

The Analysis Essay



Like the Synthesis essay, the Analysis essay has reading that you have to respond to. What makes the Analysis essay distinct is that there's only one essay, which will be about a page long, and there's no separate "reading time" for this one.

What Does "Analysis" Mean?

Read the instructions in the prompt carefully. They will say something like "write an essay in which you analyze the rhetorical strategies [the author] uses to convey his message." To *analyze* means to explain **how** or **why** the author makes particular rhetorical choices, not just to list them or summarize the passage.

How to Analyze

The following gives a guideline for how much time to spend on each of the following steps, but these are not set in stone. As you practice, you can experiment with whether you'll do better with a little more time for reading, a little more time for planning, exactly the suggested times, or something else.

1. Read—8 minutes

You have to read both the prompt (read it twice, to be sure you understand it) and the passage carefully. As you read the passage, think about the following points:

1. Identify the relationship between the speaker, subject, and audience—often, much of this information can be found in the prompt of a Q2 essay.
2. As you read the passage, chunk by primary points. This can be determined by asking yourself: "What is the author pointing out to the audience?" There may be one primary point for several paragraphs.
3. Take note of textual evidence that appeals ethically, logically, or emotionally to the audience or strengthens the speaker's credibility.
4. Examine the speaker's purpose for writing the passage. Consider which primary points best support his/her purpose.

2. Plan—2 minutes

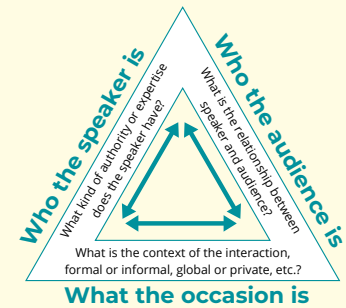
Before you can start writing, you need to know *what* you're going to write. Consider the following points to determine what you'll write about in your essay:

- Be sure you know *what* the argument is.
- Choose the *most important* rhetorical choices you noted while you were reading. You likely won't have time to discuss all of them, so make sure the ones you choose to discuss are the most effective ones.
- Make a basic outline with a thesis and the idea for each paragraph.

3. Write—30 minutes

Monitor the time you spend writing, as the proctor won't tell you when to move on to the next essay. For maximum success, follow these guidelines:

- Write as fast as you can while still keeping your handwriting legible.
- You do want to make clear that you understand what the argument is about, but don't spend too much time summarizing or quoting the passage: the graders are familiar with it.
- Remember to focus on the *why* and the *how* of the rhetorical devices:
 - *Why* did the author make that particular choice?
 - *How* does each choice help the author accomplish a particular goal?



Common Rhetorical Choices:

Rhetorical speakers will often manipulate their audience with one or more of the choices below. As you read the text, look for the evidence of the following:

Structure:

- **Juxtaposition** literally means to place two things side by side. Authors use juxtaposition to discuss two contrasting or opposing ideas.
- **Parallelism** is about expressing similar ideas in similar grammatical or syntactic structures.
- **Repetition** involves repeating the same words or phrases a few times to make an idea clearer.

Figurative Language:

- An **allusion** is a brief reference to a famous person, group, historical event, place, or work of art.
- **Irony** is a figure of speech in which words are used in such a way that their intended meaning is different from the actual meaning of the words.
- **Imagery** means to use figurative language to represent objects, actions, and ideas in such a way that it appeals to our physical senses.

Diction:

Often, an author will develop a specific tone throughout a passage, and this is accomplished using specific types of diction the author chooses. Ask yourself, how would you describe the word choice? What is the impact of such word choice?

Syntax:

Additionally, an author will manipulate the sentence structure to impact the audience. If an author incorporates several long or run-on sentences, they might mirror an extended period of mistreatment that the audience has endured.