



Basics of the Analysis Essay for AP English Language

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Just What Is an AP English Language Analysis Essay?

Generally, the student is presented with a prose passage that can be drawn from various genres and time periods. Although the specific tasks asked of the student may vary from year to year, they almost always involve the analysis of language, including rhetorical strategies and stylistic elements. (If you are in doubt about the meaning of the underlined terms, make certain to refer to the Glossary and the Comprehensive Review section.)



You may be extremely lucky and find a familiar piece by a familiar author. This certainly can enhance your comfort level. But, don't try to plug into the question everything you know about that author or selection if it does not exactly fit the prompt. Likewise, do not be rattled if you are unfamiliar with the work. You will be familiar with the approaches necessary to analyze it. Remember, this exam reaches thousands of students, many of whom will be in a similar situation and equally anxious. Be confident that you are thoroughly prepared to tackle these tasks and have fun doing so.

What Is the Purpose of the Analysis Essay?

The College Board wants to determine your facility with reading, understanding, and analyzing challenging texts. They also want to assess how well you manipulate language to communicate your written analysis of a specific topic to a mature audience. **The level of your writing should be a direct reflection of your critical thinking.**

AP is looking for connections between analysis and the passage. For example, when you find an image, identify and connect it to the prompt. Don't just list items as you locate them.

Types of Analysis Essay Prompts

What Kinds of Questions Are Asked in the Essay of Analysis?

Let's look at a few of the TYPES of questions that have been asked on the AP English Language and Composition exam in the past. These types may seem more familiar to you if you see them in the form of prompts.

- Analyze an author's view on a specific subject.
- Analyze rhetorical devices used by an author to achieve his or her purpose.

- Analyze stylistic elements in a passage and their effects.
- Analyze the author's tone and how the author conveys this tone.
- Compare and/or contrast two passages with regard to style, purpose, or tone.
- Analyze the author's purpose and how he or she achieves it.
- Analyze some of the ways an author re-creates a real or imagined experience.
- Analyze how an author presents him- or herself in the passage.
- Discuss the intended and/or probable effect of a passage.

You should be prepared to write an essay based on any of these prompts. Practice. Practice. Practice. Anticipate questions. Keep a running list of the kinds of questions your teacher asks.

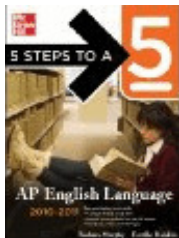
It's good to remember that the tasks demanded of you by the question remain constant. What changes is the source material on which you base your response to the question. Therefore, your familiarity with the terms and processes related to the types of questions is crucial.



Don't be thrown by the complexity of the passage. *You* choose the references you want to incorporate into your essay. So, even if you haven't understood everything, you *can* write an intelligent essay—AS LONG AS YOU ADDRESS THE PROMPT and refer to the parts of the passage you do understand.

Watch for overconfidence when you see what you believe to be an easy question with an easy passage. You are going to have to work harder to find the nuances in the text that will allow you to write a mature essay.

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