

Rhetorical and Literary Analysis Devices and Strategies

STYLE – generally style is the author’s voice/imprint – that which makes his writing unique. It can be urbane, formal, stiff, light, didactic, philosophical, whimsical, pompous etc. Style is defined by considering diction, syntax, tone, point of view, structure, imagery, literary devices, and selection of detail. In analyzing prose, you must identify and comment on the purpose and effectiveness of the author’s choices. You must always include examples from the selection to illustrate (words, phrases, line #'s etc.).

DICTION – author’s word choice intended to convey a certain effect

Abstract	Detached	Hyperbolic	Old-fashioned	Scientific
Alliterative	Dialect	Idiomatic	Onomatopoeic	Sensuous
Archaic	Emotional	Informal	Ordinary	Simple
Artificial	Esoteric	Inspid	Pedantic	Slang
Assonance	Euphemistic	Ironic	Picturesque	Soft
Bombastic	Euphonious	Jargon	Philosophical	Stiff
Cacophonous	Evocative	Learned	Plain	Symbolic
Cliché	Exact	Light	Poetic	Trite
Colloquial	Feminine	Literal	Polysyllabic	Urbane
Concrete	Figurative	Masculine	Pompous	Vulgar
Connotative	Formal	Monosyllabic	Precise	Whimsical
Crisp	Grotesque	Moralistic	Pretentious	
Cultured	Harsh	Obscure	Provincial	
Denotative	Homespun	Obtuse	Scholarly	

STRUCTURE: (organization) (rhetorical structure)

- **Modes:** argumentation, cause/effect, classification, compare/contrast, definition, exposition, narration, process analysis
- **Genre:** prose, short story, poetry, novel, drama, sermon, editorial, satire, parody, journal, letter, legal brief, speech, etc.
- **Arrangement:** chronological, flashbacks, full-circle, order of importance, spatial, informal, formal, etc.
(Examine the arrangement of ideas in a paragraph to see if there is evidence of any pattern or structure.)

TONE: (voice, attitude) the writer’s or speaker’s attitude toward the subject and audience

Afraid	Cold	Fanciful	Nostalgic	Sharp
Allusive	Complimentary	Frivolous	Objective	Shocking
Angry	Condescending	Giddy	Peaceful	Silly
Apologetic	Confused	Happy	Pitiful	Somber
Audacious	Contemptuous	Hollow	Poignant	Sweet
Awed	Cynical	Horrific	Proud	Sympathetic
Benevolent	Detached	Humorous	Provocative	Tired
Bitter	Didactic	Irreverent	Restrained	Upset
Black humor	Distant	Joking	Sad	Urgent
Boring	Dramatic	Joyful	Sarcastic	Vexed
Candid	Dreamy	Mock serious	Seductive	Vibrant
Childish	Exhortative	Mocking	Sentimental	Zealous

SYNTAX: sentence structure

Sentence Lengths

- **Telegraphic** – shorter than 5 words
- **Short-** approximately 5 words in length
- **Medium-** approximately 18 words in length
- **Long and involved-** 30 words or more in length (How does the sentence length fit in the subject matter? What variety of length is present? How is the length effective?)

Sentence Patterns

- **Declarative (assertive)** – makes a statement: e.g., “*The king is sick.*”
- **Imperative** – gives a command: e.g., “*Cure is the king.*”
- **Interrogative** – asks a question: e.g., “*Is the king sick?*”
- **Exclamatory** – provides emphasis or expresses strong emotion: e.g., “*The king is dead! Long live the king!*”
- **Simple** – contains one subject and one verb (an independent clause): e.g., “*The singer bowed to her adoring audience.*”
- **Compound** – contains two independent clauses joined by a coordinate conjunction by a semicolon: e.g., “*The singer bowed to the audience but she sang no encores.*”
- **Complex** – contains an independent clause and one or more subordinate (dependent) clauses: e.g., “*Because the singer was tired, she went straight to bed after the concert.*”
- **Compound/Complex** – contains two or more principal clauses and one or more subordinate (dependent) clauses: e.g., “*The singer bowed while the audience applauded, but she sang no encores.*”

Sentence order:

- **Loose sentence** – makes complete sense if brought to a close before the actual ending: e.g., “We reached Edmonton that morning after a turbulent flight and some exciting experiences, tired and exhilarated, full of stores to tell our friends and neighbors.” The sentence could end before the modifying phrases without losing its coherence.
- **Periodic sentence** – makes sense only when the end of the sentence is reached: e.g., “that morning, after a turbulent flight and some exciting experiences, we reached Edmonton.”
- **Balanced sentence** – the phrases or clauses balance each other by virtue of their likeness of structure, meaning, or length: e.g., “he maketh me lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside still waters.”
- **Natural Order** – constructing a sentence so that the subject comes before the predicate: e.g., “Oranges grow in Florida.”
- **Inverted order (sentence inversion)** – constructing a sentence so that the predicate comes before the subject: e.g., “In Florida grow the oranges.”

Rhetorical/Grammatical devices:

- **Active/passive voice** – the subject performs the action; the subject is acted upon; is used to suggest control or lack of control; e.g., “he looked at the dead man.” “He was being looked at by a dead man.”
- **Appositives** – set off by comas, adds information
- **Author asides** – usually in parentheses’ author intrudes on his story
- **Ellipsis, dashes** – slows the motion; indicates passage of time, pauses
- **Juxtaposition** – normally unassociated ideas, words, or phrases are placed next to one another, creating an effect of surprise and wit, e.g., “The apparition of these faces in the crowd; “Petals on a wet black bough.” (“In a Station of the Metro” by Ezra Pound).
- **Lists and catalogues** –
- **Parallel structure (parallelism)** – grammatical or structural similarity between sentences or parts of a sentence. It involves an arrangement of words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs so that elements of equal importance are similarly phrased, e.g., “He was walking, running, and jumping for joy.”
- **Participles** – “ing” words – may denote motion, quick pace, action
- **Repetition** – the deliberate use of any element of language more than once – sound, word, phrase, sentence, grammatical pattern, or rhythmical pattern; for the purpose of enhancing rhythm and creating emphasis, e.g., “government of the people by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.”
- **Rhetorical question** – a question that expects no answer. It is used to draw attention to a point and is generally stronger than a direct statement; e.g., “If Mr. Ferchoff is always fair, as you have said, why did he refuse to listen to Mrs. Baldwin’s arguments?”
- **Sentences which interrupt** – breaks the rhythm in a passage

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE: Using words or phrases in a non-literal way to create an effect

- **Alliteration** – repetition of initial consonant sound of several consecutive or neighboring words: e.g., “The twisting trout twinkled below.”
- **Allusion** – a reference to a mythological, literary, or historical person, place or thing: e.g., “He met his Waterloo.”
- **Antithesis** – involves a direct contrast of structurally paralleled word groupings, generally for the purpose of contrast: e.g., “Sink or swim.”
- **Apostrophe** – a form of personification in which the absent or dead are spoken to as if present: “Milton! Thou shouldn’t be living in this hour.”
- **Assonance** – the repetition of accented vowel sounds in a series of words: e.g., the words “cry” and “side” have the same vowel sound.
- **Consonance** – the repetition of a consonant within a series of words to produce a harmonious effect: e.g., “And each slow dusk a drawing- down of blinds.” The “d” sound is in consonance.
- **Flashback** – a scene that interrupts the action of a work to show a previous event.
- **Foreshadowing** – the use of hints or clues in a narrative to suggest future action.
- **Hyperbole** – a deliberate, extravagant, and often outrageous exaggeration: e.g., “The shot heard ‘round the world.” It may be used for either serious or comic effect.
- **Irony** –
 1. **Verbal irony** – the result of a statement saying one thing while meaning the opposite: e.g., “*It’s easy to stop smoking; I’ve done it many times.*”
 2. **Situational irony** – when a situation turns out differently from what one would normally expect thought often the twist is oddly appropriate: e.g., a deep sea diver drowning in a bathtub.
 3. **Dramatic irony** – occurs when a character says or does something that has more or different meanings from what he thinks it means, though the audience and/or other characters do understand the full ramifications of the speech or action: e.g., Oedipus curses the murderer of Laius, not realizing that he is himself the murderer and so is cursing himself.
- **Metaphor** – a comparison without the use of like or as; usually a comparison between something that is concrete and something that is abstract: e.g., “*Time is money.*”
- **Onomatopoeia (imitative harmony)** – the use of words in which the sounds seem to resemble to sounds they describe: e.g., “*hiss,*” “*buzz,*” and “*bang.*”
- **Oxymoron** – a form of paradox that combines a pair of contrary terms into a single unusually expression: e.g., “*sweet sorrow*” or “*cold fire.*”
- **Paradox** – when the elements of a statement contradict each other. Although the statement may appear illogical, impossible, or absurd, it turns out to have a coherent meaning that reveals a hidden truth: e.g., “*Much madness is divinest sense.*” “*The more you know, the more you don’t know.*” Socrates.
- **Personification** – a kind of metaphor that gives inanimate objects or abstract ideas human characteristics: e.g., “*The wind cried in the dark.*”
- **Prosody** – the study of sound and rhythm in poetry
- **Pun** – a play of words that are identical or similar in sound but have sharply diverse meanings. Puns can have serious as well as humorous uses: e.g., in *Romeo and Juliet*, Mercutio is bleeding to death and says to his friends, “*Ask for me tomorrow, and you shall find a grave man.*”
- **Sarcasm** – a type of irony in which a person appears to be praising something but is actually insulting it: e.g., “*As I fell down the stairs headfirst, I heard her say, ‘Look at that coordination.’*”
- **Sensory detail** – an appeal to the senses (sight, sound texture, taste, smell)
- **Shift or turn** – a change in movement in a piece resulting from an epiphany, realization, or insight gained by the speaker, a character. Or the reader.
- **Simile** – a comparison of two different things or ideas through the use of words like or as. It is a definitely stated comparison in which the write says one thing is like another: e.g., “*The warrior fought like a lion.*”
- **Symbols** – any object, person, place, or action that has both meaning in itself and that stand for something larger than itself, such as a quality, attitude, belief, or value: e.g., the land turtle in Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath* suggests or reflects the toughness and resilience of the migrant workers.
- **Synecdoche (metonymy)** – a form of metaphor. In synecdoche, apart of something is used to signify the whole: e.g., “*All hands on deck.*” In metonymy, the name of one thing is applied to another thing with which is closely associated: e.g., “*I love Shakespeare.*”
- **Synesthesia** – sense mixing
- **Understatement (meiosis, litotes)** – the opposite of hyperbole; a kind of irony that deliberately represents something as being much less that it really is: e.g., “*I could probably manage to survive on a salary of two million dollars per year.*”

POINT OF VIEW:

- **Participant Point of View** – first person point of view
 - Narrator as a major character
 - Narrator as a minor character
 - Innocent-eye narrator
 - Stream-of-consciousness (interior monologue)
- **Nonparticipant Point of View** – third person point of view
 - Omniscient narrator – the author can enter the minds of all the characters
 - Selective (limited) omniscient narrator – the author limits his omniscience to the minds of a few of the characters or of a single character
 - Objective narrator – the author does not enter a single mind, but instead records what can be seen and heard
- **Other POV Descriptors:** Adult, Child-Like, Naïve, Nostalgic, Objective, Persona, Personal, Reflective, Scientific, Sophisticated, Subjective

SELECTION OF DETAIL:

Describe the author's treatment of the subject matter by considering the following: Has the author been:

- **Subjective?** Are his conclusions based upon opinions; are they rather personal in nature?
- **Objective?** Are his conclusions based upon facts; are they impersonal or scientific?
- **Details?** How did he support his thesis? What details are included/omitted?

How many? About what? Specific or general? Concrete or abstract? Position in selection?

Does the author use current events, personal illustrations, descriptions, allusions, anecdotes, history, and literature?

Are the details religious, scientific, poetic, sentimental, cynical etc

OTHER TERMS:

- **Mood** – the atmosphere or predominant emotion in a literary work.
- **Motivation** – a circumstance or set of circumstances that prompts a character to act in a certain way or that determines the out come of a situation or work.
- **Narration** – the telling of a story in writing or speaking
- **Plot** – the sequence of events or actions in a short story, novel, play or narrative poem.
- **Protagonist** – central character of a drama, novel, short story, or narrative poem. Conversely, the antagonist is the character who stand directly opposed to the protagonist
- **Setting** – the time and place in which events in a short story, novel, play, or narrative poem take place.
- **Theme** – the central message of a literary work.

AP Quick Review for Language Analysis Questions

STYLE: (LITTLE WORD – BIG OPTIONS)

Generally, style is the author's voice/imprint – that which makes his writing unique. It can be urbane, formal, stiff, light, didactic, philosophical, whimsical, scientific, romantic etc.

Style is defined by considering diction, syntax, tone, point of view, structure, imagery, literary devices, and selection of detail. To prove a language analysis thesis – identify and comment on the purpose and effectiveness of the author's choices. You must always include examples from the selection to illustrate (words, phrases, line #s etc.)

DICTION:

Harsh, soft, crisp, feminine, masculine, simple, complex, evocative, emotional, poetic, scientific, colloquial, abstract, pompous, connotative language, formal, informal, clichéd, candor, denotation, archaic, jargon, euphemisms, assonance, alliteration, hyperbolic, ironic, onomatopoeic, participles (ing words), idiomatic expressions, dialect, ironic.

SYNTAX:

Sentence length, sentence variety, periodic, loose, balanced, telegraphic, fragments, parallel structure, active/passive voice, dashes, parenthesis (author asides), tense, appositives, repetitions, rhythm, cadence in structure, juxtaposition, rhetorical questions, inverted sentences, simple sentences, complex sentences, compound sentences, series of clauses or phrases, lists catalogues, ellipsis, participles (-ing, -ed words), sentences which interrupt, transitional sentences

TONE: (author's attitude) (voice)

bitter, angry, cold sympathetic, mock serious, satirical, sarcastic, light, fearful, praising, condescending, mournful, exhortative, nostalgic, anxious, critical, awed, ironic, didactic, distant, humorous, cynical, serious, flippant, black humor, mocking, indifferent, hostile, artificial, determined, sentimental, affectionate, annoyed, etc.

POINT OF VIEW:

Personal, objective, subjective, reflective, naïve, sophisticated, stream of consciousness, persona, scientific, nostalgic, child-like, adult, first person, third person – narrator, omniscient, limited, (sometimes the point of view may change in a single selection.) – (point of view can also mean literally if a narrator is stationary or moving)

STRUCTURE: (organization) (rhetorical structure)

Formal, informal, reportorial, cause-effect, definition, narrative, compare/contrast, classification, argumentation, flashbacks, spatial, order of importance, chronological, series of anecdotes, parallel paragraphs, full-circle (end return to beginning), rhythmic, balance, coherence, length of paragraphs, parody (also specific forms, e.g.: letters, legal briefs, poetry, journals, speeches, sermons, news articles, editorials etc.)

IMAGERY/FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE: (and literary devices) (or rhetorical devices/strategies)

Sensory detail, (smell, sound, sight – esp. color-, texture, taste), dominant impression, metaphor, simile, oxymoron, paradox, synesthesia, antithesis, personification, onomatopoeia, allusions, apostrophe, consonance, pun.

SELECTION OF DETAILS:

How many? About what? What kind? – specific or general – concrete or vague, historical, anecdotal, personal, scientific. Allusions, literary, religious, descriptive, position in selection?

IN CONSIDERING STYLE: it is helpful to identify and consider the target audience and purpose. Oftentimes, this will help to define the style. As always you must use examples and quotes from the text and then comment on their effectiveness in establishing purpose, tone, etc.