

AP English Language & Composition

Passage Analysis Essay: Summer Non-Fiction Text

Directions: Choose a passage from the book you read independently over the summer to analyze stylistic choices by the writer. Annotate the passage and write an essay explaining your findings.

Timeline for this Assignment:

Passage Annotation due: **Monday, September 24**

Final draft of the Passage Annotation due: **Friday, September 28.**

How to Begin:

1. Choose a passage from the book that you read this summer. This may be a passage that you already reflected on for the summer assignment, or it could be an entirely different passage. The point is that *you* are choosing a passage that interests *you*. I will find it highly suspect if the same passage is chosen by multiple people. We're talking hundreds of pages here to choose from. Branch out, people! This is an individual assignment. ☺
2. Type out the passage. Read with a pencil in hand, and annotate the text.
3. Look for patterns in the elements you've noticed about the text.
4. Ask questions about the patterns you've noticed--especially how and why.

How long should my passage be?

That depends on the writer's style, but the passage you choose to analyze may be several paragraphs, or one longer paragraph. It should provide enough text to examine the different elements of the writer's style. We're not talking pages and pages here, but you to choose a passage that provides enough material for an analysis.

What should the final essay look like?

Review the example on the class website (Under "Formal Writing Assignments") and also the student essay in the *LC* textbook pgs. 46-47: "Joan Didion's Santa Ana Winds: A Mechanistic View of Nature."

<http://pwhsaplanguange.pbworks.com>



Summer Reading Passage Analysis – Standards for Assessment

- Passage included shows extensive annotation; numerous aspects of diction and syntax are identified.
- Brief introduction gives context of the passage being analyzed.
- Effect(s) of diction strategies (tropes) are identified and explained with examples.
- Effect(s) of syntax strategies (schemes) are identified and explained with examples.
- Sentence Fluency – sentences flow together well (begin in different ways and sentence length varies)
- Uses writing conventions of Standard English; there are few (if any) errors in punctuation or grammar.

Guidelines:

- ✓ Be sure to include a properly formatted MLA header on the first page, left side, with your name, class, teacher's name and the date. Double spaced, 1 inch margins. A title is also required – this can be practical or more creative.
- ✓ The passage you choose should be typed out, annotated and included with the essay.
- ✓ A brief introduction to the book and its major ideas should begin your essay. Here you will note the writer's name and when it was published.
- ✓ The body section of your analysis should focus on artful syntax (schemes) and artful diction (tropes) that you identify in the passage. How are these elements used effectively by the writer? Examine the choices the writer has made in sentence structure and word choice.
- ✓ A length of 2-3 pages for this assignment is reasonable.

Review your Diction and Syntax NOTES for the following categories:

Categories of Diction and Questions to Ask (TROPES)

1. Word length
Does the writer use long or short words for effect? If so, how?
2. Register (vulgarity-slang-colloquialism-dialect-elevated)
How would you characterize the register of this passage?
3. Meaning (connotative and denotative words)
Are there words with connotative, as well as denotative meanings? How do they impact the meaning of the passage?
4. Type of Words (abstract or concrete)
Which words are abstract – which are concrete? What are the effect of these words?
5. Sound of Words (euphonious or cacophonous)
What are some examples of euphonious or cacophonous words? How do they affect the tone?
6. Figurative Language (metaphor-imagery-simile-personification-etc.)
What is the effect of the figurative language? If a comparison is being made, what does it mean?

Categories of Syntax and Questions to Ask (SCHEMES)

1. Sentence Length
Is the author trying to stress a key idea with a short sentence? Does sentence length affect the rhythm of the text? Does it quicken or slow down your pace?
2. Punctuation
To what extent does punctuation affect the meaning and rhythm of the sentence?
3. Arrangement of Ideas (cumulative/loose-periodic-parallel)
Are ideas set out a certain way for a purpose or effect?
4. Types of Sentences (declarative, imperative, interrogative, exclamatory)
Is there a pattern to the text and does it affect meaning?
5. Sentence Structures (simple, compound, complex, compound-complex)
What is emphasized because of the sentence structure?
6. Voice (active or passive)
Does the text use passive voice, and if so, for what effect?
7. Word Order (natural, inverted, split, interrupted)
What is emphasized because of the choices in word order?
8. Violations for effect
Does the text use fragments or run-on sentences for effect?