

Three-Column Analysis

What the Writer Says First Reading: Read for <i>literal meaning</i>	What the Writer Does Second Reading: Annotate for the <i>tools</i> (elements)the writer uses	What the Writer Implies Final Reading: Draw conclusions about <i>the effect</i> of the tools used (theme, characterization, etc).
<p>Misreading occurs when students divorce their interpretation from the literal story line of the work. You MUST first understand what is actually there on the page.</p> <p>Consider the following literary elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaker and Point of View: From whose perspective is the story told and what effect does that have on the way you see what is happening? Is the narrator reliable? What biases does the narrator have? Does gender or age matter? Is the narrator trying to hide something? If so, what? • Setting: Where are you and why does it matter? When does the story occur? • Character: Who is the narrator and what do you know about him/her? Who else is in the work and what are they like? • Situation: What is happening? Literally. • Conflict: What problem(s) does the narrator face or describe? Who or what causes the problem? <p>If the language is not literal, still visualize it as if it were.</p>	<p>The text of the work appears in this column. This time, read to identify the tools the writer uses. Consider the following tools/elements:</p> <p>Diction: Which words stands out as having a strong punch of meaning? Why do they capture our attention? Is it denotation or connotation?</p> <p>Images: What images seem especially strong or important?</p> <p>Details: More factual than images, which seem important and why?</p> <p>Figurative Language: The list is long, but the basics are metaphor, simile, personification, hyperbole, allusion, symbol, and irony. If you can't tell what device is used but recognize it is not literal language and seems important, mark it anyway.</p> <p>FYI: A metaphor and simile compare something literal in the story to something seemingly dissimilar but really related to understand the original thing better. A symbol is something literal in the story that stands for or evokes an abstract idea. A motif is a recurring element that occurs throughout a work.</p> <p>Syntax: Consider the arrangement of the words, both in individual sentences and paragraphs as a whole, the structure and length of sentences, as well as the punctuation (or lack thereof) contained within the sentences. It will be pointless to write about syntax, however, unless you can tie it to meaning (theme).</p>	<p>For each of the tools marked in column 2, draw a conclusion about the effect of that tool <u>in the context of the literal situation!</u> Ground your conclusions in close attention to the implications of the specific tools in the text. Do not discuss something that is not in the text. All assertions must be supported with evidence from the text!</p> <p>Look for irony (Trust me, it is there more often than it is not – “Irony trumps everything.”)</p> <p>Determine tone and mood (the narrator’s attitude and the author’s). More often than not, the narrator’s attitude is not the same as the author’s. Also, be on the lookout for shifts or changes in both tone and mood. These changes can be signaled by conjunctions and abrupt changes in syntax.</p> <p>This column will primarily be determined by what the prompt is asking you to do.</p>
<p>Focus Statement: Write one sentence that includes author, title, literal situation, tone, and theme. Do NOT use those words, however. There’s no need to say “...a tone of anger...” or “the theme of love...” Instead, for example, write something like, In Paul Smith’s “So Long, Farewell,” the speaker confronts his cheating lover in an exclusive and very public restaurant [literal situation] and through his cool and sarcastic dialogue [tone] with his beloved declares that romantic love is a fraud women commit through their insincere and untrustworthy flattery of men to get what they want [theme].</p>		