

TIPS FOR WRITING AN ANALYSIS ESSAY (PAPERS 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6)

YOUR PRIMARY GOAL IN AN ANALYSIS ESSAY:
EXPLAIN the author's purpose and how she achieves it.

WHAT YOU MUST UNDERSTAND TO ACCURATELY ANALYZE A TEXT:

1. SOAPSTone (Speaker, Occasion, Audience, Purpose, Subject, and Tone)
2. Stylistic Strategies
 - a. Literary Tools (details, imagery, figurative language)
 - b. Syntax (structure of words, phrases, sentences, and/or paragraphs)
 - c. Diction (distinctive vocabulary or effective word choice)
 - d. Rhetorical Appeals (ethos, logos, pathos)
3. **WHY** the author chooses these strategies for the particular audience, occasion, and/or purpose...
 - a. THIS IS ANALYSIS! Without this, you are merely summarizing the text.
 - b. Think about these questions:
 - i. HOW do the stylistic strategies help the author achieve his/her purpose?
 - ii. WHY does the author choose these strategies for that particular audience and for that particular occasion?

THE BIG IDEA (YOUR INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH)

1. In a line or two, explain the overall purpose of the writer. THIS IS THE BIG IDEA (or umbrella statement)! This will also help you create a part-to-whole effect.
2. If you cannot think of this right away, skip a couple lines then go back and fill it in along the way or when you complete your essay.
3. DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING:
 - a. Purpose: (Writer's last name)'s purpose is to (what the writer does in the text).
 - b. Audience: He/she adopts a[n] (adjective describing the attitude/feeling conveyed by the writer) tone in order to (verb phrase describing what the writer wants readers to do/think) in his/her (intended audience).
 - c. Two examples of a big idea:
 - i. *Tan's purpose is to convey the idea that, at fourteen, she wasn't able to recognize the love her mother had for her or the sacrifices she made. She adopts a sentimental tone in order to arouse similar feelings and experiences in her adult readers. (This is decent.)*
 - ii. *In a satirical missive to his former owner, Jourdon Anderson exercises his intellectual and rhetorical prowess to mock his once-master and to chide slavery.*

THE ANALYSIS PART (YOUR BODY PARAGRAPHS)

1. This is where you include a detailed explanation of strategies used by the writer.
2. When writing an analysis, it is easier and more organized to work **chronologically** through the text. This means that you start at the beginning of the text and work your way through it by discussing what the writer is saying and, MOST IMPORTANTLY, the effectiveness of the strategies he/she is using at the beginning, middle, and end of the text. Sometimes this means that you will discuss each **paragraph** (one at a time), and sometimes this means that you will divide the text into **sections** and discuss the beginning, middle, and end of the text. Whether you discuss each paragraph or each section depends on the length and organization of the text itself.
3. To help you move chronologically through the text, there are **transition words** you can use. A few of them are listed below:

begins	closes	shifts to	ends with
opens	contrasts	juxtaposes	moves to

4. Every analysis paragraph MUST:

- a. Identify the part of the text you are analyzing by using **transition words** and **strong verbs** to explain what is being said.
- b. Identify the **strongest stylistic strategies** used in that particular section. This includes incorporating **specific text examples** into your own words. Do NOT try to discuss every strategy the writer uses; pick the strongest!
- c. Clearly and specifically **explain how** the stylistic strategies are used to help the writer achieve his purpose and reach his audience.
- d. The above items must be woven together seamlessly into **one sophisticated paragraph** of the body of your analysis essay.
- e. CONSIDER THIS FORMAT and EXAMPLE [from Pres. Reagan's speech after the space shuttle *Challenger* explosion in the 1980s]:
 - i. **The first sentence identifies which section of the text you are discussing and the main idea of that section:** (Writer's last name) (transition word) his/her (type of text) by (strong verb) that (main idea of this section of the text). *Reagan begins his tribute to the Challenger astronauts by acknowledging that the shuttle accident has appropriately postponed his planned State of the Union address and by expressing the depth of his and his wife's personal grief.*
 - ii. **The second sentence conveys the writer's support for the main idea by identifying and providing a specific example for one rhetorical strategy used by the writer.** [This sentence is repeated if you want to discuss more than one rhetorical strategy.] *He appeals to the mournful emotions of the audience by admitting that he and Nancy are "pained to the core," that today is rightfully a "day for mourning and remembering," and that the accident is "truly a national loss."*

- iii. **The third sentence explains how the stylistic strategies you discussed in the previous sentences help the writer achieve his purpose by using an *in order to* statement.** *He joins in this time of mourning in order to unify the nation and humbly admit that “we share this pain with all of the people of our country.”*
- iv. **The fourth sentence identifies the effect of the writer’s use of these rhetorical strategies on the audience.** *This outpouring of emotion from the president conveys a calming tone that reassures the Nation that their grief is both understandable and proper.*
- v. **Put it all together and this is what one paragraph of the body of a rhetorical analysis essay might look like:**

Reagan begins his tribute to the Challenger astronauts by acknowledging that the shuttle accident has appropriately postponed his planned State of the Union address and by expressing the depth of his and his wife’s personal grief. He appeals to the mournful emotions of the audience by admitting that he and Nancy are “pained to the core,” that today is rightfully a “day for mourning and remembering,” and that the accident is “truly a national loss.” He joins in this time of mourning in order to unify the nation and humbly admit that “we share this pain with all of the people of our country.” This outpouring of emotion from the president conveys a calming tone that reassures the Nation that their grief is both understandable and proper.

- vi. You are going to need SEVERAL more of body paragraphs. Four or five more of these would be ideal. You will follow this format in EACH body paragraph.

BIG IDEA REVISITED/CONNECTING IT ALL (YOUR CONCLUDING PARAGRAPH)

- 1. The conclusion is probably the easiest part. Be brief. In one-two sentences, simply remind your reader of the things you said in the introduction. Reword it or, better yet, share your big idea in a way that packs a punch (or as we like to say, “not a fart, but a soft, sweet kiss”).
 - a. *Though Jourdon is quite furtive with his word choice, his message speaks volumes. What’s even more impressive is that instead of hiding behind a rifle, he wields a mere pen and actually hits his mark.*

TIPS FOR ANALYZING DICTION

- 1. **Diction** is simply the **words** the writer chooses to convey a particular meaning.
- 2. When analyzing diction, look for **specific words** or short phrases that seem stronger than the others (ex. Bragg’s use of *slingshot* instead of *travel*). Diction is NEVER the entire sentence!
- 3. Look for a **pattern** (or similarity) in the words the writer chooses (ex. Do the words imply sadness, happiness, etc.?). This pattern helps to create a particular kind of diction. This pattern can also include **repetition** of the same words or phrases. Repeating the same word or phrase helps the reader emphasize a point, feeling, etc. **FOCUS ON THE EFFECT OF THIS IF YOU SEE IT IN THE PASSAGE!**

4. Effective diction is shaped by words that are clear, concrete, and exact. Effective writers avoid words like *pretty*, *nice*, and *bad* because they are not specific enough. Instead, they rely on words that invoke a specific effect in order to bring the reader into the event being described.
 - a. **Examples:** A coat isn't torn; it is *tattered*. The US Army does not want revenge; it is *thirsting* for revenge. A door does not *shut*; it *thuds*.

5. Diction depends on **subject, purpose, occasion, and audience**.
 - a. The **subject** often determines how specific or sophisticated the diction needs to be. For example, if an author's purpose is to deride or ridicule a person or event, the reader is likely to see strong words that reveal that feeling of displeasure or disgust.
 - b. The writer's **purpose** – whether to persuade, entertain, inform – partly determines diction. He chooses words chosen to impart a particular effect on the reader, which reflect the writer's purpose. For example, if an author's purpose is to inform, the reader should expect straightforward diction. On the other hand, if the author's purpose is to entertain, the readers will likely encounter words used in ironic, playful, or unexpected ways.
 - c. Diction also depends on **occasion**. Formal diction is reserved for scholarly writing and serious texts. Informal diction is often used in narrative essays and newspaper editorials. Colloquial diction and slang are typically used to capture the language of a particular time frame or culture.
 - d. Finally, the type of diction a writer uses depends on the **audience** (readers, listeners). An author who uses sophisticated diction knows he is writing for an intelligent audience. An author who uses more informal diction knows he is writing for an audience of varied intelligence.

6. When you are **writing an essay** in which you are analyzing the diction of the writer, avoid writing, "The writer used diction..." – since this is obvious (diction IS the words on the page; without them, the page would be blank).

7. Below are just a few words that you may use to **describe the type of diction** used by the writer. (You may want to add words to this list or circle the ones you use frequently.)

abstract	caustic	curt	everyday	idiomatic
learned	offensive	poetic	sentimental	trite
academic	concrete	denotative	exact	inflammatory
loaded	ordinary	political	shocking	unifying
ambiguous	colloquial	detached	fanciful	inflated
lyrical	ornate	polysyllabic	sincere	uppity
biting	colorful	divisive	flowery	informal
melodious	passionate	precise	slang	vague
bombastic	common	emotional	figurative	insincere
monosyllabic	patriotic	pretentious	subdued	vulgar
brusque	connotative	esoteric	folksy	jargon
nostalgic	pedantic	provincial	symbolic	literal
cacophonous	cultured	euphemistic	formal	
obscene	picturesque	romantic	tame	
casual	crisp	euphonious	grandiose	
obscure	plain	scholarly	technical	

TIPS FOR ANALYZING TONE

1. **Tone** is the writer's attitude or feeling about the subject of his text.
2. It is a special kind of stylistic strategy because **tone is created by the writer's use of all of the other s stylistic strategies**: Diction & Tropes; Syntax & Schemes; Details & Lack of Details
3. When discussing an author's tone, you must be careful to **choose the right word**. Below is a small list of tone words (there are hundreds). Use them in your essays to describe the tone of the piece... but **only if you are sure** you know the word's meaning. When writing your essay, avoid using: "The writer uses tone," since ALL writers use a tone of some kind. Instead, say: "The writer creates a _____ tone..."

angry	confused	sentimental	cloying	bitter
sad	hollow	fanciful	dramatic	audacious
sharp	childish	complimentary	provocative	benevolent
cold	joyful	condescending	didactic	tired
upset	peaceful	sympathetic	proud	frivolous
urgent	allusive	contemptuous	giddy	irreverent
silly	mocking	apologetic	pitiful	seductive
joking	vexed	humorous	restrained	sweet
boring	vibrant	horrific	somber	objective
poignant	sarcastic	sarcastic	candid	nostalgic
afraid	patriotic	zealous	dreamy	shocking
detached	motivational	serious	mocking	satiric
happy	tactful	respectful	humorous	

THE WHOLE ALIVE WORD IDEA STILL APPLIES! NO DEAD WORDS!

1. Strong vs. Weak Verbs: To help you move away from summary and toward **ANALYSIS**, you need to begin to incorporate strong verbs into your writing when commenting on a writer's style.

We've included a list of verbs that are considered weak because they imply SUMMARY; they are WEAK VERBS! We've also included a list of verbs that are considered strong because they imply ANALYSIS. Strive to use the stronger verbs in your essays to help push yourself away from summary and toward analysis: "The writer emphasizes..." NOT "The writer says..."

WEAK VERBS (Used for Summarizing, which we should not be doing AT ALL!)

says	goes on to say	this quote shows	states
relates	tells	explains	show

STRONG VERBS (Used for Analyzing)

implies	flatters	establishes	admonishes	lists
suggests	denigrates	ridicules	narrates	describes
compares	lionizes	minimizes	processes	questions
emphasizes	vilifies	qualifies	analyzes	contrasts
defines	praises	dismisses	enumerates	argues
trivializes	demonizes	supports	expounds	warns

OTHER POWERFUL AND MEANINGFUL VERBS TO USE IN YOUR ANALYSES
(ALTERNATIVES TO USE, SHOW, and STATE)

acknowledge	discuss	implement	omit	repair
address	dismiss	implicate	optimize	report
analyze	distinguish	imply	organize	represent
apply	duplicate	improve	outline	resolve
argue	elaborate	include	overstate	retrieve
assert	emphasize	incorporate	parallel	reveal
augment	employ	indicate	persist	revise
broaden	enable	induce	point out	separate
calculate	engage	initiate	possess	shape
capitalize	enhance	inquire	predict	signify
characterize	establish	instigate	present	simulate
claim	evaluate	integrate	probe	solve
clarify	exacerbate	interpret	produce	specify
compare	examine	intervene	promote	structure
complicate	exclude	invert	propose	suggest
confine	exhibit	isolate	prove	summarize
connect	expand	justify	provide	support
consider	explain	juxtapose	qualify	suspend
construct	exploit	locate	quantify	sustain
contradict	express	loosen	question	tailor
correct	extend	maintain	realize	terminate
create	facilitate	manifest	recommend	testify
convince	feature	manipulate	reconstruct	theorize
critique	forecast	measure	redefine	translate
declare	formulate	merge	reduce	undermine
deduce	fracture	minimize	refer	understand
defend	generalize	modify	reference	unify
demonstrate	group	monitor	refine	utilize
deny	guide	necessitate	reflect	validate
describe	hamper	negate	refute	vary
determine	hypothesize	nullify	regard	view
differentiate	identify	obscure	reject	vindicate
disagree	illuminate	observe	relate	yield
discard	illustrate	obtain	rely	
discover	impair	offer	remove	

TIPS FOR ANALYZING SYNTAX (**Syntax** refers to the way words are arranged within sentences.)

Schemes: One aspect of syntax is **schemes**. Most English sentences follow a subject-verb-object pattern (ex. I went to the store.) Deviating from this pattern can serve to add emphasis to the author's ideas. [See the **scheme** section of your Style handout for different ways authors can change the pattern of their sentences.]

Sentence Length: Another aspect of syntax is **sentence length**. Good writers will use a variety for emphasis.

Short sentences – straightforward

Long sentences – descriptive, detailed

Sentence Type: A third aspect of syntax is sentence type. Again, good writers use a variety.

Simple: subject-verb (**I went** to the store.)

Compound: Two independent clauses joined by a conjunction (I went to the store, **and** I bought candy.)

Complex: Independent clause and dependent clause (**While** I drove to the store, I saw my friend.)

Compound-complex: Two independent clauses and one or more dependent clauses (While I drove to the store, I saw my friend, **and** she gave me money for candy.)

Declarative: statement (I went to the store.)

Exclamatory: strong feeling (What a wonderful candy store!)

Interrogative: question (Is this a store?)

Imperative: command (Go to the store.)

Punctuation: A final aspect of syntax is punctuation. Yes, good writers use a variety here too.

Semicolon(;) gives equal weight to two or more independent clauses in a sentence. Writers use this to reinforce parallel ideas and show how both ideas are equally important

Colon(:) directs the reader's attention to the words that follow. Writers use this to show the reader that the information after the colon is important.

Dash (-) marks a sudden change in thought or tone or sets off a brief summary