

ANALYZING A TEXT

What is a text?

Written text:	A poem, story, novel, memoir, or essay.
Pictorial text:	Advertisements, posters, paintings, illustrations, or works of art.

Why analyze a text?

- To give a close reading of the text
- To compare with other texts
- To find sub-text (meaning beneath the obvious meaning of the text)
- To connect background info to the text and understand it in a deeper way.
- To place the text within the context of the author's life, its historical period, or a literary or artistic movement
- To prove a larger thesis about a writer's motivation or about themes that interested writers at a certain time

When you analyze a text, you give it meaning beyond what the text tells you directly.

What is analysis?

When you **analyze** a text, you ask questions about it so that you can offer an interpretation of the text.

How can you find a thesis?

- Read the text more than once. What's interesting, odd, unexpected, or troubling?
- Write down questions you might ask about the text.
 - Evaluate the questions as you write them and check which relate to one another.
 - Look for patterns in your questions to discover what's interesting about the text.
- Your questions will help you find a thesis (an idea about the text to discuss by referring to specific details of the text).

Your analysis should be placed in some context of its own.

Your reader **should not** come to the end of your essay and think, “so what?”
Give your reader a sense of the **significance of your analysis**:
How does your analysis enhance your reader’s consideration of this text?

Use these questions to help formulate specific questions about a text:

1. What is the problem/question that motivates the author?

2. From what context is the author writing?

3. What assumptions does the author bring to the text?

4. What argument is the author putting forth?

5. What contradictions do you find in the text? How do they affect your understanding?

6. What evidence does the author use to support his/her assertions? Why?

7. How is the text structured? How does it affect your understanding of the argument?

8. What rhetorical choices (style or word choice) does the author make? How do those choices help to convey the meaning of the text?

9. What do you think are the key passages in the text? Why are they important? How do they work with the rest of the text to convey the author’s meaning?

10. What assumptions do you bring to the text? To what extent has the author considered your needs as a reader?
