

Identify	State a clear, concise, and specific answer.
Define	Give the precise meaning or basic qualities of something.
Describe	Provide a representation in words of the basic attributes or characteristics of something.
Explain	Give a detailed account, by offering reasons or adding details, to make something plain.
Discuss	Offer a considered review which may include explanations, illustrations, arguments, factors, and evidence.

Question posted on APHG EDG (March 2011, from Russell Cieslica)

I've struggled with this for some time now; the amount of "discussion" or "explanation" required to attain FRQ points.

What is expected for credit?

Response posted on APHG EDG (from Chris Hall)

Regarding the difference between identify, describe, explain, and discuss - common verbs used in the APHG course questions - I would say this:

Identify simply means to give a single, concrete response, possibly just a word or phrase (but as part of a complete sentence, of course). **Describe** means to point out characteristics of which are germane to something. This may take a couple of sentences to be done well. **Explain** would mean to give the reader a clear understanding of a concept by providing some details, a bit more complex than simply describing. To **discuss** requires that a student describe aspects of a concept, explain them as needed, and possibly even give examples.

I believe that the terms could be thought of in this way - more or less in a progression from basic to more complex. Though, having read hundreds of student responses, I think that it is not at all easy for some students to "identify" important causes, etc. geographically. They tend to launch right into something we might refer to as "talking about."