Critical Thinking

Points to consider when writing

1. Exploring the problem:
   A. Who is your reader?
   B. What is your purpose?

2. Making your goals operational:
   A. How can you achieve your purpose?
   B. Can you make a plan?

3. Generating some ideas:
   A. Brainstorm:
      -- keep writing
      -- don't censor or evaluate
      -- keep returning to the problem
   B. Talk to your readers:
      -- What questions would they ask?
      -- What different kinds of readers might you have?
   C. Ask yourself questions:

4. Classical topics (patterns of argument):
   A. Definition:
      -- How does the dictionary define ____?
      -- What do I mean by ____?
      -- What group of things does ____ belong to?
      -- How is ____ different from other things?
      -- What parts can ____ be divided into?
      -- What other words mean about the same as ____?
      -- What are some concrete examples of ____?
      -- When is the meaning of ____ misunderstood?
   B. Comparison/Contrast:
      -- What is ____ similar to? In what ways?
      -- What is ____ different from? In what ways?
      -- ____ is superior (inferior) to what? How?
      -- ____ is most unlike (like) what? How?
   C. Relationship:
      -- What causes ____?
      -- What are the effects of ____?
      -- What is the purpose of ____?
      -- What is the consequence of ____?
      -- What comes before (after) ____?
D. Testimony:
   -- What have I heard people say about ____?
   -- What are some facts of statistics about ____?
   -- Can I quote any poems or sayings about ____?
   -- Are there any laws about ____?

E. Circumstance:
   -- Is ____ possible or impossible?
   -- What qualities or conditions make ____ possible or impossible?
   -- When did ____ happen previously?
   -- Who can do ____?
   -- If ____ starts, what makes it end?
   -- What would it take for ____ to happen now?
   -- What would prevent ___ from happening?

5. Cubing (considering a subject from six points of view):
   A. Describe it (colors, shapes, sizes, etc.)
   B. Compare it (What is it similar to?)
   C. Associate it (What does it make you think of?)
   D. Analyze it (Tell how it's made)
   E. Apply it (What can you do with it? How can it be used?)
   F. Argue for or against it