

Tips to Remember When Writing AP Rhetorical Analysis

1. Break down the prompt!

Directions

1. Find the word that means “analyze.” Underline AFTER “analyze” all the way to the end of the sentence. This is the “command.”
2. Look for the authorial action verb in the “command” section. This is usually an infinitive that follows the word that asks you to analyze.
3. THEN, double-underline from that infinitive to the end of the sentence.
4. Then generate a question beginning with “**WHAT**.” LOOK ONLY AT THE PART OF THE SENTENCE YOU HAVE DOUBLE-UNDERLINED and ask, “What can’t I know until after I have actually read this essay?”

Example Prompt:

The passage below is from the opening of an essay, “On Seeing England for the First Time,” by Jamaica Kincaid. Kincaid grew up on the Caribbean island of Antigua before it became independent from England in 1981. Read the entire passage carefully. Then write an essay analyzing the rhetorical strategies Kincaid employs to convey her attitude toward England.

Command:

Analyze the rhetorical strategies Kincaid employs to convey her attitude toward England.

Conquer:

WHAT is her attitude toward England?

Conquer Answer:

(Note: You can’t answer this without having read the essay first.) _____

Practice:

On the tenth anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., labor union organizer and civil rights leader Cesar Chavez published an article in the magazine of a religious organization devoted to helping those in need. Read the following excerpt from the article carefully. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze the rhetorical choices Chavez makes to develop his argument about nonviolent resistance.

In the following letter, Abigail Adams (1744–1818) writes to her son John Quincy Adams, who is traveling abroad with his father, John Adams, a United States diplomat and later the country’s second president. Read the letter carefully. Then, in a well-developed essay, analyze the rhetorical strategies Adams uses to advise her son. Support your analysis with specific references to the text.

2. Divide the reading into thirds.

As you read each section, annotate for STOPADS (especially, occasion and speaker/persona) but make sure to focus on the answer to your CONQUER question and the most prevalent rhetorical strategies used in each section of the reading.

3. Write a rhetorical analysis thesis statement following the following format or a variation of it:

4. Each of your body paragraphs should deal with each rhetorical strategy mentioned in your thesis statement in order of the flow of the text.

5. Use quotations effectively!

- Introduce your quotations. Do not use quotations in isolation. A quotation should never suddenly appear out of nowhere. Some kind of information about the quotation is needed.

For example:

Jones uses assertive language like “must” and “certain.”

- Sometimes you can leave out some words to condense the quotation. Mid-sentence ellipses use three spaced, bracketed dots. Example text:

The surf on the beach at Mazatlan beat against the shore.

Your quotation:

Smith says of his wave watching, "The surf [. . .] beat against the shore."

- Any time you refer to the text, even if you are just referring to a single word, you must use quotation marks (see #1).
- Punctuate quotations correctly! A general guideline for closing a quote is: *P before Q – Punctuation before quotation mark.*

For example—

When Smith uses the phrases “against the shore,” he is conveying the idea that all things must eventually come “home.”

- Use lots of SHORT quotations, not a few LONG ones. Even if you use short ones, make sure they are not too short where the reader is left trying to figure out context.

6. Use stronger verbs than “show”!

_____ emphasizes asserts illustrates conveys argues