

## The Analysis Essay

40 minutes

### What does the analysis essay require of me?

You will be presented with a prose passage that can be drawn from various genres and time periods. Although the specific tasks asked of the student may vary, they almost always involve the analysis of language, including rhetorical strategies and stylistic elements. The College Board wants to determine your facility with reading, understanding, and analyzing challenging texts. They also want to assess how well you manipulate language to communicate your written analysis of a specific topic to a mature audience. Your level of writing should be a direct reflection of your critical thinking.

### What kinds of questions can I expect?

- Analyze an author's view on a specific subject
- Analyze rhetorical devices used by an author to achieve his or her purpose
- Analyze stylistic elements in a passage and their effects
- Analyze the author's tone and how the author conveys this tone
- Compare and/or contrast two passages with regard to style, purpose, or tone
- Analyze the author's purpose and how he or she achieves it
- Analyze some of the ways an author recreates a real or imagined experience
- Analyze how an author presents him or herself in the passage
- Discuss the intended and/or probable effect of a passage

### How do I decipher the prompt?

Carefully read and deconstruct the prompt. You will have to read the prompt more than once. Once you know what is expected, you will read in a more directed manner and be sensitive to the details from the reading that will apply to the topic. To deconstruct the prompt, highlight the essential terms and elements of the prompt that tell you what your essay needs to accomplish.

### How do I read and annotate the text?

Read once quickly to get the gist of the passage. Then, reread to highlight and annotate, making notes that relate to the writing assignment.

OR

Read slowly in order to highlight and annotate details that relate to the writing assignment. Then, reread to confirm that you have caught the full impact of the passage.

You *must* highlight and make marginal notes. Here are some strategies to help you:

- Read the introductory information that provides clues about the rhetorical situation and background of the author and text. (Speaker, Occasion, Audience, Purpose)
- Identify the main idea, message, or theme of the text. (Subject)
- Identify the tone of the text. (Tone)
- Watch for shifts in the text. Why do they occur? What is their importance or significance? How do they work to move the essay forward?
- Find literary devices, rhetorical devices, and stylistic elements at work in the essay. You should especially watch for the devices that are mentioned in the prompt. How does the author use these devices? How do these elements help the author attain his or her purpose for writing? (To what end? To what avail?)
- Ignore what you don't understand immediately. It may become clear as you continue.

### How do I plan my essay?

After deciphering the prompt and annotating the passage, sort your annotations using a numbering or labeling system. As you sort, link the literary and rhetorical devices according to the author's content and purpose. The reasons for your groupings should reflect the questions in the prompt.

### What should my opening include?

Make certain that your introductory paragraph

- cites the author and title of the text
- states which strategies, devices, or elements you will analyze in your essay
- states the purpose of analyzing these elements by referring to the question from the prompt

### What should the body of the essay include?

Make certain that your body paragraphs

- contain specific but short direct references to the text (clipped quotes)
- repeat key ideas from the prompt and the opening paragraph
- connect all quotations and analysis to the prompt, establishing adherence to the question
- contain "echo words" (i.e. synonyms: *town/village/hamlet*; *bland/ordinary/undistinguished*)
- use transitions between and within paragraphs
- do not simply list the use of rhetorical devices; show how they support the central argument
- ignore details that do not apply to the prompt

### How do I conclude my essay?

Focus on your body paragraphs, not on a conclusion. You do not need to summarize your major points, restate your thesis, or repeat the prompt. If you feel that you must have a concluding statement or remark, try to link your ideas to a particularly effective line or image from the passage. Use the last sentence or two of your last body paragraph to deliver this concluding comment.

### What are some things I need to keep in mind as I write?

- Don't be thrown by a complex passage. *You* choose the references you'll use. So, even if you don't understand everything, you *can* write an intelligent essay as long as you address the prompt and refer to the parts of the passage you do understand. Likewise, don't get overconfident with an easy passage. You'll need to find the nuances that will make your essay mature.
- You need to connect your analysis of the writer's language to his or her purpose as indicated in the prompt. Your essay should not consist of a list of devices that you have identified.
- Write in present tense.

### How do I pace myself?

1-3 minutes	Read and decipher the prompt
5 minutes	Read and make marginal notes regarding the passage Try to isolate two references that strike you; you might use these in your opening and closing
10 minutes	Prepare to write by highlighting, marginal mapping, using charts or key word/one word/line number outlining
20 minutes	Write the essay based on your preparation
3 minutes	Proofread
40 minutes	Total time on essay