HOW TO WRITE: AP *Rhetorical Analysis* Paragraphs and Essays

Things you must know in order to accurately analyze a text:

1. SOAPS
2. Rhetorical Strategies
   a. Appeals (ethos, logos, pathos)
   b. Style (diction, syntax, details, imagery, tone, etc.)
3. Why did the author choose these strategies for the particular audience, occasion, and/or purpose?
   a. This is the analysis part! Without this, you are merely summarizing the text.
   b. Think about these questions:
      i. HOW do the rhetorical strategies help the author achieve his/her purpose?
      ii. WHY does the author chose those strategies for that particular audience and for that particular occasion?

Once you’ve identified the information above, it’s time to begin putting your thoughts and ideas into a format that proves you have accurately analyzed the text. There are many ways to write an effective rhetorical analysis essay. Below is one way that is a good, simple format to help you get started. You may find as you become more comfortable with analysis that you want to deviate from this format. That’s fine as long as you are still focusing on numbers 1-3 from above.

**Introduction**
The introductory paragraph to an analysis essay is usually brief. However, it must contain some essential information.

**Put SOAPS in your introduction and follow this format:**

**FORMAT:**
1. Speaker, Occasion, and Subject
   (*Writer’s credentials*), (*writer’s first and last name*), in his/her (*type of text*), (*title of text*), (*strong verb – see list at end of this handout*) (*writer’s subject*).

   Well-known essayist and writer, Joan Didion, in her essay, The Santa Ana, describes the dramatic mood altering effects of the Santa Ana winds on human behavior.

2. Purpose
   (*Writer’s last name*)’s purpose is to (*what the writer does in the text*).

   Didion’s purpose is to impress upon readers the idea that the winds themselves change the way people act and react.

3. Audience
   He/she adopts [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*).

   She creates a dramatic tone in order to convey to her readers the idea that the winds are sinister and their effects inescapable.

**EXAMPLE:**
Novelist, Amy Tan, in her narrative essay, “Fish Cheeks,” recounts an embarrassing Christmas Eve dinner when she was 14 years old. 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 appeal to similar feelings and experiences in her adult readers.
**Body**
This is the analysis part! This is where you include a detailed explanation of strategies used by the writer.

When writing an analysis, it is crucial that you 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 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.

To help you move chronologically through the text, there are **transition words** you can use. A few of them are listed below:

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<th>Begins</th>
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<th>contrasts</th>
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<tr>
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<td>juxtaposes</td>
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Every analysis paragraph MUST:
- Identify the part of the text you are analyzing by using **transition words** and **strong verbs** to explain what is being said.
- Identify the **strongest rhetorical strategies** used in that particular section. This includes incorporating **specific text examples** (exact words from the text – see last page of this handout for proper format) into your own words. Do NOT try to discuss every strategy the writer uses; pick the strongest!
- Clearly and specifically **explain how** the rhetorical strategies are used to help the writer achieve his purpose and reach his audience.
- The above items must be woven together seamlessly into **one sophisticated paragraph** of the body of your analysis essay. A sample format is below:

**FORMAT and EXAMPLE** [from Pres. Reagan’s speech after the space shuttle *Challenger* explosion in the 1980s]:

1. 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.

2. 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” (3), that today is rightfully a “day for mourning and remembering” (2-3), and that the accident is “truly a national loss” (4).

3. The third sentence explains how the rhetorical 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” (4).

4. 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.

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” (3), that today is rightfully a “day for mourning and remembering” (2-3), and that the accident is “truly a national loss” (4). 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” (4). This outpouring of emotion from the president conveys a calming tone that reassures the Nation that their grief is both understandable and proper.

Conclusion
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.
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 discussing the writer’s rhetorical choices. Below is a list of verbs that are considered weak because they imply summary and 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 flatters…” NOT “The writer says…”

WEAK VERBS (Summary)
says relates goes on to say tells this quote shows
explains states shows

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

Powerful and meaningful verbs to use in your analyses: Alternatives to “show”

Acknowledge Discuss Implement Optimize Represent
Address Dismiss Implicate Organize Resolve
Analyze Distinguish Imply Outline Retrieve
Apply Duplicate Improve Overstate Reveal
Argue Elaborate Include Persist Revise
Assert Emphasize Incorporate Point out Separate
Augment Employ Indicate Possess Shape
Broaden Enable Induce Predict Signify
Calculate Engage Initiate Present Solve
Capitalize Enhance Inquire Prove Simulate
Characterize Establish Instigate Produce Specify
Claim Evaluate Integrate Promote Structure
Clarify Exacerbate Interpret Propose Suggest
Compare Examine Intervene Prove Summarize
Complicate Exclude Invert Provide Support
Confine Exhibit Isolate Qualify Suspend
Connect Expand Justify Quantify Sustain
Consider Explain Locate Question Tailor
Construct Exploit Loosen Realize Terminate
Contradict Express Maintain Recommend Testify
Correct Extend Manifest Reconstruct Theorize
Create Facilitate Manipulate Redefine Translate
Convince Feature Measure Reduce Undermine
Critique Forecast Merge Refer Understand
Declare Formulate Minimize Reference Unify
Deduce Fracture Modify Refine Utilize
Defend Generalize Monitor Reflect Validate
Demonstrate Group Necessitate Refute Vary
Deny Guide Negate Regard View
Describe Hamper Nullify Reject Vindicate
Determine Hypothesize Obscure Relate Yield
Differentiate Identify Observe Rely
Disagree Illuminate Obtain Remove
Discard Illustrate Offer Repair
Discover Impair Omit Report

D:\My Documents\Orlando Teacher docs\AP LANG and COMP\2 Close Reading The Art and Craft of Analysis
Analyzing DICTION

**Diction** is simply the **words** the writer chooses to convey a particular meaning.

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!

Also, 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.

Effective diction is shaped by words that are clear, concrete, and exact. Good 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.

**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*.

Diction depends on **subject, purpose, occasion, and audience**.

The **subject** often determines how specific or sophisticated the diction needs to be. For example, articles on computers are filled with a specialized language: *e-mail, e-shopping, web, interface*. Many topics generated special vocabularies to convey meaning.

The writer’s **purpose** – whether to persuade, entertain, inform – partly determines diction. Words chosen to impart a particular effect on the reader 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.

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.

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.

When you are **writing an essay** in which you are analyzing the diction of the writer:

Avoid saying: “The writer used diction...” – since this is obvious (diction IS the words on the page; without them, the page would be blank 😞).

Instead, say: “The writer creates a ______________ diction through the use of...” OR “The language of the text is __________________.”
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.

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**OTHERS:**
- abstract diction
- concrete diction
- elevated/formal
- low/informal
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.

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

- **Short sentences** – imply straightforward
- **Long sentences** – imply 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**: 2 independent clauses joined by a conjunction (I went to the store, and I bought candy.)
- **Complex**: independent clause and dependent clause (While traveling to the store, I saw my friend.)
- **Compound-complex**: 2 independent clauses and one or more dependent clauses (While traveling 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

SYNTAX WORDS

- balanced sentence
- complex sentence
- compound sentence
- compound-complex sentence
- declarative
- exclamatory
- imperative
- interrogative
- interruption
- inversion
- juxtaposition
- loose/cumulative sentence
- parallel structure
- periodic sentence
- repetition
- rhetorical question
- simple sentence
Analyzing TONE

Tone is the writer’s attitude or feeling about the subject of his text.

It is a special kind of rhetorical strategy because **tone is created by the writer’s use of all of the other rhetorical strategies.**
- Diction & Tropes
- Syntax & Schemes
- Details & Lack of Details

When discussing an author’s tone, you must be careful to **choose the right word.** Below is a list of tone words. Use them in your essays to describe the tone of the piece but only if you are sure you know the word’s meaning (not sure – look it up in a dictionary).

When **writing your essay**, avoid saying: “The writer uses tone” since ALL writers use a tone of some kind. Instead, say: “The writer creates a __________ tone…”

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impulsive  incisive  incandescent  indolent  indifferent  indignant  indulgent  inflammatory  informal  informative  insightful  insisting  insolent  instructive  instructive  insubstantial  intellectual  interesting  inviting  irate  ironic  irrelevant  irrelevant  irrational  irritable  jarry  jovial  joyful  judgmental  labored  lackadaisical  lackluster  laudatory  learned  light  light-hearted  lofty  loving  lucid  lush  lyrical  matter of fact  maudlin  meditative  melancholic  melancholy  melodramatic  memorable  mock-heroic  mocking  mock-serious  moralizing  morbid  mordant  mournful  narrow  nostalgic  objective  obvious  offbeat  offensive  opinionated  optimistic  ordinary  ostentatious  outraged  outrageous  overdone  paradoxic  paradoxical  passionate  patronizing  peaceful  pedantic  pedestrian  pejorative  pensive  persuasive  pessimistic  pessimistic  piquant  pitiful  plaintive  plaintive  playful  poetic  pompous  preachy  predictable  pretentious  profound  prosaic  proud  provocative  provocative  purple  pulsed  querulous  questioning  rambling  reader-friendly  realistic  reflective  refreshing  reflective  regrettful  reminiscent  repetitious  repressed  reproachful  resigned  resigned  respectful  restrained  revealing  reverent  rhapsodic  sad  sanctimonious  sarcastic  sardonic  satirical  satisfied  scornful  seductive  self-indulgent  sensuous  sentimental  sentimental  serene  serious  severe  shallow  sharp  shocked  silly  simple  simplistic  sincere  sober  solemn  somber  sophomoric  spicy  spiteful  stiff  stringent  striking  strong  substantive  subtle  superficial  surd  surprising  suspicious  sweet  sweet  sympathetic  talky  taunting  thorough  thoughtful  thought-provoking  threatening  tired  tiresome  tolerant  trite  troubled  unconvincing  underdone  uneven  unsympathetic  upset  urbane  urgent  vexed  vibrant  wary  whimsical  wise  wistful  witty  wordy  wry  zealous

MOOD WORDS: Sometimes the TONE will set a MOOD.
bleak, dark, delirious, dismal, eerie, elegiac, haunting, lonely, ominous, peaceful, playful, quizzical, reproachful, satiric, serene, soothing, suspenseful, tense, threatening, uplifting, whimsical

CHARACTER WORDS: Sometimes you need to describe the SPEAKER.
absorbed, aggressive, aloof, ambitious, amorous, anxious, apathetic, argumentative, arrogant, bitter, bored, carefree, careless, cautious, churlish, compassionate, conceited, conniving, curious, deceitful, demure, detached, devious, devoted, dishonest, easygoing, envious, exacting, frantic, freethinkers, gregarious, intelligent, irritable, loquacious, manipulative, mendacious, naive, nervous, noble, outgoing, patient, picky, scrupulous, self-involved, sincere, sloppy, spontaneous, suspicious, talkative, testy, uninvolved, unpredictable, vindictive, welcoming, wise, worried