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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>begins</th>
<th>closes</th>
<th>shifts to</th>
<th>ends with</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>opens</td>
<td>contrasts</td>
<td>juxtaposes</td>
<td>moves to</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 | folksy | literal |
   | cacophonous | cultured | euphemistic | grandiose | |
   | obscene | picturesque | formal | | |
   | casual | crisp | romantic | tame | |
   | obscure | plain | euphonious | 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 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...”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Angry</th>
<th>Confused</th>
<th>Sentimental</th>
<th>Cloying</th>
<th>Bitter</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sad</td>
<td>Hollow</td>
<td>Fanciful</td>
<td>Dramatic</td>
<td>Audacious</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sharp</td>
<td>Childish</td>
<td>Complimentary</td>
<td>Provocative</td>
<td>Benevolent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cold</td>
<td>Joyful</td>
<td>Condescending</td>
<td>Didactic</td>
<td>Tired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upset</td>
<td>Peaceful</td>
<td>Sympathetic</td>
<td>Proud</td>
<td>Frivolous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urgent</td>
<td>Allusive</td>
<td>Contemptuous</td>
<td>Giddy</td>
<td>Irreverent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silly</td>
<td>Mocking</td>
<td>Apologetic</td>
<td>Pitiful</td>
<td>Seductive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joking</td>
<td>Vexed</td>
<td>Humorous</td>
<td>Restrained</td>
<td>Sweet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boring</td>
<td>Vibrant</td>
<td>Horrific</td>
<td>Somber</td>
<td>Objective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poignant</td>
<td>Sarcastic</td>
<td>Sarcastic</td>
<td>Candid</td>
<td>Nostalgic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afraid</td>
<td>Patriotic</td>
<td>Zealous</td>
<td>Dreamy</td>
<td>Shocking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detached</td>
<td>Motivational</td>
<td>Serious</td>
<td>Mocking</td>
<td>Satiric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happy</td>
<td>Tacitful</td>
<td>Respectful</td>
<td>Humorous</td>
<td></td>
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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!)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>says</th>
<th>goes on to say</th>
<th>this quote shows</th>
<th>states</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>relates</td>
<td>tells</td>
<td>explains</td>
<td>show</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

   **STRONG VERBS (Used for Analyzing)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>implies</th>
<th>flatters</th>
<th>establishes</th>
<th>admonishes</th>
<th>lists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>suggests</td>
<td>denigrates</td>
<td>ridicules</td>
<td>narrates</td>
<td>describes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>compares</td>
<td>lionizes</td>
<td>minimizes</td>
<td>processes</td>
<td>questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>emphasizes</td>
<td>vilifies</td>
<td>qualifies</td>
<td>analyzes</td>
<td>contrasts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>defines</td>
<td>praises</td>
<td>dismisses</td>
<td>enumerates</td>
<td>argues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trivializes</td>
<td>demonizes</td>
<td>supports</td>
<td>expounds</td>
<td>warns</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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
analyze  distinguish  imply  organize
apply  duplicate  improve  outline
argue  elaborate  include  overstate
assert  emphasize  incorporate  parallel
augment  employ  indicate  persist
broaden  enable  induce  point out
calculate  engage  initiate  possess
capitalize  enhance  inquire  predict
characterize  establish  instigate  present
claim  evaluate  integrate  probe
clarify  exacerbate  interpret  produce
compare  examine  intervene  promote
complicate  exclude  invert  propose
confine  exhibit  isolate  prove
connect  expand  justify  provide
consider  explain  juxtapose  qualify
construct  exploit  locate  quantify
contradict  express  loosen  question
contracept  extend  maintain  realize
create  facilitate  manifest  recommend
convince  feature  manipulate  reconstruct
critique  forecast  measure  redefine
declare  formulate  merge  reduce
deduce  fracture  minimize  refer
defend  generalize  modify  reference
defend  group  monitor  refine
demonstrate  guide  necessitate  reflect
deny  hamper  negate  refute
describe  hypothesize  nullify  regard
determine  identify  obscure  reject
differentiate  illuminate  obvserve  relate
disagree  impair  offer  rely
discard  illustrate  obtain  remove
discover
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 emphasize 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