

****DETAIL UNIT****
INTRODUCTION TO WORD USAGE

Following are examples of each type of word use you will be studying (except for syntax; it is sentence structure, more than simply word usage). You will see these examples as you study each element: detail, diction, figurative language, and imagery. Each example shows you the effect on a basic sentence that each element has.

BASIC SENTENCE: *Robbie reached for the basketball.*

DETAIL: *Robbie reached for the ball, successfully took possession, pulled it to his chest, looked at the basket, then aimed, threw, and watched it drop through the rim to score the winning point. (numerous facts)*

DICTION: *Desperate to win, Robbie lunged for the ball* (using words with connotation)

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE: *Thinking like a winner, Robbie's controlled frenzy enabled him to reach for the ball, jump gracefully as a gazelle as he threw it toward the basket, and – unfortunately—heard it smack against the backboard and rebound into the arms of an opponent.*

IMAGERY: *Robbie felt the round, nubby ball as his hands curled around the worn leather, hugged it protectively to his chest, then lobbed it toward the basket.*

This sheet can be a handy reference for you when you analyze.

****Add to notebook.**

INTRODUCTION TO DETAIL / CONCEPTS AND EXAMPLES

This unit and several units following are studies of the writer's use of words. Of course, one writer does not use words in the same way that another writer does. Some of the basic fundamentals may be the same, but each writer's use of words is distinctly different from others, just as your signature is different from the signature of your closest friend (and from everyone else's signature, too). If everyone wrote the same way, reading would be seriously boring! When you write, as you will find yourself doing often in an English AP class, your writing style is as unique as your signature.

There are four basic methods of word-use to compose sentences, the simplest of which is **DETAIL**. **DETAIL** makes a basic sentence informative and interesting. *So what is detail? Detail is simply the use of FACTS! Just facts and nothing more.*

The following is a "bare bones" sentence without any kind of embellishment:

BASIC SENTENCE: Robbie reached for the basketball.

*Now let's make it more interesting. The purpose of **DETAIL** is to give more specific information. See the following:*

DETAIL EXAMPLE: Robbie reached for the ball, took possession, pulled it to his chest, looked at the basket, then aimed, threw, and watched it drop through the rim to score the winning point.

EXPLANATION OF DETAIL: **DETAIL** is the use of words as **FACTS**, sometimes found in a list of words or within a group of words. Detail has no connotations (associations, emotional suggestions); *it is what it says*. An author might give a description or list events, places, objects, etc. Do not expect every passage to be completely comprised of detail, or diction, or figurative language (which you will be learning about in the next few units). A passage comprised predominantly of detail might also have some limited diction or figurative language or imagery within it.

To determine detail in a passage, first carefully read the passage, highlighting words that are facts (detail). After you read, look back over the passage for any kind of pattern. Is the author explaining something, perhaps trying to make information clear? Is he/she trying to describe something/someone/some place? Is he/she relating a series of events, perhaps in order to prove a point? If this information is stated in a factual way, using little or no connotative language (diction), then you are looking at detail. An author's purpose for using detail may be any of the following:

to describe
to inform
to overwhelm the reader with proof, reasons, facts, etc., to make a point
to establish tone.
to offer a list of events/reasons/etc.

The author's choice to use detail must be the result of his/her purpose. When you recognize detail within a passage, you must decide the author's *purpose* for using detail. Don't make this decision about purpose complicated. You should (1) read the passage carefully; (2) identify the use of detail; (3) then ask "why" the author is using detail.

However, keep in mind that there is not necessarily just one correct opinion about purpose. Purpose is a matter of interpretation of the passage.

EXAMPLE #1: The child walked home through the forest, singing, collecting wild flowers, looking for berries, and enjoying the sunshine.

QUESTION: What is the author's purpose for listing all the details of what the girl is doing on her walk? In other words, *why is he/she doing this?*

ANSWER: *To show that the child is pleasantly busy and involved on her walk home.*

QUESTION: What selection of details does the author use to show this?

ANSWER: *walking, singing, collecting, looking, and enjoying*

EXAMPLE #2: Standing in the doorway, the woman saw that the room was the same, the comfortable old chair just as she remembered, the familiar picture of sunflowers over the sofa, the old wooden coffee table, and as always, the lamp without a bulb.

QUESTION: What is the author's purpose for listing the furniture in the room?

ANSWER: *To reveal all that the woman sees as she surveys the room, unchanged since she was last here. This detailed information is possibly being used to set up the woman's feelings or reactions when she sees that all is the same as it was previously.*

QUESTION: What choice of detail does the author use to show this?

ANSWER: *the chair -- just as she remembered; the picture -- familiar; the coffee table -- old; and the lamp -- as always.*

EXAMPLE #3: When the mother saw her twelve-year-old child's performance in the play, she at first felt fear of her daughter's possible failure; then as the play progressed, pride about the girl's ability; by the third act, respect for the child's poise; and, finally, joy at her success.

QUESTION: What is the author's purpose for listing all the mother's emotions?

ANSWER: *To reveal the range of emotions that a mother might feel when she sees her child displaying her talent publicly*

QUESTION: What choice of detail does the author use to show this?

ANSWER: *fear, pride, respect, joy*

DETAIL EXAMPLE

PROMPT As you read the following passages, underline or highlight words and / or phrases that are detail (facts). Name two tones in the passage. Identify the author's purpose for using detail, and answer any questions following each passage. The EXAMPLE below from "*The Ultimate Kitchen Gadget*" by Robert Capon is done for you:

"The Ultimate Kitchen Gadget" by Robert Capon

"It is the ultimate kitchen gadget. It serves as a juicer for lemons, oranges and grapefruit, and as a combination seed remover and pulp crusher for tomatoes. It functions as a bowl scraper, an egg separator and a remover of unwelcome particles – the stray bit of eggshell, the odd grain of black rice -- from mixing bowl or saucepan. It is a thermometer capable of gauging temperatures up to 500 degrees Fahrenheit and, in addition, is a measuring device for dry ingredients in amounts from 1 tablespoon down to 1/8 teaspoon or less, and for whatever liquids may be called for in the cooking of grains and stocks. It can be used as tongs for removing hot cup custards from the oven, as a mixer of water into pastry dough and as a kneader of bread. Best of all, it cleans up in a trice, presents no storage problems, will not chip, rust or tarnish and, if it cannot be said to be unlosable or indestructible, it nevertheless comes with a lifetime guarantee to remain the one household convenience you will have the least desire either to lose or to destroy. It is, of course, the human hand."

A. TONES: *informative, enlightening*

As always, when you read you need to underline/highlight important words. When looking for detail, you read specifically for facts, which are underlined in the passage above. You will also want to underline any other words which seem important.

B. PURPOSE: *The purpose of using detail is to show the numerous uses of the human hand as a kitchen gadget.*

C. What uses are listed for the human hand as a kitchen gadget? *a juicer, seed remover, pulp crusher, bowl scraper, egg separator, remover of unwelcome particles, thermometer, measuring device for dry ingredients and for liquids, tongs, mixer, kneader*

D. Although this passage is filled with detail (facts), there are several words which have connotation (diction words which suggest other meanings). What are they? *"unlosable," "indestructible," and "destroy"*

***If you have trouble finding purpose, look at the details in the passage. If you answered C first, that might help you with B (purpose).*

ASSIGNMENT 1: DETAIL GROUP PRACTICE

PROMPT As you read the following passages, underline / highlight words and / or phrases that are detail (facts). Name two tones in the passage, identify the author's purpose for using detail, and answer any questions following each passage.

1. (Original spelling, capitalization, and punctuation are retained.)

Indentured Servant Writes Home by Elizabeth Sprigs

"To Mr. John Sprigs white smith [tinsmith] in White Cross Street near Cripple Gate London

Maryland Sept'r 22'd 1756

Honored Father

O Dear Father, belive what I am going to relate the words of truth and sincerity, and Balance my former bad Conduct [to] my sufferings here, and then I am sure you'll pittty your Destress[ed] Daughter. What we unfortunat English People suffer here is beyond the probability of you in England to Conceive. Let it suffice that I, one of the unhappy Number, am toiling almost Day and Night, and very often in the Horses druggery...and then tied up and whipp'd to that Degree that you'd not serve an Annimal.

[There is] scarce any thing but Indian Corn and Salt to eat and that even begrudged. Nay, many Neagroe are better used. [I have] no shoes nor stocking to wear....What rest we can get is to rap ourselves up in a Blanket and ly upon the Ground. This is the deplorable Condition your poor Betty endures. And now I beg, if you have any Bowels of compassion left, show it by sending me some Relief. Clothing is the principal thing wanting, which if you should condiscend to, may eaely send them to me by any of the ships bound to Baltimore town, Patapsco River, Maryland. And give me leave to conclude in Duty to you and Uncles and Aunts, and Respect to all Friends,

Honred Father
Your undutiful and Disobedient Child,
Elizabeth Sprigs"

A: TONES

B. PURPOSE

C. Why do you suppose that Elizabeth has been sent to America?

2.

The Stinging Cell by John Hersey

“I’ve talked about marvels out here. Here’s one for you: the stinging cell of the kind embedded by the hundreds in the tentacle of a jellyfish. It’s really almost unbelievable that such a tricky device could grow in a single cell. It has a mouth, beside which is a tiny hair, the trigger of the cell’s explosive weapon. The latter consists of a kind of bladder, like a rubber syringe, filled with a poisonous fluid, running back from the mouth, with a pair of blades folded like scissors near the mouth and a long, flexible needle coiled inside. When the hair trigger comes into contact with anything edible, there is a sudden increase of pressure inside the bulb, and out from the mouth first pop the scissors, opening out to cut an incision in the victim’s skin, then the long needle uncoils and shoots itself through it into the victim. When the needle is fully extended and rigid, its tip bursts and the bladder shoots a paralyzing drug into the victim. It’s a hypodermic needle and its barrel, all built into a single cell.”

A. TONES

B. PURPOSE

C. What effect does the inclusion of the details in this passage have upon the reader?

3.

Halloween Party by Lillian Ross

“My thirteen-year-old son gave a Halloween costume party for a bunch of boys and girls. I became his financier as he talked endlessly about his Count Dracula costume. Count Dracula seems to have been the most popular Halloween costume for the past ten years – a black satin Count Dracula cape (\$18.95), Count Dracula fangs (\$1.25), clown whiteface makeup (\$2), and Zauders stage blood (\$2). The menu for the party included fried chicken, spaghetti, Cokes, salad, and cupcakes with orange or chocolate icing (cost per guest: \$7). The candy, for visiting trick-or-treaters as well as for the guests, was orange and black jelly beans, sugar pumpkins, Candy Corn, Tootsie Rolls, Raisinets, Almond Joys, Nestle Crunch, Baby Ruths, Milky Ways, Heide Jujufruits, Peanut Chews, and Cracker Jacks (total: \$38.65). My son also had eight cookies, six inches in diameter and decorated with black cats (\$1.25 each); eight little plastic pumpkins full of hard candies, each with a trembly plastic spider on top (\$2.50 each); eight orange-colored balloons that blew up to resemble cats (eighty-five cents each); eight orange-colored lollipops with jack-o’-lantern faces (seventy cents each); a large paper tablecloth showing a black witch standing over a

black caldron with spiders popping out of the caldron (\$2.25); matching napkins (\$1.10); matching paper cups (\$2); matching paper plates (\$1.75); a “HAPPY HALLOWEEN” sign (\$1.25); a dancing skeleton (\$3.99); something called a Happy Spider (\$4, plus labor). Total investment in props: \$181.59. Total investment of labor in jack-o-lantern, kitchen cleanup, and laundry: \$35. Total investment in emotion and puzzlement: indeterminable.”

A. TONES

B. PURPOSE

C. What can we tell about the mother’s feelings in the last three sentences?

ASSIGNMENT 2: DETAIL INDIVIDUAL PRACTICE

PROMPT

As you read the following passages, underline / highlight words and / or phrases that are detail (facts). Name two tones in the passage, identify the author's purpose for using detail, and answer any questions following each passage.

1. *Geography* by Elizabeth Bishop

"Only the third and fourth grades studied geography. On their side of the room, over the blackboard, were two rolled-up maps, one of Canada and one of the whole world. When they had a geography lesson, Miss Morash pulled down one or both of these maps, like window shades. They were on cloth, very limp, with a shiny surface, and in pale colors – tan, pink, yellow, and green – surrounded by the blue that was the ocean. The light coming in from their windows, falling on the glazed, crackly surface, made it hard for me to see them properly from where I sat. On the world map, all of Canada was pink; on the Canadian, the provinces were different colors. I was so taken with the pull-down maps that I wanted to snap them up, and pull them down again, and touch all the countries and provinces with my own hands. Only dimly did I hear the pupils' recitations of capital cities and islands and bays. But I got the general impression that Canada was the same size as the world, which somehow or other fitted into it, or the other way around, and that in the world and Canada the sun was always shining and everything was dry and glittering. At the same time, I knew perfectly well that this was not true."

A. TONES

C. PURPOSE

C. How do the details contribute to the author's naïve impression of Canada's size in relationship to the rest of the world?

2. *Tumalo* from *The New Yorker*

"Tumalo is a town of little consequence. Actually, Tumalo isn't even an incorporated town, and there is no post office. There's the gas station, along with a mini-market; the Tumalo Irrigation District Office; a Presbyterian church; an animal hospital; the Tumalo Trading Post, where a variety of hubcaps are for sale; and the Dames and Dudes Hair Design Studio. Behind the gas station is a mobile-home lot where maybe five families live. If you were driving from one of the big cities in the Willamette Valley – say, from Eugene—to go skiing at Mt. Bachelor or fly-fishing in the Deschutes River, you would pass Tumalo's gas station, off Highway 20, and, down the road, you would pass the Tumalo Emporium, a restaurant with Old West décor, but unless you were hungry or needed gas the chances are you would pass through Tumalo without really noticing it."

A. TONES

B. PURPOSE

C. Is there any town like Tumalo near you? How does it remind you of this town?

ASSIGNMENT 3: DETAIL INDIVIDUAL PRACTICE

Read the following passages and highlight/underline the detail; then answer the questions following the passages.

1. This is a narrative by a Puritan woman captured and later released by American Indians.

A Narrative of the Captivity by Mary Rowlandson

"But now, the next morning, I must turn my back upon the town and travel with them [her captors] into the vast and desolate wilderness, I knew not whither. It is not my tongue, or pen, can express the sorrows of my heart and bitterness of my spirit that I had at this departure; but God was with me in a wonderful manner, carrying me along and bearing up my spirit, that it did not quite fail. One of the Indians carried my poor wounded babe upon a horse; it went moaning all along, 'I shall die, I shall die.' I went on foot after it, with sorrow that cannot be expressed. At length I took it off the horse and carried it on my arms till my strength failed, and I fell down with it. Then they set me upon a horse with my wounded child in my lap, and there being no furniture upon the horse's back, as we were going down a steep hill we both fell over the horse's head....But the Lord renewed my strength still and carried me along, that I might see more of His power; yea, so much that I could never have thought of had I not experienced it.

"After this it quickly began to snow, and when night came on, they stopped, and down I must sit in the snow, by a little fire, and a few boughs behind me, with my sick child in my lap; and calling much for water, being now (through the wound) fallen into a violent fever. My own wound [was] also growing so stiff that I could scarce sit down or rise up; yet so it must be, that I must sit all this cold winter night upon the cold snowy ground, with my sick child in my arms, looking that very hour would be the last of its life; and having no Christian friend near me, either to comfort or help me. Oh, I may see the wonderful power of God, that my spirit did not utterly sink under my affliction: still the Lord upheld me with His gracious and merciful spirit, and we were both alive to see the light of the next morning."

A. TONES

B. PURPOSE

C. Mary Rowlandson seems quite courageous in this passage. To what/who does she attribute her strength and endurance through this ordeal?

2.

The Autobiography by Benjamin Franklin

"I have been the more particular in this description of my journey, and shall be so of my first entry into that city, that you may in your mind compare such unlikely beginnings with the figure I have since made there. I was in my working dress, my best clothes being to come round by sea. I was dirty from my journey; my pockets were stuffed out with shirts and stockings; I knew no soul, nor where to look for lodging. I was fatigued with traveling, rowing, and want of rest. I was very hungry, and my whole stock of cash consisted of a Dutch dollar and about a shilling in copper. The latter I gave the people of the boat for my passage, who at first refused to take it on account of my rowing; but I insisted on their taking, a man being sometimes more generous when he had but a little money than when he has plenty, perhaps through fear of being thought to have but little. Then I walked up the street, gazing about, till near the Market House I met a boy with bread. I had made many a meal on bread, and inquiring where he got it, I went immediately to the baker's as he directed me to in Second Street, and asked for a biscuit, intending such as we had in Boston, but they, it seems, were not made in Philadelphia; then I asked for a three-penny loaf, and was told they had none such. So not considering or knowing the difference of money and the greater cheapness nor the names of his bread, I bade him give me three pennyworth of any sort. He gave me, accordingly, three great puffy rolls; I was surprised at the quantity, but took it, and having no room in my pockets, walked off, with a roll under each arm, and eating the other."

A. TONES

B. PURPOSE

C. In your opinion, what does this excerpt from his autobiography reveal about the character of Benjamin Franklin?

3. The following letter, written in 1744, is the Iroquois leader, Canassatego's response to the Virginia government's invitation to educate some Iroquois children at The College of William and Mary.

Canassatego: An Offer of Help from The Writings of Benjamin Franklin

"We know you highly esteem the kind of Learning taught in these Colleges, and the maintenance of our young Men, while with you, would be very expensive to you. We are convinced, therefore, that you mean to do us Good by your Proposal; and we thank you heartily. But you who are so wise must know that different Nations have different Conceptions of things; and you will not therefore take it amiss, if our ideas of this kind of Education happen not to be the same with yours. We have had some experience of it. Several of our young People were formerly brought up in the Colleges of the Northern Provinces; they were instructed in all your Sciences; but, when they came back to us, they were bad Runners, ignorant of every means of living in the Woods, unable to bear either Cold or Hunger, knew neither how to build a Cabin, take a deer, or kill an enemy, spoke our language imperfectly, were therefore neither fit for Hunters, Warriors, nor Counselors, they were totally good for nothing. We are however not the less obliged for your kind Offer, tho' we decline accepting it; and to show our grateful Sense of it, if the Gentlemen of Virginia shall send us a Dozen of their Sons, we will take great care of their Education, instruct them in all we know, and make Men of them."

A. TONES

B. PURPOSE

C. What does Canassatego think of the white man's methods of education?