**Literary Analysis: Using Elements of Literature**

Students are asked to write literary analysis essays because this type of assignment encourages you to think about **how and why** a poem, short story, novel, or play was written.  To successfully analyze literature, you’ll need to remember that authors make specific choices for particular reasons.  Your essay should point out the author’s choices and attempt to explain their significance.

Another way to look at a literary analysis is to consider a piece of literature from your own perspective.  Rather than thinking about the author’s intentions, you can develop an argument based on any single term (or combination of terms) listed below.  You’ll just need to use the original text to defend and explain your argument to the reader.

**Allegory**- narrative form in which the characters are representative of some larger humanistic trait (i.e. greed, vanity, or bravery) and attempt to convey some larger lesson or meaning to life. Although allegory was originally and traditionally character based, modern allegories tend to parallel story and theme.

* *William Faulkner’s A Rose for Emily- the decline of the Old South*
* *Robert Louis Stevenson’s Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde- man’s struggle to contain his inner primal instincts*
* *District 9- South African Apartheid*
* *X Men- the evils of prejudice*
* *Harry Potter- the dangers of seeking “racial purity”*

**Character -**representation of a person, place, or thing performing traditionally human activities or functions in a work of fiction

* **Protagonist** - The character the story revolves around.
* **Antagonist** - A character or force that opposes the protagonist.
* **Minor character** - Often provides support and illuminates the protagonist.
* **Static character** - A character that remains the same.
* **Dynamic character** - A character that changes in some important way.
* **Characterization** - The choices an author makes to reveal a character’s personality, such as appearance, actions, dialogue, and motivations.

*Look for: Connections, links, and clues between and about characters. Ask yourself what the function and significance of each character is. Make this determination based upon the character's history, what the reader is told (and not told), and what other characters say about themselves and others.*

**Connotation**- implied meaning of word. BEWARE! Connotations can change over time.

* *confidence/ arrogance*
* *mouse/ rat*
* *cautious/ scared*
* *curious/ nosey*
* *frugal/ cheap*

**Denotation** - dictionary definition of a word

**Diction**- word choice that both conveys and emphasizes the meaning or theme of a poem through distinctions in sound, look, rhythm, syllable, letters, and definition

**Figurative language**- the use of words to express meaning beyond the literal meaning of the words themselves

* ***Metaphor*** - contrasting to seemingly unalike things to enhance the meaning of a situation or theme without using **like** or **as**
	+ *You are the sunshine of my life.*
* ***Simile*** - contrasting to seemingly unalike things to enhance the meaning of a situation or theme using **like** or **as**
	+ *What happens to a dream deferred, does it dry up****like****a raisin in the sun*
* ***Hyperbole***- exaggeration
	+ *I have a million things to do today.*
* ***Personification*** - giving non-human objects human characteristics
	+ *America has thrown her hat into the ring, and will be joining forces with the British.*

**Foot**- grouping of stressed and unstressed syllables used in line or poem

* ***Iamb*** - unstressed syllable followed by stressed
	+ *Made famous by the Shakespearian sonnet, closest to the natural rhythm of human speech*
		- How ***do*** I ***love*** thee? ***Let*** me ***count*** the ***ways***
* ***Spondee*** - stressed stressed
	+ *Used to add emphasis and break up monotonous rhythm*
		- ***Blood boil, mind-meld, well- loved***
* ***Trochee*** - stressed unstressed
	+ *Often used in children’s rhymes and to help with memorization, gives poem a hurried feeling*
		- ***While*** I ***nod***ded, ***near***ly ***nap***ping, ***sud***den***ly*** there ***came*** a ***tap***ping,
* ***Anapest*** - unstressed unstressed stressed
	+ *Often used in longer poems or “rhymed stories”*
		- Twas the ***night*** before ***Christ***mas and ***all*** through the ***house***
* ***Dactyls***- stressed unstressed unstressed
	+ *Often used in classical Greek or Latin text, later revived by the Romantics, then again by the Beatles, often thought to create a heartbeat or pulse in a poem*
		- ***Pic***ture your***self*** in a ***boat*** on a ***ri***ver,
		With ***tan***gerine ***trees*** and mar***ma***lade skies.

*The iamb stumbles through my books; trochees rush and tumble; while anapest runs like a hurrying brook; dactyls are stately and classical.*

**Imagery**- the author’s attempt to create a mental picture (or reference point) in the mind of the reader. Remember, though the most immediate forms of imagery are visual, strong and effective imagery can be used to invoke an emotional, sensational (taste, touch, smell etc) or even physical response.

**Meter** - measure or structuring of rhythm in a poem

**Plot** - the arrangement of ideas and/or incidents that make up a story

* ***Foreshadowing*** - When the writer clues the reader in to something that will eventually occur in the story; it may be explicit (obvious) or implied (disguised).
* ***Suspense*** - The tension that the author uses to create a feeling of discomfort about the unknown
* ***Conflict*** - Struggle between opposing forces.
* ***Exposition*** - Background information regarding the setting, characters, plot.
* ***Rising Action*** - The process the story follows as it builds to its main conflict
* ***Crisis*** - A significant turning point in the story that determines how it must end
* ***Resolution/Denouement*** - The way the story turns out.

**Point of View** - pertains to who tells the story and how it is told. The point of view of a story can sometimes indirectly establish the author's intentions.

* ***Narrator*** - The person telling the story who may or may not be a character in the story.
* ***First-person*** - Narrator participates in action but sometimes has limited knowledge/vision.
* ***Second person***- Narrator addresses the reader directly as though she is part of the story. (i.e. “You walk into your bedroom.  You see clutter everywhere and…”)
* ***Third Person (Objective)*** - Narrator is unnamed/unidentified (a detached observer). Does not assume character's perspective and is not a character in the story. The narrator reports on events and lets the reader supply the meaning.
* ***Omniscient*** - All-knowing narrator (multiple perspectives). The narrator knows what each character is thinking and feeling, not just what they are doing throughout the story.  This type of narrator usually jumps around within the text, following one character for a few pages or chapters, and then switching to another character for a few pages, chapters, etc. Omniscient narrators also sometimes step out of a particular character’s mind to evaluate him or her in some meaningful way.

**Rhythm**- often thought of as a poem’s timing. Rhythm is the juxtaposition of stressed and unstressed beats in a poem, and is often used to give the reader a lens through which to move through the work. (See [meter](https://www.roanestate.edu/owl/elementslit.html#meter) and [foot](https://www.roanestate.edu/owl/elementslit.html#foot))

**Setting** - the place or location of the action.  The setting provides the historical and cultural context for characters. It often can symbolize the emotional state of characters. Example – In Poe’s *The Fall of the House of Usher*, the crumbling old mansion reflects the decaying state of both the family and the narrator’s mind. We also see this type of emphasis on setting in Thomas Mann’s *Death in Venice*.

**Speaker** - the person delivering the poem. Remember, a poem does not have to have a speaker, and the speaker and the poet are not necessarily one in the same.

**Structure (fiction)** - The way that the writer arranges the plot of a story.

*Look for: Repeated elements in action, gesture, dialogue, description, as well as shifts in direction, focus, time, place, etc.*

**Structure** **(poetry) -** The pattern of organization of a poem. For example, a Shakespearean sonnet is a 14-line poem written in iambic pentameter. Because the sonnet is strictly constrained, it is considered a closed or fixed form. An open or free form poem has looser form, or perhaps one of the author’s invention, but it is important to remember that these poems  are not necessarily formless.

**Symbolism** - when an object is meant to be representative of something or an idea greater than the object itself.

* *Cross - representative of Christ or Christianity*
* *Bald Eagle - America or Patriotism*
* *Owl - wisdom or knowledge*
* *Yellow - implies cowardice or rot*

**Tone**- the implied attitude towards the subject of the poem. Is it hopeful, pessimistic, dreary, worried? A poet conveys tone by combining all of the elements listed above to create a precise impression on the reader.

Advanced Power Tools for Opening Up a Text

**Analysis** is basically "taking something apart," in order to understanding it better by considering its component parts separately as well as together. **Response**is writing an answer or offering your own feedback on the text.

|  |
| --- |
| Directions: Use these fully-portable power tools for personal***responses***, ***reaction*** papers, for some ***analysis papers***, and for college ***book reports***.   |

Of course, begin your report or response by referring in the text to the title and author of the text, as well as the main thesis or point of the text. Then it is up to you to pick out  the analysis tools that best serve your own purposes (and more importantly,  the purposes or assignments of  your audience). Some of the most common are:

**1. Analyze the text as a material object. This can mean any or all of the following:**

    **a. Analyze the text as argument.**  Who is the intended audience? What is the author trying to persuade the audience to believe or do? (What is the standpoint of the text?)  What arguments are used in the text to convince the reader?  What was the author's purpose in writing this text?  What evidence is used to support the argument of the text?  How does the author use reasoned argument, emotion, or personal character to persuade?

    **b. Analyze the structure** of the text. What comes first? What comes after?  How is it built? Is it a travelogue, or fantasy or a historical novel or a nonfiction work or poetry or what? Does it follow a time-line, a logical sequence, a problem-solution-resolution process, a simple list of items, a comparison and contrast analysis, a balance of forces analysis, or does it simply jump back and forth chaotically? How are the chapters and sections divided?  What sort of language and imagery does the text contain?  What style (tone) of language is used (high, medium, or low)?  How good is the spelling, grammar, vocabulary and punctuation?

    **c. Analyze the text as a product**on the market. How long or short is the text (and is it too long or too short?  Why?). What is the context (social, economic, political, historical, commercial, intellectual) in which the text was produced and sold?  How attractive is the physical form and appearance of the text (cover, printing, type-faces, website, etc.)? Who is the intended consumer? Why was this text written or published, and how well does it fulfill that purpose for the majority of readers?  Is it commercial (popular), scholarly, journalistic, or some other form of writing, and does it meet expectations for this form of writing?  Did you find any errors, typos or problems within the text itself?

     **d. Analyze the text as the product of the author's mind.** Who was the author?  When and where did she/he live?  What is the author's personality, attitude and outlook on life and how does it show up in the text? What were the author's upbringing, physical circumstances, health, ethnic background and social class? What other works has this author published, and how do they relate to this text?

     **e. Analyze the text as communication.** How effective is the text in communicating the main idea? Who is the intended audience or actual audience of this text? How does the voice of the author shine through in the text?  How true are the facts in the text, or is it purely made-up fiction or fantasy?  How powerful is the writing, whether in persuading the audience or simply in entertaining (which is another form of persuasion)?  How effective is the text in accomplishing the purpose for which it was created?

  **f. Analyze the text in a social context.**Whom does this text serve best?  Who in society does it put down, ignore, pretend not to notice or shove aside? Does the author speak for the dominant part of society, or was she/he writing with the voice of the majority who are not dominant?  Does the text glorify the wealthy, the famous and the proud?  Does it lift up the powerless and those who have been pressed down? Is everyone assumed in the text  to be  prosperous,  white and healthy, or straight, or young, or English-speaking?  Does this text make you feel contented and satisfied about the way things are right now in the world, or does it make you want to help make the world better?  Does it even engage the real world at all, or not?  Does it make you feel hopeless, that life is meaningless and nothing anyone can do matters, or does it suggest that people can make a difference?

    **g. Analyze the text from a psychological viewpoint.**What are the possible psychological motivations of the author in writing this book, and what does it suggest about the author's mind?  What about the psychological motivations of the characters in the text?

     **h. Analyze the text from some certain specific point of view or belief.**How does this text treat women--does it honor and raise them up, or disrespect and put them down? In what way?  How might this text read differently through the eyes of a gay or lesbian reader than in the view of a straight reader?  What analysis of the text would a third-world reader or a person of color give, or a senior citizen, or a blind or deaf audience?  How would you analyze this text from a faith-based perspective?

**2. Analyze the text as a work of art.**  This might include the following:

**a. Clarity**(How clear is the writing?  Is it easy to understand or is it confusing and mysterious, and did the author intend it that way or not?)

**b. Grandeur**(How strong, educated, mature and vigorous is the language? Why?)

**c. Beauty**(Is this text a pleasure to read? Or, does the author use any annoying or ugly words and expressions where they are not appropriate? Is the imagery lively or boring?)

**d. Speed**(How fat-free is it? Does the writing in the text flow along easily, making it easy to read, or does it drag along with extra words, phrases and sentences? Does the author repeat him/herself anywhere in the text? Does it keep you at the edge of your seat, or put you to sleep?  Why? **)**

**e. Character**(If applicable, how realistic or believable are the characters in the text? How is the character of the author reflected in the text?)

**f. Truth**(How true are the facts used in the text?  How well does the author use facts? How well does he/she present sources and proofs for facts, quotes or data cited in the text?)

**g. Gravity** (Does this text pass the "*who cares?*" test? How much does this text MATTER? Does it change your mind or your feelings, inform you, or make you agree more with the author? Why or why not?)

**(based on the *Seven Ideas*of Hermogenes.)**

**3. Analyze and respond to the text from your own personal viewpoint as an individual reader.**

**a.**How much does it agree or clash with your view of the world, and what you consider right and wrong? Why or why not?  How much were your views challenged? How well does it address things that you, personally, care about and consider important in the world**?**How much new did you learn from it?

     **b.**How did you like or enjoy the text overall, and (most importantly) why or why not?  Keep in mind that some texts (news reports, textbooks, obituaries) are not written to be enjoying or entertaining.

**Studying the Text**

**1**

**Write out essential questions or learning objectives for the text.** In many cases, these will be provided by your instructor. If not, consider **why you are reading the text,** what you hope to take from it, and how you will use the text. As you read, try to address the essential questions or objectives.[[1]](https://www.wikihow.com/Analyze-Texts#_note-1)

* + Include your answers to these questions or objectives in your notes about the text.

**2**

**Read the text.** It’s hard to analyze a text you haven’t read! Do a slow, close reading of the text. As you read, look for content that addresses your essential questions or objectives. You’ll likely need to read the text multiple times to fully understand it.[[2]](https://www.wikihow.com/Analyze-Texts#_note-2)

* + Although it’s best to read the text at least twice, this may be harder with longer texts. If this is the case, you can re-read difficult passages within the book.

**3**

**[Annotate](https://www.wikihow.com/Annotate%22%20%5Co%20%22Annotate) the text by highlighting and writing in the margins.** Annotating means marking up a text to help you understand it. Use different colored highlighters to mark important passages in the text. Alternatively, you could underline passages. Include your notes, ideas, and short summaries in the margins.[[3]](https://www.wikihow.com/Analyze-Texts#_note-3)

* + For example, use a yellow highlighter to indicate main ideas, and use an orange highlighter to mark the supporting details.
	+ For fiction, use a different colored highlighter for passages related to each main character.

**4**

**Take notes as you read.** Include the answers to your essential questions or objectives, ideas the text brings to mind, and important information from within the text. Make sure you write down the main ideas and any supporting details provided by the text.

* + For a fiction text, write down the names and basic information about characters. Additionally, make note of any symbolism and use of literary devices.
	+ For a nonfiction text, write down important facts, figures, methods, and dates.[[4]](https://www.wikihow.com/Analyze-Texts#_note-4)

**5**

**Summarize each section of the text.** Once you have a sense of the text's structure, writing short summaries will help you better understand what the author is saying. If the text has sections, use the existing sections to create your summaries. Otherwise, you could summarize every paragraph or every few paragraphs.[[5]](https://www.wikihow.com/Analyze-Texts#_note-5)

* + For example, summarize each chapter of a novel. On the other hand, summarize each paragraph of a small article.

**6**

**Write out your own response to the text.** How you feel about the text can help you analyze it. However, don’t base your entire analysis on your own thoughts. Consider your response alongside the rest of your analysis. Ask yourself the following questions to help shape your response:[[6]](https://www.wikihow.com/Analyze-Texts%22%20%5Cl%20%22_note-6)

* + What am I taking away from the piece?
	+ How do I feel about the topic?
	+ Did this text entertain me or inform me?
	+ What will I do with this information now?
	+ How does this text apply to real life?

**7**

**[Make a reverse outline](https://www.wikihow.com/Write-an-Outline%22%20%5Co%20%22Write%20an%20Outline) of the text.** A reverse outline works backwards from an existing text to develop the framework of the text. This helps you examine the structure of the text.[[7]](https://www.wikihow.com/Analyze-Texts#_note-7)

* + For a work of fiction, outline the plot of the story, as well as any important details and literary devices.
	+ For a nonfiction text, focus on the main points, evidence, and supporting details.

**8**

**Read other analyses of the text.** Looking for other analyses of the text can help you contextualize your initial thoughts and feelings. You don't have to agree with everything you read, nor should you depend on the analyses of others for your own work. However, reports, essays, and reviews from other scholars can help you get a better initial sense of the text.[[8]](https://www.wikihow.com/Analyze-Texts#_note-8)

* + These analyses are easy to find through a quick internet search. Just type in the name of your text followed by the word, "analysis."

**Method2**

**Examining Fiction**

**1**

**Review the context of the text, such as when it was written.** Knowing the background of the text and its author can help you understand the influences on the text. To understand the context of the text, answer the following questions:[[9]](https://www.wikihow.com/Analyze-Texts%22%20%5Cl%20%22_note-9)

* + When was the text written?
	+ What is the historical background of the work?
	+ What is the author’s background?
	+ What genre does the author work in?
	+ Who are the author's contemporaries?
	+ How does this text fit in with the author's larger body of work?
	+ Did the writer provide their inspiration for the text?
	+ What type of society does the author come from?
	+ How does the text’s time period shape its meaning?

**2**

**Identify the theme of the text.** The theme encompasses the subject and the writer’s thoughts on that subject. It helps to think of the theme as the message of the book. What is the author trying to say?[[10]](https://www.wikihow.com/Analyze-Texts#_note-10)

* + A short story might have 1 or 2 themes, while a novel might have several. If the text has several themes, they might be related.
	+ For example, the themes of a sci-fi novel might be “technology is dangerous” and “cooperation can overcome tyranny.”

**3**

**Determine the main ideas of the text.** The main ideas will likely be related to the theme of the text. Examine the characters, their relationships, and actions, and the issues that arise in the text to identify the main ideas.[[11]](https://www.wikihow.com/Analyze-Texts#_note-11)

* + Notice the character’s words, actions, and thoughts. Consider what they convey about the character, as well as possible themes.
	+ Watch for symbolism, metaphor, and the use of other literary devices.

**4**

**Identify pieces of text that support the main ideas.** Pull out direct quotes where the author illustrates their points. For a longer text, you will likely find several. It’s a good idea to note as many as you can, especially if you’ve been assigned an essay or will be tested over the material.[[12]](https://www.wikihow.com/Analyze-Texts#_note-12)

* + You can use these quotes to support your own claims about the text if you write an analysis essay.

**5**

**Examine the author’s writing style.** The writer’s style can include their word choice, phrasing, and syntax, which is the arrangement of the words in a sentence. Although style can be strictly an aesthetic quality, it can also contribute to the text’s meaning.[[13]](https://www.wikihow.com/Analyze-Texts#_note-13)

* + For example, Edgar Allan Poe’s style of writing enhanced the effect of his poems and stories in an intentional way. If you were analyzing one of his texts, you’d want to consider his individual style.
	+ As another example, Mark Twain uses dialect in his novel *Pudd'nhead Wilson* to show the differences between slave owners and slaves in the deep south. Twain uses word choice and syntax to show how language can be used to create a divide in society, as well as control a subsection of the population.

**6**

**Consider the**[**author's tone**](https://www.wikihow.com/Analyze-Tone-in-Literature)**.** The author's tone is their attitude or feeling toward the subject. Through their language choices, sentence structure, and use of literary devices, the author can create different tones that lead you as a reader to feel a certain way about the subject.[[14]](https://www.wikihow.com/Analyze-Texts#_note-14)

* + Common tones include sad, solemn, suspenseful, humorous, or sarcastic.
	+ Tone can be indicative of not only what's happening in the piece, but of larger themes. *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* changes tone, for example, when Dorothy leaves Kansas for Oz. This is seen in the film through the change in color, but in the novel, this is established through the shift in tone.

**Method3**

**Evaluating Nonfiction**

**1**

**Determine the author’s purpose.** Why is the author writing this piece? Knowing this purpose can help you better understand the meaning of the text. To determine the purpose, ask yourself the following questions:[[15]](https://www.wikihow.com/Analyze-Texts#_note-15)

* + What is the topic and discipline?
	+ What does the text accomplish?
	+ What does the author make you think, believe, or feel?
	+ Are the ideas in the text new or borrowed from someone else?

**2**

**Examine the writer’s use of language, including jargon.** The writer’s word choice, especially when it comes to jargon, can give you more perspective on the text. You can determine the intended audience, as well as the tone of the text.[[16]](https://www.wikihow.com/Analyze-Texts#_note-16)

* + Using jargon and technical language shows the author is writing for people in their field. They might be trying to instruct or may be presenting research ideas. If you're unsure of a writer's intended audience, technical terms and jargon can be a good indicator.
	+ The tone is the mood of a text. For example, a researcher might use a formal, professional tone to present their research findings, while a writer might use an informal, casual tone when writing a magazine article.

**3**

**Identify the author’s argument.** Consider the author’s thesis, as well as any claims stated within the text. In a shorter piece, the entire argument may be presented clearly in the thesis, but a longer text may include multiple claims.[[17]](https://www.wikihow.com/Analyze-Texts#_note-17)

* + If you’re struggling to find the author’s argument, review the evidence they provide in the text. What ideas does the evidence support? This can help you find the argument.
	+ For example, the thesis could read as follows: "Based on data and case studies, voters are more likely to choose a candidate they know, supporting the ideas of rational choice theory." The argument here is in favor of rational choice theory.

**4**

**Examine the evidence the author uses to support the argument.** Evaluate the type of evidence used, such as data, facts, or anecdotes. Then, determine if the evidence fully and accurately supports the argument, or if the evidence is weak.[[18]](https://www.wikihow.com/Analyze-Texts#_note-18)

* + For example, evidence that includes research and statistical data may provide a lot of support for an argument, but anecdotal evidence might result in a weak argument.
	+ You may want to write out the evidence in your own words, but this may not be necessary.

**5**

**Separate facts from opinions in a nonfiction text.** Although the text is nonfiction, the author will likely include their own viewpoints. Both the factual information and the author’s ideas are important to your analysis, but you need to know the difference between the two. Read with an eye for the author's use of [rhetorical](https://www.wikihow.com/Write-a-Rhetorical-Analysis) or persuasive techniques.[[19]](https://www.wikihow.com/Analyze-Texts#_note-19)

* + For example, you might highlight facts and opinions using different colors. Alternatively, you might create a chart with facts on one side and opinions on the other.
	+ For instance, the writer might state, "According to the survey, 79% of people skim a ballot to find the names they know. Clearly, ballots aren't designed to engage voter interest." The first sentence is a fact, while the second sentence is an opinion.

**6**

**Determine if the text accomplishes its purpose.** Does the writer achieve what they set out to do? Based on your analysis, decide if the text is effective, as well as why or why not.[[20]](https://www.wikihow.com/Analyze-Texts#_note-20)

* + For example, you might find that the paper on rational choice theory contains few statistics but many pieces of anecdotal evidence. This might lead you to doubt the writer's argument, which means the writer likely didn't achieve their purpose.

**Method4**

**Writing an Analysis Paragraph**

**1**

**Create a topic sentence explaining your views on the text.** What have you concluded about the text? What ideas will your selected text support? Use this information to create a topic sentence.[[21]](https://www.wikihow.com/Analyze-Texts#_note-21)

* + Here’s an example: “In the short story ‘Quicksand,’ the author uses quicksand as a metaphor for living with chronic illness.”
	+ This is another example: "In the novel *Frankenstein*, Shelley displays the conventions of the Romantic Period by suggesting that nature has restorative powers."

**2**

**Introduce your supporting text by explaining its context.** You will need to include a direct quote from the text to back up your views. It’s best to introduce this quote by explaining how it's presented in the text, as well as what it means.[[22]](https://www.wikihow.com/Analyze-Texts#_note-22)

* + You could write, “At the beginning of the story, the main character wakes up, dreading the coming day. She knows she needs to get out of bed, but her illness prevents her from rising.”

**3**

**Provide your supporting text, using a lead-in.** This will be a direct quote from the text that illustrates your views on the text. It’s a piece of evidence that shows you’re right about what the text means.[[23]](https://www.wikihow.com/Analyze-Texts#_note-23)

* + For example, “To show the struggle, the author writes, ‘I sank back into the bed, feeling as though the mattress was sucking me further and further down.’”
	+ As another example, "In *Frankenstein*, Victor escapes from his problems by frequently going out into nature. After spending two days in nature, Victor says, "By degrees, the calm and heavenly scene restored me..." (Shelley 47).

**4**

**Explain how the supporting text backs up your ideas.** Describe what is happening in the text, as well as what it means in the context of the entire text. You can also discuss any literary devices that are used, such as symbolism or a metaphor. Similarly, you can explain how the author’s style, diction, and syntax affects the meaning of the text.[[24]](https://www.wikihow.com/Analyze-Texts#_note-24)

* + You might write, “In this passage, the author builds on the metaphor of an illness acting like quicksand by showing the main character struggling to get out of bed. Despite fighting to get up, the main character feels as though they’re sinking further into the bed. Furthermore, the author uses first-person point-of-view to help the reader understand the main character’s thoughts and feelings on their illness.”

**Community Q&A**

**Ask a Question**

Submit

**Can you answer these readers' questions?**

On [**How to Transfer a House Deed to a Family Member**](https://www.wikihow.com/Transfer-a-House-Deed-to-a-Family-Member), a reader asks:

What if the house I am living in was my grandmothers and she told me she was leaving it to me in her will, I was homeless and she said I could have it now when I need it instead of after she passed, she had already moved to a rental house. To my knowledge it was mine, come to find out I get served. What can I do?



On [**How to Start a Dairy Farm**](https://www.wikihow.com/Start-a-Dairy-Farm), a reader asks:

What infrastructure do I need to start a dairy farm?



On [**How to Find the Chassis and Engine Number**](https://www.wikihow.com/Find-the-Chassis-and-Engine-Number), a reader asks:

Can I find chassis number by registration number ?



**Tips**

* Study guides like Cliff’s Notes can help you analyze a longer text, which is harder to re-read.
* Working with a partner or group can help you better understand a text because you can see it from different perspectives. However, make sure any written analysis you do is your own work, not the group’s.

**Warnings**

* Always use quotation marks and a lead in when directly [quoting a passage](https://www.wikihow.com/Put-a-Quote-in-an-Essay). Otherwise, you’ll be plagiarizing.

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**Essential Questions**

How do readers know what to believe in what they read, hear, and view?

How do strategic readers create meaning from informational and literary text?

How does interaction with text provoke thinking and response?

What is the purpose?

What is this text really about?

What makes clear and effective writing?

What will work best for the audience?

Who is the audience?

Why do writers write?

* How does interaction with text provoke thinking and response?
* Why do writers write? What is the purpose?
* What makes clear and effective writing?
* Who is the audience? What will work best for the audience?
* How do readers know what to believe in what they read, hear, and view?
* How do grammar and the conventions of language influence spoken and written communication?

**Vocabulary**

* **Analysis:**The process or result of identifying the parts of a whole and their relationships to one another.
* **Characterization:**The method an author uses to reveal characters and their various personalities.
* **Climax:**The turning point in a narrative; the moment when the conflict is at its most intense. Typically, the structure of stories, novels, and plays is one of rising action, in which tension builds to the climax.
* **Conflict/Problem:**A struggle or clash between opposing characters, forces, or emotions.
* **Literary Elements:**The essential techniques used in literature (e.g., characterization, setting, plot, theme).
* **Plot:**The structure of a story. The sequence in which the author arranges events in a story. The structure often includes the rising action, the climax, the falling action, and the resolution. The plot may have a protagonist who is opposed by an antagonist, creating what is called *conflict*.
* **Resolution:**The portion of a story following the climax, in which the conflict is resolved. The resolution of Jane Austen’s *Northanger Abbey* is neatly summed up in the following sentence: “Henry and Catherine were married, the bells rang, and everybody smiled.”
* **Rising Action:**The part of a story where the plot becomes increasingly complicated. Rising action leads up to the climax, or turning point.
* **Setting:**The time and place in which a story unfolds.
* **Theme:**A central idea or message of a piece of writing; a major idea broad enough to cover the entire scope of a literary work.
* **Thesis Statement:**The basic argument advanced by a speaker or writer who then attempts to prove it; the subject or major argument of a speech or composition.