat his mental process.’* ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER, 1788–1860

* *Do not use websites that “help” you write the essay. The IB is aware of these sites and any essays that use examples, formats and advice from these websites will not be scored well. Candidates who use these sites “struggle to demonstrate a mastery of the essay, and trigger suspicion in the minds of examiners as to the provenance of the work as a whole.”*
* *Maintain your personal voice (not informal, but personal)*
* *Use your own definition of knowledge, not Plato’s and not a Dictionary’s*

*Avoid the following, overused examples:*

1. The NASA Mars rover *Curiosity* and curiosity itself as a motivation for knowledge

2. Pablo Picasso’s style of painting as a model

3. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders

4. The multi-store memory model and the case of Clive Wearing

5. Neoclassical and Keynesian models in macroeconomics

6. James Watson and Francis Crick’s model of DNA

7. The fluid-mosaic model of membrane structure

8. Stanley Prusiner and the discovery of prions

9. Andrew Wakefield and the movement his discredited work triggered against

vaccination

10. The epidemiology of Ebola in West Africa

11. Myers-Briggs personality tests

12. Wilfred Owen’s *Dulce ef Decorum Est*

13. Elizabeth Loftus and John Palmer’s work on the effect of the wording of questions to

eye-witnesses

14. The Rape of Nanking

15. Alexander Fleming and the discovery of penicillin

16. Ludwig van Beethoven and his deafness as the lack of a “way of knowing”

17. Vincent Van Gogh’s Starry Night — seems to have become the default example for

almost any claim about the visual arts

* *Hypothetical examples are almost never convincing when offered as support for assertions in essays*
* *Examiners appreciate the effort by candidates to use examples that arise naturally from their own experience*
* *History is the study of recorded traces of the past, not the past itself (The map is notthe territory!)*
* *Perception in TOK does not mean “point of view”—SENSE PERCEPTION*

*-Do not use hypothetical examples.*

* *Real examples that everyone else in the class (or everyone else in the world) are using should be avoided (JFK assassination, Nazi experimentation, Banksy graffiti, Pulitzer Prize winning photos, stem cell research). Try for fresh material.*
* *Avoid sweeping generalizations (“all Christians reject the theory of evolution”)*
* *Use examples that arise naturally from your own experience*
* *A colossal number of candidates feel unable to avoid claiming in their first paragraph that knowledge is the same as justified true belier and the majority of them never offer further comment about this definition or how it might influence the rest of what they write. Come up with your own definition of knowledge that suits the title.*
* *Recognize the difference between key terms and other connecting words in the title that do not merit lengthy discussion*

**Overall Essay Writing:**

*-proof read; teachers MAY not micro edit your papers*

*-stay within the word count*

*-plan your paragraphs and the transitions between them*

*-connect any knowledge claims you make with citations*

*-do not rely heavily on your TOK notes and cite your teacher for the knowledge claim*

*-do not run words together in an effort to beat the word limit—WOW!!!!*

**Filling In the Essay Planning Form**

* For each interaction, comment on your thought process as you were going through the various stages of essay writing.
* For example, in the first interaction, discuss how you chose the essay title you did and what your first thoughts on the essay title were.
* For your second interaction, discuss your thoughts as you were planning your essay, writing your proposal, and creating your outline.
* For your third interaction, discuss the changes that you have been making while writing your essay and why you have made those changes. How has your thinking about the title changed and why?
* DO NOT write a play by play of your essay writing process—eg. In the first interaction I chose a topic and brainstormed ideas. In the second interaction, I answered the questions in the proposal. In the third interaction I edited my essay. Please do not do this. The interactions must focus on your thinking about the topic.