Tackling the Social Sciences Passage

Strategies for the social sciences passages are similar to those for the history passages.

1. Try and establish the purpose of the passage as soon as possible. This section is going to rely heavily on you being able to find textual evidence, understanding purpose, and analyzing argument. These passages ALWAYS have an underlying purpose or message that drives the entirely passage.
2. Understand that paragraphs are separate paragraphs for a purpose. Each paragraph should have a mini thesis of its own. Annotate wisely—a few words to the side of each paragraph will help you comprehend the passage as well as go back and locate answers.
3. Notice structure. When analyzing the purpose of paragraphs, notice possible explanations for arguments, shifts in ideas, or opposing views.
4. Practice engagement. For many students, the social studies passage is the least engaging. Therefore, students must intentionally try to engage with the passage. However, that is easier said than done. Here are a few methods:
   * Imagine that you are the individual whose ideas are being presented, and that you are actually presenting them to an audience. Are you clearly presenting your ideas? Does the speed of your reading change over the course of the passage to emphasize certain points? Did you read the first and last paragraphs a little slower?
   * Set a goal to write at least a five to six word summary for each paragraph.
   * Once you establish the writer’s purpose, try to evaluate and judge the strength of his evidence and argument to support that purpose.