Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 17-18 edition

**Conquering the AP Language Analysis Essay[[1]](#footnote-1)**

Before we get down to the more intricate elements of analysis, here are a few notes you need to be sure you know thoroughly[[2]](#footnote-2):

1. Crafting a solid introduction using rhetorical precis and an "in order to" phrase
2. Rhetorical Strategies
   1. Appeals (ethos, pathos, logos)
   2. Style (diction, syntax, imagery, tone, parallelism, etc.)
3. Why did the author choose these strategies for the particular audience and/or purpose?
   1. How do the rhetorical strategies you have located help the speaker achieve his/her purpose?
   2. Why would the author choose those particular strategies/styles for that specific audience/purpose?

*By answering both these questions, you move into the "realm of analysis" and away from summary. Remember: your goal is not to wow your audience with your ability to recognize a device or strategy, it is to examine why and how these strategies are particularly poignant in achieving the author's purpose.*

--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------**Introductory Paragraph**

A good intro should be composed of these essential elements:

1. Define the speaker's purpose
2. Clarify the audience and tone
3. Highlight some of the rhetorical devices you intend to showcase

Or, you could employ the rhetorical precis model (an excellent way to begin):

Sentence #1: Name of author, (optional: a phrase describing the author), the genre and title of the work, a rhetorically accurate verb (such as "assert," "argue," "suggest," "imply," "claim,"), and a THAT clause containing the major assertion (thesis statement) of the work

Sentence #2: An explanation of how the author develops and/or supports the thesis usually in chronological order.

Sentence #3: A statement of the author’s apparent purpose, followed by an "in order" phrase

Sentence #4: A description of the intended audience and/or the relationship the author establishes with the audience

Example:

Toni Morrison, in her essay "Disturbing Nurses and the Kindness of Sharks," **implies** that racism in the United States has affected the craft and process of American novelists. Morrison supports her implication by **describing** how Ernest Hemingway writes about black characters in his novels and short stories. Her **purpose** is to make her readers aware of the cruel reality of racism underlying some of the greatest works of American literature **in order to** help them examine the far-reaching effects racism has not only on those discriminated against but also on those who discriminate. She establishes a formal and **highly analytical tone** with her audience of racially mixed (but probably mainly white), **theoretically sophisticated readers and critical interpreters** of American literature.

***When you sit down to write the intro and you can't remember all the points of a good precis paragraph--just remember: purpose, audience, tone, and "in order to." [This way you hit all the key points!]***

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**Body Paragraphs**

Now we get to the analysis! Remember:

1. When writing analysis, you should move chronologically through a text--in this way, it is easier for you to stay organized, and for your reader to remain engaged.
2. Think about how the text is naturally divided and use this to begin. For example, is there an introduction where the speaker's intent is clearly outlined? Do you see patterns of organization where you can build your analysis? Does the speaker shift between anecdotes and more direct appeals? As you read the text initially, draw line breaks where ideas and tonal shifts occur. If the text appears in two columns (as they often do on the paper), draw a line down the middle of the text and divide it in half.
3. Always inspect for similarities. So many of the rhetorical devices we study are based on repetition (parallelism, repetition, anaphora, syntax). If you notice a pattern in the language, you need to discuss it!
4. Only focus on the important devices a writer uses to achieve their purpose. You don't need to invite all your friends to the party, just your closest. An essay that carefully examines tone, syntax, imagery, and parallelism is often much stronger than an essay that forces an examination of metonymy or syllogism. Stick with what you know and where you are comfortable.

Devices you should look for in every analysis prompt:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| TONE | SYNTAX | CHARACTERIZATION | FORMAT |
| ANECDOTES | **RHETORICAL QUESTIONS** | **ETHOS, PATHOS, LOGOS** | **PARALLELISM** |

Remember: if you know these terms and can analyze the author's purpose in employing them, you'll have a great essay!

**Here is an example of one way you could structure an analysis paragraph:**

[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.

1. 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).

1. 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).

1. 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.

***\*Try not to over think the task! Look at the example above--it is not flooded with rhetorical devices--but it is a solid paragraph of analysis highlighting all the important techniques.***

**Other Notes**

To get away from summary and closer to analysis, incorporate strong verbs into your writing. Weak verbs = <6. Strong verbs= >6.

**Weak summarizing verbs**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| says | explains | tells | explains |
| states | shows | uses | this quote shows |

**Strong analysis verbs**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| implies | trivializes | flatters | qualifies | processes | describes |
| suggests | dismisses | questions | compares | vilifies | praises |
| supports | enumerates | contrasts | emphasizes | demonizes | establishes |
| argues | defines | ridicules | minimizes | narrates | lists |
| warns | validates | justify | illuminates | capitalize | defend |

**You should always analyze tone:**

When writing an essay, avoid saying: "The writer uses tone" since ALL writers use a tone of some kind. Instead, say: "The writer creates a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ tone in order to..." (here is where your vocabulary comes in handy again).

If you are stumped for a proper tone, think about emotion. Is the speaker angry, happy, sad, etc.? Then substitute a more advanced, appropriate word for a simple emotion. For example, if President Obama is angry and sad in his address to the nation following the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School, omit angry and sad in favor of caustic, accusatory, embittered, compassionate, resolute, etc. You need to sound academic. Don't simplify tone.

Consider these tone words:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| abrupt | disbelieving | detached | derisive | haunting |
| flippant | cynical | optimistic | candid | condemning |

1. This handout has been curated by Mr. Neden; some of the work is his, with portions adapted from other sources. Where appropriate, please visit the websites hyperlinked for more information and guidance. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. http://www.franklin.kyschools.us/Downloads/How%20to%20write%20a%20rhetorical%20analysis%20essay.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-2)