

The Language of Literary Analysis

TONE WORDS

accusatory
 admiring
 afraid
 ambivalent
 amused
 analytical
 angry
 annoyed
 apathetic
 apologetic
 approving
 audacious
 bemused
 benevolent
 bitter
 bored
 callous
 calm
 candid
 cautious
 childish
 cold
 comic
 compassionate
 complimentary
 conciliatory
 condescending
 confident
 confiding
 confused
 contemplative
 contemptuous
 contented
 critical
 curious
 cynical
 derisive
 detached
 didactic
 disappointed
 disdainful
 disgusted
 dismayed
 disparaging
 dramatic
 dreamy
 earnest
 ecstatic
 effusive
 elated
 elegiac
 energetic
 enthusiastic
 exaggerating
 facetious
 factual
 fanciful
 fascinated
 flippant
 forgiving
 forthright

frivolous
 giddy
 gloomy
 grudging
 happy
 harsh
 haughty
 hollow
 hopeless
 horrific
 humorous
 impartial
 impulsive
 incisive
 indignant
 indulgent
 informal
 informative
 insisting
 instructive
 irate
 ironic
 irreverent
 joking
 jovial
 joyful
 judgmental
 learned
 lyrical
 matter-of-fact
 melancholy
 mocking
 mordant
 mournful
 nostalgic
 objective
 optimistic
 passionate
 patronizing
 peaceful
 pensive
 persuasive
 pessimistic
 pitiful
 plaintive
 playful
 poignant
 pretentious
 proud
 provocative
 puzzled
 querulous
 reflective
 regretful
 remorseful
 resentful
 resigned
 respectful
 restrained
 reverent
 sad
 sarcastic

sardonic
 satiric
 satisfied
 scornful
 sentimental
 serene
 severe
 sharp
 silly
 sincere
 solemn
 somber
 spiteful
 straightforward
 strident
 superficial
 suspicious
 sweet
 sympathetic
 taunting
 thoughtful
 tired
 tolerant
 troubled
 unsympathetic
 upset
 urgent
 vexed
 vibrant
 wary
 whimsical
 wistful
 witty
 wry
 zealous

STYLE WORDS

abstract
 argumentative
 colloquial
 complex
 concrete
 conversational
 descriptive
 detached
 disingenuous
 disjointed
 effusive
 expository
 figurative
 homespun
 informal
 instructive
 metaphorical
 moralistic
 objective
 pedantic
 plain
 poetic
 precise
 reasoned
 scholarly

symbolic
 terse
 trite
 understated
 wry

MOOD WORDS

bleak
 dark
 delirious
 dismal
 eerie
 elegiac
 haunting
 lonely
 ominous
 peaceful
 playful
 quizzical
 reproachful
 satiric
 serene
 soothing
 suspenseful
 tense
 threatening
 uplifting
 whimsical

CHARACTER WORDS

absorbed
 aggressive
 aloof
 ambitious
 amorous
 anxious
 apathetic
 argumentative
 arrogant
 bitter
 bored
 carefree
 careless
 cautious
 churlish
 compassionate
 conceited
 conniving
 curious
 deceitful
 demure
 detached
 devious
 devoted
 dishonest
 easygoing
 envious
 exacting
 frantic
 fretful
 gregarious
 intelligent

irritable
 loquacious
 manipulative
 mendacious
 naive
 nervous
 noble
 outgoing
 patient
 picky
 scrupulous
 self-involved
 sincere
 sloppy
 spontaneous
 suspicious
 talkative
 testy
 uninvolved
 unpredictable
 vindictive
 welcoming
 wise
 worried


DICTION WORDS

abstract diction
 concrete diction
 connotation
 denotation
 elevated/formal
 low/informal
 colloquial
 conversational
 jargon
 slang

SYNTAX WORDS

balanced sentence
 complex sentence
 compound sentence
 compound-complex sentence
 declarative
 exclamatory
 imperative
 interrogative
 interruption
 inversion
 juxtaposition
 loose/cumulative sentence
 parallel structure
 periodic sentence
 repetition
 rhetorical question
 simple sentence

Style Analysis Notes

 Domain	Questions to Ask
Imagery Sensory details Symbols Allusions Words/Phrases Effect/Intent Connection to: Mood/Tone Theme Plot Character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What sensory information do I find in the language: colors, scents, sounds, tastes, or textures? • What is the author trying to convey or achieve by using this imagery? • Are these images part of a larger pattern or structure within the text (e.g., do the images connect to one of the major themes)? • What figures of speech—metaphors, similes, analogies, personification—does the writer use? How do they affect the meaning of the text? What is the author trying to accomplish by using them?
Diction Types Slang Colloquial Jargon Dialect Formal Concrete Abstract Denotation Connotation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which of the following categories BEST describes the diction in the passage or text? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal (e.g., dialect, slang, or jargon) • Formal • Abstract or concrete • Denotative (direct) or connotative (suggestive) • What effect is the author trying to achieve through the use of a specific type of diction? • What does the author’s use of diction suggest about his or her attitude toward the subject, event, or character? • What are the connotations of a given word used in a particular context? (To begin, you might ask if particular words have a positive or negative connotation and then consider them in the specific context.) • What words would best describe the diction in a specific passage or the text in general?
Syntax Sentence structure Sentence patterns Declarative Imperative Interrogative Exclamatory Simple Compound Complex Compound-Complex Loose/Cumulative Periodic Balanced Inversion Interruption Juxtaposition Parallelism Repetition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Punctuation</i>: How does the author punctuate the sentence, and to what extent does the punctuation affect the meaning? • <i>Structure</i>: How are words and phrases arranged within the sentence? What is the author trying to accomplish through this arrangement? • How would you characterize the author’s syntax in this text? • <i>Changes</i>: Are there places where the syntax clearly changes? If so, where, how, and why? • <i>Sentence length</i>: How many words are in the different sentences? Do you notice any pattern (e.g., a cluster of short sentences of a particular type)? • <i>Devices</i>: How would you describe the author’s use of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent and dependent clauses • Coordinating, subordinating, or correlative conjunctions • Repetition • Parallelism • Fragments • Comparisons • <i>Sentence beginnings</i>: How does the author begin his or her sentences? (Does the author, for example, consistently begin with introductory phrases or clauses?) • <i>Language</i>: What use does the author make of figurative language or colloquial expressions?
Attitude (Tone) Word choice Details Imagery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the author’s use of words, details, or imagery, such as gesture or allusions, reveal the author’s attitude toward a character or event in the story? • What words best describe the author’s attitude toward this subject, character, or event?
Literary Elements Setting Characterization Plot Theme Point of View Tone/Attitude	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the author’s use of these different elements contribute to the text’s meaning? • Do the different elements interact with or otherwise affect the meaning of other elements? • Do you notice any significant shifts in any of the elements at any point? If so, what changes, and how and why? What is the importance and meaning of this change? • What words best describe the different use of these elements? For example, how would you describe the point of view and the effect it has on the meaning of the text?
Organization Compare/Contrast Importance Chronology Cause-Effect Order of Degree Classification Spatial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which organizational pattern does the author use? • Why does the author choose to use that particular organizational strategy? • Are there places where the author blends or alternates between different organizational patterns? If so, what is the author trying to accomplish by mixing them in these ways? • To what extent and in what ways do you think the author’s organizational strategy is effective? Why?
Types of Writing Narrative Persuasive Expository Descriptive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Exposition</i>: Is the author defining, comparing, classifying, analyzing (a process), describing, or narrating? • <i>Persuasion</i>: Is the author arguing about what something means, whether something is true, which alternative is the best (or most important), or what course of action someone should take? • <i>General</i>: What is the author trying to accomplish? How is the writer using, for example, narrative writing to solve that problem?