Summer Reading: The Prince and Utopia

These books are deceptive. Just because they are thin, does not mean that they will be easy to read. They are written in a style and manner difficult for many students to engage in and understand. Here is some advice:

Go with the flow-it will be hard to read at first, but don't get frustrated or give up. It will take time to get accustomed to the style, so keep reading even if you don't fully understand the content.

Find a strategy that works for you-but do it all at once. Because the material is hard to navigate, it is best to read it all over the course of a few days when you can truly devote your attention to the text. Stringing it out over the summer will prevent you from grasping the "flow" of the book; so read each book right away to get it over with, or right at the end of the summer when it will be fresh in your mind.

Take Notes- Make a chart of main characters. Keep track of commentary the authors make that fits with the 7 key values of The Renaissance we will be studying this year:

Individualism- uniqueness, pride, especially in the individual
Rationalism- solving problems with reason, logic
Secularism- emphasis on the worldly or material; of this earth; not religious or spiritual
Classicism- interest in the art, culture, politics of ancient Greece and Rome
Skepticism- doubting, questioning, challenging; "proof" has a greater value than "faith"
Naturalism- natural world as a model; representationalism; art based on observation
Humanism- humans are viewed as the center of the world, important, capable, as a measure of value and a method of study.

Use outside resources- again, these texts are difficult. Feel free to get help understanding the material on-line to help you gain perspective and clarify things. But don't rely on these accounts alone. You MUST read the text alongside any outside resources you use, the AP Test will expect you to be comfortable reading texts such as these and you will likely have questions that deal with material AT LEAST as difficult as these texts are to understand.

Part 1: The Prince, Niccolo Machiavelli

The Prince, written by Niccolo Machiavelli, is one of the most influential works on political power in Western Civilization. The Prince is not an obscure work, so it should be easy to find. You can probably find it new or used at a local bookstore, online via Amazon, Barnes & Noble, etc. Full-text versions of the book may be available on-line as well. (There may be additional essays included in the copy you find, but you won't need them for this assignment.)

Before you read The Prince, you will need to familiarize yourself with Niccolo Machiavelli and his world. Listed below is one link you can use to find information about Machiavelli:

http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/h1302/philosophers/machiavelli.html

Once you have studied the historical context in which The Prince was written, you should read The Prince, paying close attention to themes present throughout the text. Answer/respond to the following questions/prompts in as much detail as possible, using complete sentences, citing evidence from the text when possible.
Questions/Prompts:

1. Describe Machiavelli's life and political climate in Italy while this book was being written.
2. Identify and discuss three major themes in The Prince. (Hint: look at chapter titles).
3. What were the five "errors" committed by Louis XII of France described by Machiavelli in Chapters 3 and 4? How did the ancient Romans and Alexander the Great avoid some of these mistakes?
4. Explain why Machiavelli, in Chapter 5, insists so much on destruction.
5. In Chapters 6 and 7, which vices are considered useful and advisable? Why does Machiavelli recommend them?
6. Describe Francisco Sforza and Cesare Borgia, as they are discussed in Chapter 7. Why does Machiavelli dedicate almost the entirety of the chapter to Cesare Borgia?
7. Describe the role of armies according to Machiavelli in chapters 12-14. Pay specific attention to why they must be strong, different types of troops-and their value, and the military duty of the prince.
8. What does Machiavelli say in regards to a prince being either feared or loved? Which, in Machiavelli’s opinion, is more important? Is it possible for a ruler to be both? Explain.
9. In regards to the concept of a ruler being feared and loved, explain Machiavelli’s discussion of the Carthaginian General Hannibal of the Roman General Scipio Africanus.
10. What is the significance of the Myth of Chiron in Chapter 18? What are the qualities symbolized by the fox and the lion?
11. What is the course a prince should follow in choosing his advisors? What is the best method in recognizing a good minister?
12. Discuss Machiavelli's views on religion.
13. As you perceive it, describe what a state might be like under a Machiavellian ruler.

Part 2 Summer Reading: Utopia, Sir Thomas More

Sir Thomas More attempts to envision and create an ideal society in his influential work, Utopia. More’s Utopia expresses many of the core values of The Renaissance, a period of time characterized by commercial expansion, rediscovery of classical learning, an emphasis on the importance of the material world, and rapid flourishing in the pursuit of excellence in arts and humanities.

Before you begin the 2nd part of your summer assignment, you should familiarize yourself with Sir Thomas More and his world. Listed below is one link you can use to find information about More and The Renaissance.

http://www.luminariaum.org/relit/morebio.htm

Once you have become familiar with More, you need to read Sir Thomas More’s Utopia. Again, this is a relatively well-known work, so you should be able to find new and used copies easily at a local bookstore or various online venues, you may even be able to find the complete work available online for free. As you read, pay close attention to themes present throughout the text. When you have finished reading the text, answer/respond to the questions/prompts below.

Questions/Prompts
1. Describe the geography of Utopia. Describe the role geography plays in the way Utopian society developed.
2. Describe the economy of Utopia.
3. Define the following terms: capitalism, socialism and communism. Based upon the definitions of these terms, what elements of each are present in Utopia?
4. Describe the role of each of the following elements plays in the success of Utopia:
   a. Cities
   b. Community life
   c. Economy
   d. Education
   e. Artisans
   f. Agriculture
   g. Philosophy
   h. Religion
   i. Law
   j. Foreign relations
   k. Slavery
5. What does Utopia tell us about More’s view of human nature and humanity? Do you agree with his views? Why or why not?
6. Would it be possible to establish a community like Utopia? Why or why not?

***Final Prompt***

In a typed (double spaced, using times new roman, 12 point font), standard 5 paragraph essay: compare and contrast a state under a Machiavellian ruler with a state organized like Utopia.