

AP English Writing Guide

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Prose Analysis Mnemonics

Diction	The connotation of the word choice
Images	Vivid appeals to understanding through the senses
Details	Facts that are included or those omitted
Language	The overall use of language, such as formal, clinical, jargon
Syntax	(Sentence Structure) how structure affects the reader's attitude

Subject	The general topic, content, and ideas
Occasion	The time and place of the piece
Audience	Group of readers to whom this piece is directed
Purpose	Reason Behind the text
Speaker	The voice that tells the story

Close Reading of a Literary Passage

To do a close reading, you choose a specific passage and analyze it in fine detail, as if with a magnifying glass. You then comment on points of style and on your reactions as a reader. Close reading is important because it is the building block for larger analysis. Your thoughts evolve not from someone else's truth about the reading, but from your own observations. The more closely you can observe, the more original and exact your ideas will be. To begin your close reading, ask yourself several specific questions about the passage. The following questions are not a formula, but a starting point for your own thoughts. When you arrive at some answers, you are ready to organize and write. You should organize your close reading like any other kind of essay, paragraph by paragraph, but you can arrange it any way you like.

I. First Impressions:

- What is the first thing you notice about the passage?
- What is the second thing?
- Do the two things you noticed complement each other? Or contradict each other?
- What mood does the passage create in you? Why?

II. Vocabulary and Diction:

- Which words do you notice first? Why?
- How do the important words relate to one another?
- Do any words seem oddly used to you? Why?
- Do any words have double meanings?
- Look up any unfamiliar words. For a pre-20th century text, look in the [Oxford English Dictionary](#) for possible outdated meanings.