

Chapter 2

Analytic Writing in College: Forms, Sites, and Strategies

Mary Kay Mulvaney

We are constantly “analyzing” our environment. In the course of the past few hours, I have analyzed student requests appearing among a lengthy list of emails, prioritized them and initiated various strategies of response; I have analyzed program descriptions of a conference I am attending and judged the appropriateness of their content relative to my professional interests in order to select which sessions I will attend; I have analyzed my options for getting to the airport as I prepare to leave the conference, making a decision relative to time, budget, distance, and so forth. Countless examples of relatively trivial things such as these enter our schedules each day, and while we attend to them, we rarely, if ever, consider the nature of the actual process of analysis we use to do so. Of course, because the above items are fairly mundane and straightforward, they can be analyzed fairly quickly and easily. Our students cope with trivial instances of analysis on a regular basis as well. For example, dress choices for a given school day are “usually” quickly analyzed in light of weather conditions, recently worn clothing, availability of clean laundry, anticipated peer encounters that day, and so forth. But of course, change the venue from “school day” to something like “senior prom,” and a whole new set of choices and contributing factors complicate the analytic demands.

Within an academic context, the process of analysis is generally much more complex, but at its core, analysis involves similar steps, no matter what the circumstances. As Chapter 1 of this volume explains, analysis always involves looking at how an entity’s *parts*—the student emails that need answering, the various session descriptions of the conference program, the possible routes to the airport, the items of clothing one could put on, as well as, for example, the organization, syntax, and diction of a text—constitute its *whole*, its meaning, purpose, or effect. In addition, analysis always involves *reacting* and *generating*: reacting to a text or an event by analyzing it, noting how its parts constitute its whole; and generating a clear explanation of the analysis. Failing to recognize the basic nature of analysis and lacking tools to react analytically to a text and generate an original response to it, college students often find the demands of analytic writing quite daunting. In an effort to assist teachers in preparing young writers for the demands of college-level analytic writing, this chapter will examine three things: 1) specific forms that analysis typically takes in the college setting; 2) common places that students might expect to encounter college-level analytic writing; and 3) useful considerations in preparing students for responding successfully to those encounters.

Forms of Analysis Demanded in College

College students face challenges of analysis in their personal lives that directly or indirectly affect their academic lives. Personally, for example, they face an array of decisions involving analysis: what courses to register for, what major to declare, what fraternity or sorority to pledge, what internship to secure, what extra-curriculars to join, and so forth. All of these quandaries involve the classic part-to-whole nature of analysis. Tacitly, the students might ask themselves, "What parts of my personal experience will build the *whole* person I want to become?" Within their academic curriculum, students find that occasions involving analysis will take many forms as well—oral, visual, or electronic, as well as, of course, written analysis.

Students in college are sometimes given an analysis assignment involving primarily oral forms. They may be asked to analyze a famous speech, a radio press conference, a taped interview or significant conversation, a frequently-heard radio advertisement, or a timely political debate. In each of the above instances, in addition to examining the content, audience, purpose, and context required to conduct any analysis (details of these will be discussed below), students need to consider aspects of delivery such as pace, tone, articulation, expression, and so forth. As an extension of such an assignment, students may be asked to in turn create their own oral text, by articulating the results of their analysis in their own speech, oral report, or recorded critique. In other words, they may be asked to react to and then generate oral forms of communication.

Students may also be asked to analyze visual forms, such as a provocative billboard or an intriguing work of abstract art or an important but ineffective brochure. (The Advanced Placement English Language and Composition Examination moved to incorporate the analysis of visual artifacts, beginning with the 2007 examination.) In these occasions, once again students would need to consider content, audience, purpose, and context, but they would also need to consider elements such as the use of colors, line, shape, textures, layout, size, and so forth. In turn, upon conducting their analysis by reacting to a given visual form, they may be called upon to generate another visual in response – such as a magazine advertisement offering a counter-message to the one they analyzed, a series of photographs attempting to express a similar abstraction of an image or concept, or a revised brochure.

Increasingly, students are being challenged to analyze various electronic forms of communication such as websites, emails, PowerPoint presentations, YouTube videos, blogs, and so forth. Here again with these different forms come different demands. In addition to the ever-present aspects of content, audience, purpose, and context are considerations of visual elements, such as color, layout, or shape, and elements of the oral forms such as tone or expression. There are also aspects of technical access, speed, connectivity, delivery, all often issues of much-wider audience potential. Once again when students have reacted to an electronic text they may be asked to generate and articulate their response in an appropriate electronic form such as their own PowerPoint presentation, a blog post with photos uploaded, an updated website, a new video, and so forth.

Sometimes, perhaps since oral, visual, and electronic texts are ubiquitous and demand immediate response, students find analysis of them an easier, or at least a more engaging, form of analysis than analysis of written texts. Their reaction to such texts as a newspaper editorial, an academic journal essay, or a comprehensive letter, *or* their generation of a written report of their analysis, such as an essay exam, a lab experiment discussion section, or the commonly assigned analytic essay often find students bewildered and frustrated.

Indeed, the traditional academic form of analytic writing – the analysis essay – continues to be very challenging for most students on two levels. It demands that they understand how to analyze the text or texts written by others and in turn, it requires that they know how to effectively articulate that analysis in their own original academic essay. In other words, when students are challenged to analyze a written text they struggle, and when challenged to generate their *own* written text in response, their struggle is compounded. Before we turn to some specific strategies to help students address these struggles, it seems useful to identify at least some of the many places that typical college students may expect to encounter demands for analytic writing.

Encounters with Analytic Writing in College

Of course, it comes as no surprise that students would be expected to compose an analytic essay in a college composition class, but students need to recognize that the analysis they perform may not look exactly the same as that required on the A. P. English Language and Composition Examination. Frequently assignments such as the following are included in first-year composition syllabi:

ANALYSIS ESSAY

Assignment –

Write a 4-5 page, typed, double-spaced **analysis** of some aspect of Ehrenreich's text *Nickel and Dimed in America*. You may elect to analyze some aspect of the social ramifications of the "working poor"; some aspect of their lifestyle; some aspect of Ehrenreich's "experiment"; or a blend of analyzing both the topic **and** her treatment of it.

Remember that an analysis includes:

- a *brief* introduction of the overall content of the text/topic being analyzed, including a clear identification of the author, the text, and the context
- a **thesis** sentence (preferably in the opening paragraph), which is a summary statement of *your* position on the essay and/or topic being analyzed
- summary, only as needed, of the main points of the text under scrutiny

- an analysis of the arguments/ assumptions/ accuracy, etc. of the text (depending upon your focus)
- your opinions and ideas in response (agreement or disagreement or a blend) to the author's information and/or presentation, with strong support arguments
- a well-developed conclusion that redirects the reader to *your* thesis and considers implications beyond

Reminder: An analysis includes elements of summary, but it is something very different. An analysis presents an argument, defending a position. The summarized points are to be *interwoven* throughout your argument, not presented in separate sections!

Notice that while the assignment says the “analysis presents an argument, defending a position,” students who have done well in A. P. English Language will recognize that their task is two-fold: To analyze Ehrenreich’s argument itself, *and* to argue for the validity of their own assessment of the book. The former task is completely congruent with the analysis called for by many of the free-response prompts on the A. P. English Language Examination. (In this volume, see Bernard Phelan’s explication of the prompt based on an excerpt of a Scott Russell Sanders essay on the 2007 examination.) The latter task rarely appears on the examination, but is a common extension of analysis found in college assignments.

A first-year college composition student responded to this assignment by composing a six-page, detailed analysis of aspects of the Ehrenreich text, which she entitled “ Help Wanted: Total Authenticity Not Required. [See Appendix 1 for a re-print of the student essay in its entirety.] Megan began her essay with this opening, establishing the subject and the thesis of her analysis:

Life as Barbara Ehrenreich knew it ended over a plate of “salmon and fried greens” (1)! Author of the 2001 book entitled *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America*, Barbara Ehrenreich throws herself back into the world of investigative reporting, shedding her normal lifestyle for that of a low-wage worker. Throughout her novel, Ehrenreich delves into the lives of the working poor and attempts to survive on minimum wage in Florida, Minnesota, and Maine. Those who criticize Ehrenreich’s book say that her minimum wage experiments in these three states are inauthentic. Although Ehrenreich’s experiments are more or less authentic at times, this does not diminish the insights into the lives of the low-wage workers gained by the reader. (excerpt from Megan’s essay)

Once she established the framework, Megan aptly proceeded to analyze various aspects of the authenticity of Ehrenreich’s project, always evaluating its impact in light of the overall relationship to the insights provided the reader—in other words, showing how the parts constitute the whole. A representative segment of her analysis reads as follows:

While evaluating Ehrenreich's experiment, it becomes important to remember that despite more or less authenticity, we as readers are able to gain a better understanding of life for the typical low-wage worker. While Ehrenreich does have certain advantages not available to the working poor, such as her advanced education, car, and savings, the reader is still able to see the social and economic struggles that the working poor are forced to endure. Her advantages don't change the fact that "these jobs were physically demanding, some of them even damaging if performed month after month" (195). Low-wage jobs are often emotionally taxing as well, with little or no praise given for a job well-done. Along these same lines, low-wage workers have become "the untouchables of a supposedly caste-free and democratic society" (117). Ehrenreich characterizes their work as "invisible and even disgusting" (117). She finds it tough to watch her co-workers perform this "disgusting" work for \$6.65 an hour at The Maids and \$2.43 an hour plus inadequate tips at Hearthside (61, 16). Furthermore, despite the inauthentic parts of her experiment, we are still able to discern that when "[people] enter the low-wage workplace—and many of the medium-wage workplaces as well—[they] check [their] civil liberties at the door, leave America and all it supposedly stands for behind, and learn to zip [their] lips for the duration of the shift" (210). Because Ehrenreich doesn't come from this low-wage world, her experiment will in no way be completely authentic. (excerpt from Megan's analysis essay)

Megan clearly grasped the requirements of a close reading of the text relative to her thesis and a competent articulation of evidence to support the conclusion her analysis maintains. Commonplace for some time within a composition classes, such assignments are increasingly common college classes in different disciplines. Fostered by the now highly-visible and widely-endorsed Writing-Across-the-Curriculum movement, analytic writing is commonly assigned in nearly every field. Academics throughout the university recognize two important attributes about effective writing – its power as a cognitive and affective heuristic *and* its necessity as a tool to construct meaning and promote activity within all discourse communities. Consequently, college professors increasingly assign analytic writing as a means to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills, as well as to teach content knowledge in a given area, and in turn require students to demonstrate competence in applying that knowledge to appropriate needs, concerns, and issues within a discipline.

Consider, for example, the following list of potential analytic writing assignments for any given college student over the course of his or her academic career:

- An analysis of a journal article reporting on an original study of assessment of child development for an education psychology class. This assignment would call for the student to "unpack" and evaluate both the principles and methods of assessment used.

- An analysis of conflicting management styles in three highly successful Fortune 500 companies for Introduction to Management Theory. This assignment would call for the student to separate the management styles into their component parts and to compare and contrast how each part worked in each of the three companies.
- A literary analysis of the theme of assimilation in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* as discussed in the written novel and as depicted in the recent film version of the novel for a postcolonial literature course. This assignment would ask the student to characterize what aspects of the novel—plotting, characterization, point-of-view, setting, and so on—collectively produce the theme under consideration.
- A comparative sociological analysis of family structures across three different cultural groups: Native American, African American, and Hispanic American. This assignment would call for the student break down the different features of “family structure” and compare and contrast them across the cultures.
- An analysis of chemical data which challenges prevalent popular theories of global warming for a campus symposium on energy for Chemistry 110: Chemistry and the Environment. This assignment would call on the student to separate the data into categories and evaluate the degree to which each category leads to global warming.
- A campus-wide analysis of college students' reticence to register and/or vote in democratic elections for the Dean of Student Affairs as an assignment in a first-year seminar course entitled “Politics and the College Campus.” This assignment would call on the student to generate an instrument to categorize the various reasons students don't vote and then to assess the relative strengths and weaknesses of each reason.
- An analysis of the marketing strategies of automotive producers for diverse audience: recent college graduates and established corporate baby-boomers. This assignment would call for relatively tradition analyses of advertisements, both print and electronic.
- An analysis of U.S. intervention steps in Iraq as a take-home essay exam for a course entitled “Contemporary Politics in the Middle East.” This assignment would ask students to show what the parts of the intervention strategy were and how successful each was.

Obviously, the list could go on and on. Also, quite obviously, many of these assignments would seriously challenge students, requiring them to both understand how to successfully analyze something and how to demonstrate that understanding.

Sometimes entire papers are specifically labeled “analysis papers.” Such papers are very common assignments in literature classes, and prompts calling for such tasks are commonplace on the A. P. English Literature and Composition Examination. Literary analysis, focusing on a literary feature of a short story or novel or poem, such as an aspect of plot, narration and point of view, character, structure, symbolism, setting or theme, is often the primary activity of any

literature course. Composing a literary analysis involves careful reading of the literary work, followed by a detailed examination and interpretation of the work. A literary analysis paper will assert a claim and provide “evidence” from the literary text itself to support the claim. It will also provide additional evidence for the analysis by drawing upon the analytical discussion of previously-published professional literary critics. For example, a claim might be asserted that a particular character is motivated by cultural expectations of his time. Then the writer would locate specific examples and evidence of those cultural norms throughout the text, supporting the claim asserted and then cite scholarly articles of literary criticism that reinforce the claim. In doing so, the writer offers an analysis of an aspect of the novel involved. The writer’s ideas are not specifically stated in the original work, but rather are created in response to the original work. Thus, the analysis becomes an extension of the original text.

Let’s look at one student’s response (let’s call her “Holly”) to the first example mentioned in the list of possible college analysis assignments in which a student successfully meets the demands of a given analytic writing assignment outside of the conventional English class. This assignment occurred within EDU311: Educational Psychology. The syllabus stated the requirement of a “Journal Article Analysis Paper” and provided the following details:

Choose one research journal article based on an original research study (no meta-analyses) that is related to one of the following course topics: child development (ages 5-18), or pK-12 instruction, learning, motivation, classroom/ school environment, or assessment. Then write your analysis consisting of the following 7 components:

1. summary of the theory/ models/ concepts/ and prior research on the topic
2. participants and methods used to collect the data,
3. research question of the study
4. type of research study (descriptive, co-relational, experimental),
5. findings
6. limitations of the study, and
7. significance of the study for classroom teachers or professionals in education.

The analysis should be no more than 4 pages in length, double-spaced, and word-processed. A copy of the research article should be attached to the paper. Do not quote any parts of the article. At the top of the paper, provide the complete APA-style citation of the research article. (30 points).

Interestingly, the first five components of the assignment actually call for summarizing and reporting, *not* analysis. However, the sixth component most likely does require original analysis on the part of the student. She must determine the limitations of the study, if they are not specifically acknowledged by the journal article author. Here Holly reports:

The overwhelming weakness of this study is the negative attitude incurred by the teachers. It is very difficult to evaluate this study because of the bias brought on by the teachers. Through the interviews, it seems as though teachers felt disgruntled by lack of consultation prior to implementation and lack of support throughout the program. Another program would have created a stronger study, as it sounds like there were some underlying political issues within the school that was used. Also, because only one school was studied, the sample size is far too small to draw adequate conclusions and to make generalizations about all single-sex programs. Another factor discussed in the study was that in the creation of single-sex classrooms, the number of students per classroom increased, creating a more stressful and less safe environment for both students and teachers. (excerpt from Holly's paper) [Note: See Appendix 2 for the reprint of the student's paper in its entirety.]

The seventh requirement calls for the student to extend *beyond* analysis and to generate a response, determining the significance of this study for a specific audience. The final section of Holly's essay reads as follows:

Perhaps the best suggestion that this study offers to educators and professionals is how *not* to run a single-sex program. The study demonstrates the importance of collaboration and mutual respect among teachers and administrators. The study also, because of its poorly designed nature, offers hope to educators that perhaps single-sex classrooms can be successful in a well-managed, well-prepared environment. It certainly offers motivation to the so-inclined researcher to continue studying the topic and search for contrasting research. (excerpt from Holly's paper)

Clearly, the definitions and expectations of analytic writing assignments in college can and probably will vary considerably. There is no lack of possible places for analytic writing to appear within a college curriculum, presenting numerous challenges for college students today. The more strategies that students possess to face those challenges, the more successful they will be in managing college analytical writing tasks.

Teaching Analytic Writing

Recognizing analysis as a complete process of seeing the parts' relation to the whole, reacting to texts and events, and generating a clear text that reports the analysis and occasionally extends beyond it is crucial for success in college. Assisting students to succeed at analysis requires time, energy, and intentional instruction that includes: 1) an examination of the nature of "analysis," particularly as it differs from other cognitive and linguistic processes; 2) an exploration of the requisite components that *always* constitute an effective analysis besides basic understanding of content, namely, context, audience, and purpose; and 3) a careful articulation and examination of several of the most commonly employed rhetorical devices used to accomplish a given purpose. This section will discuss these three aspects of teaching analytical writing,

concluding with a close reading and discussion of a recent AP English Language Exam prompt that required an analysis essay in response.

Defining Analysis

First of all, it is extremely important that students recognize “analysis” as a complex cognitive and linguistic process that is quite different from a process of observation and reporting or of reading and summarizing. Observation and reporting implies that you look carefully and record or recall what you see. And even though different viewers would see different things, many people will report the same basic things, offering no opinion or explanation regarding their observations. Similarly, to write a summary, a student need only ask a single basic question -- “what?” In other words, the main purpose is to determine the essence of what the author has stated or what has occurred at a particular site, and then restate that, in a shortened version, in his/her own words. Strictly speaking, a summary prohibits commentary, opinion, interpretation of the “what” the original author presents. Analysis is, of course, quite the opposite. Creating an analysis demands that the student move beyond determining “what” and ask several other questions, such as “why?,” “how?,” “so what?,” and “what if?.” The written text or event or reported observations must now be considered carefully asking, “what might this really mean?,” “how does this relate to other facts or ideas already possessed?,” “what implications might it offer for certain actions or other perspectives?,” and so forth. Then students must assert certain opinions and interpretations about the information or ideas analyzed.

Most likely during college, the purpose of many assignments confronting students will be to analyze the reasons, motivations, effectiveness, and so forth of a given text or group of texts. To prepare high school students for college-level writing, A. P. instructors could introduce them to some basic differences between college writing and high school writing. College-level projects anticipate a far greater level of personal, scholarly involvement; that is, they demand an engagement on the student’s part that includes original, personal analysis. Simply put, college instructors (and, therefore, good A. P. teachers) want students to process and then create, *not* regurgitate. They want to see evidence of original, critical thinking on the student’s part that has enabled him/her to “create again something new.”

In the language of rhetoric and language scholars, one might say that the projects are epistemic or “knowledge-creating” rather than simply being reproductive or “knowledge-recording,” as many high school assignments are. It is up to students to begin to create new knowledge – to question existing ideas, to make connections with various theories and forge new ground – to not be content to simply identify and then mimic back what others have already said and thought. In order to generate “informed” opinions – in order to generate new ideas – students must know what the current thoughts are on a topic and must recognize that true academic writing is never done in isolation, rather it is part of a conversation – a conversation with other scholars who are also continually questioning, exploring, stretching the boundaries of existing theories and thought, trying to create new perspectives to understand various aspects of our human experience.

Thus, students need to understand that analysis is a sort of “meta” activity by its very nature, quite different from summarizing or reporting. When someone analyzes a text, it is also necessary to move well beyond simply re-stating the author’s language or ideas – in fact, a complete re-packaging occurs. Analysis demands that students carefully explore the unstated or tacit aspects of a given text, in order to begin to see how and why it makes meaning with words and then they must determine and articulate a reasoned reader response to those words.

In order to demonstrate to students the basic difference between summary and analysis, it may be useful to tape a segment of a political speech, presidential press conference, or debate, which is followed by a commentary segment. First, students could watch the speech or debate and simply record “what” was said, as literally as possible. Then they could listen to the commentaries offered soon after. Students should note how the interpreters (ideally from more than one perspective) will “analyze” the words delivered. Even though the literal words, the “what,” was the same for all hearers, the commentaries will vary tremendously. Students should recognize that these interpretations or analyses are asking the “why?,” “so what?,” “what if?” and “so now what?,” types of questions. These questions and answers are never the same for and by all listeners. Surely, even within the classroom, students will analyze the same words heard with very different results. Similarly, you might ask student to watch a short film clip and then ask them to record exactly what happened. Students could compare recordings and then write a brief interpretation of the meaning of what they saw, once the facts of the “what” are agreed upon. Students can compare their responses, debate the inevitable differences, and then read and compare professional film critiques that offer analyses of the film. Finally, they could discuss and compare those to each other and to the inevitable differing reactions of the students themselves. These suggested exercises can serve as a first step to moving toward an understanding of where and how those differences arose and provide insight into how analysis is conducted.

Components of Analysis

Exercises such as these can launch an explanation of the requisite features of analysis, which always operates beyond the basic level of comprehension of content and a surface understanding of vocabulary and sentence structure. Effective analysis must consist of a careful exploration of three things beyond basic content: *purpose*, *context*, and *audience*.

Any analysis must begin with a consideration of the purpose of a text. The most basic “move” of analysis is to determine how the parts of a text lead to its accomplishment of purpose. For any text to exist, first there needs to be an occasion, an impetus—in formal discussions of rhetoric, it usually referred to as *exigence*—that motivates a need for a text. Exigence *precedes* a text, so exigence does not equal purpose. *Purpose* is what the text, created in response to the exigence, is intended to do. For example, a eulogy is written in response to an exigence, a community’s sorrow, grief, and need to formalize the death of a member of its community. The purpose of the eulogy is most likely to honor the deceased.

The purpose of any given type of text can vary tremendously. Consider, for example, the eulogy of Brutus provided by Marc Anthony in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*; clearly, the purpose of this famous "Brutus is an honorable man" speech is not to honor, but to shed considerable doubt on Brutus's reputation and indeed, to stir the subjects of the murdered Caesar to revolt. Moreover, the purposes of texts are certainly multiple. A single text, for example, can accomplish one or more of the following purposes:

To record information

To help someone retain information

To explain processes

To communicate facts or ideas to someone else

To explore significant and/or mixed feelings

To figure out what you really mean or think about a subject

To demonstrate knowledge to others

To share information with others

To persuade others they should adopt a new course of action or change opinions

To evaluate the perspectives of others, and so forth.

When considering the notion of context, you might first lead a brainstorming session of all the *possible* things that influence the context of any written text. Students will ideally produce a list including:

- the time period a text was written;
- the significant events occurring during that time period, whether directly related or seemingly unrelated to the text;
- the physical or virtual place the text was produced and the primary features of that place;
- the primary methods of communication during that time – consider for example, the potential differences between a telegraph message and an email message;
- the cultural groups (primary or marginalized) involved as subjects of the text and/or as the intended audience(s) of the text;
- important text(s) that this text was written in response to;
- responses that it or similar texts generated at the point of its original publication and/or throughout time and/or current responses

AND, the "speaker" (writer) of the text, include considering any information about their personal background, expertise (or not) about the subject, previous publications, and so forth. [Note: Of course, it is possible to consider the speaker/writer as separate from discussions of the context. In fact, students will often *not* initially identify the speaker as part of the context of the text. However, it can be a useful way for students to understand that for analysis to occur, an analyst must first admit that no text is created in a vacuum and that indeed, the

author of a text, with his/her unavoidable cultural perspectives, is a part of the context from which the text emerges.]

When initially guiding students to assess the importance of “context,” a specific example is usually the most effective. Let’s examine a simple, straight-forward English sentence: “Smiling tentatively, she walked through the door of Jackson High to begin her first day.” Students can discuss the meaning of this simple sentence if the context is the following: *It is part of a letter to a close friend, written by a divorced mother of an only child who lives in a Chicago suburb in 2007, who is now delivering her daughter to an East coast boarding school near her father per the terms of a newly-signed, shared custody agreement.* OR *It is a line from a 1960 small town Alabama newspaper written by a white male journalist covering the first admission of a black teenaged woman to a previously all white high school.* OR *It is a line in a 1980s novel focusing on the experiences of a neophyte teacher or rural background beginning her career in an inn-city high school.*

Discussion of these varied meaning should underscore the point that, clearly, context matters a great deal when analyzing a text. In addition to paying close attention to the multiple complex variables of context to conduct an analysis, it is also crucial to pay close attention to the complexities of *audience*. Every text is always written for some kind of an audience – even if that audience is a private one, such as in a personal journal, for instance. Intensity of audience demands vary from the informal and casual such as when writing a quick email to a friend to extremely complex when writing a document for a highly-specialized professional audience. Most frequently, academic tasks require students to write for an audience of college peers and professors. In the case of *any* audience, an analyst needs to assess the characteristics of the audience itself and the audience’s expectations in order to successfully complete the writing task.

There are numerous “characteristics” of any audience that may significantly influence an effective analysis. In the case of writing an analysis essay as a response to a text, it is necessary, for instance, to analyze the audience of the original text that no doubt influenced the author and then to analyze the audience for the analysis essay as well. They will be different, but equally important factors in both. Some of these audience variables include age, gender, experience/knowledge level, interest, and motivation. These factors will significantly impact just “how much” a writer needs to share with the audience by way of background or groundwork. Consider, for example, the difference between writing an analysis of the remake of a classic film for a professor who has published widely in the field of film studies versus for a campus newspaper’s weekly column on box office hits. Thus, understanding the social characteristics (age, gender, ethnicity) of an audience as well as the level of knowledge and experience an audience possesses can significantly impact the success of the analysis.

Similarly, considerations of audience motivation can affect an analyst’s work. Consider if the audience really “wants” this information? If so, for what purpose? If so, a writer probably can concentrate on informative techniques and clarity issues. But if the writer thinks that an audience “needs” or “should want” this information, persuasive techniques will be much more important than simply providing accurate and comprehensive information. Thus, audience

variables are demanding and complex for a writer of analytic texts -- variables that college students may frequently ignore.

In addition to identifying the purposes, context, and audience of a text, students need to know the tools authors utilize to accomplish purposes, in a context, for an audience. One important set of tools comes to us from some of the earliest language theorists and philosophers, including the ancient rhetoricians, Aristotle and Cicero, who provided a framework for analyzing discourse that is still very useful. In simplistic terms, that framework consists of three lenses: *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*. Some students may find these Greek terms daunting, but in fact, they encounter their essence daily.

Ethos refers to the image that the text develops of the speaker, an image that an author or speaker can use to influence listeners or readers. Students need to learn to analyze the language or ideas of another by looking closely at the ethos of the speaker/writer. For example, students can examine how the writer or speaker presents himself or herself, what aspects of his or her personality comes through in the text, and so forth. One particular consideration for students is how qualified or authoritative a speaker or writer is to discuss a given topic. For example, following advice in an article by Michael Jordan on ways to motivate high school basketball players would no doubt be useful, but adopting his opinions on the appropriateness of the standardized testing for college admissions criteria may be naive. Teachers should instruct students to assess their confidence in the speaker's or writer's ability based on reputation, previous works, recommendations of others, and level of personal involvement. Also, teachers should encourage students to assess how effectively a text is delivered by closely analyzing the attributes of the speaker projected in the text, including his or her apparent knowledge, tone, level of sincerity, vested interest in the topic, and so forth.

Pathos refers to the emotional appeals made to influence an audience. Frequently, information is presented to us in a highly emotionally-charged package – attempting to make us fearful or sympathetic or excited or angry or competitive, for example. These emotional trappings no doubt affect the way we process the information provided. Therefore, students should know that when conducting an analysis, it is crucial to look closely for the emotional appeals present in the argument. They should examine the presence of emotionally-charged language and ideas or examples of poignant, personal examples, for instance. These tools can be highly effective and often are highly appropriate. However, sometimes they might be unethically manipulative. A skillful analyst must always be attentive to emotional appeals and their function and appropriateness in a given text.

Logos refers to the formal arguments, reasons, facts, logical appeals developed in a text. In conducting an analysis, students should first identify the claim(s) asserted and then trace the reasons and evidence provided. They should scrutinize all raw data and question the use of statistics, and they should consider what facts are offered and check the sources and credibility of those facts. Teachers should remind students that even with seemingly hard and fast mathematical statistics or scientific facts, the truth can be skewed, so students should study such data carefully, reflecting on the specific reasons provided to

support a given position and assess their reasonableness. Sometimes there are illogical or fallacious reasons presented to defend a position, so students should weigh the logic of a given assertion. To do so, they must ask the hard questions: Is the claim based on a flimsy sample and then projected to apply to a large group? Is it making an assumption that what applies in one set of circumstances automatically applies in all? Is the evidence provided no longer timely and therefore, no longer valid since newer research have negated the results? In other words, students must work to uncover faulty reasoning. For example, if students are analyzing a speech or a written document, they should ask if the author is basing his or her statements on broad generalizations or on illogical connections between ideas, assuming one thing causes something else when, in reality, it is unrelated.

Many aspects of analyzing the *logos* of a text are universal, but sometimes the criteria for successful logical argumentation are discipline-specific. To begin an analysis of the *logos* of a text for any disciplinary setting, it is useful to instruct students about the basic differences between inductive and deductive reasoning. Students can begin to unpack this distinction by determining if lots of examples are provided and then general conclusions drawn (the inductive process) or if a general, guiding statement is provided and then specific examples are provided as illustration or evidence of the credibility of that statement. Understanding this distinction enables students to comment on the strategy used by an author to project his argument and note the techniques involved.

Another common “logical” strategy in academic writing to support a position is to establish the credibility of value of the argument or position by drawing upon external support. Specifically, invite the students to identify this type of support frequently provided in the form of quoting experts in the field, usually with “tags” provided indicating the relativity and worth, i.e. using the term “historian” or “literary critic,” or “sociologist,” prior to the cited name of the commentator. Frequently, within examples of academic writing, support is further provided through the ample use of cross references, eyewitness testimony, previous studies, and so forth. All of these things are strategies for bolstering the value of the argument, contributing to the credibility of the *logos* of a text. Teaching students to recognize these strategies is crucial to their success as analytic writers.

Calls for analysis in texts will appear in different formats depending upon disciplinary context. Sometimes, as in a laboratory or scientific report, an analysis will be specifically labeled the “analysis or discussion section.” Note this analysis excerpt from a student-written engineering lab report on the strength of steel in tension conditions. The writer offers the following interpretation of the data collected in the “Discussion” section of her report:

In each specimen type the proportional limit was exceeded in the initial loading and thus there remained a permanent strain present in the specimens despite unloading. When loading was continued the specimens ultimately experienced necking and eventual fracture, with the cold rolled steel experiencing a longer necking process before failure, while the hot rolled steel experienced a shorter necking process before failure. This can be justified looking at the values for

ultimate strength, cold rolled steel is higher than that of hot rolled steel, thus allowing cold rolled steel to withstand more necking before fracture.

In conclusion, this lab allowed one to explore the mechanical properties which will influence structural decision making between that of cold rolled and hot rolled steel. The modulus of elasticity, the yield stress, and the ultimate strength are all higher for that of cold rolled steel in comparison to hot rolled steel. Such knowledge is essential, for in design cold rolled steel would be chosen over hot rolled steel in an environment where tensile failure was of concern. This lab offered insight into the testing process and exposed one to the usefulness and importance of uniaxial specimen testing. Despite the small scale nature of this lab, the knowledge and skills obtained in this lab can further add to one's ability to begin to make serious engineering decisions regarding essential materials. (excerpt from Katelyn's lab report) [See Appendix 3 for the lab report in its entirety.]

Note that the writer looks back to consider what her lab findings actually might mean, trying to determine if there are useful generalizations that can be drawn, asking if there are implications for other contexts. In essence, the author is considering the underlying arguments suggested by her findings.

Finally, an important aspect of conducting an analysis of a written text and/or generating one's own analytic essay is understanding commonly-employed language strategies, each of which can appeal to a text's *ethos*, *pathos*, or *logos*. These include, but are not limited to, the use of:

- repetition
- distinctive sentence structures such as the long, periodic sentence or the very short one word sentence exclamation
- contrasts
- irony
- parallelism
- figures of speech like powerful metaphors, personification, isocolon
- classical and intercultural allusions
- proper nouns to create specificity, and so forth.

Teaching students to be attentive to language features and discussing their effects provides a very useful means for them to conduct an effective analysis.

A careful examination of a specific example of a recent AP English Language Exam prompt for the analysis essay might be the best way to demonstrate the teaching of the above-mentioned ways to conduct an effective analysis. The following prompt is shared in the College Board website for review:

2007 AP English Language and Composition

Free-Response Questions (Form B)

Question 3

(Suggested time – 40 minutes. This question counts for one-third of the total essay section score.)

The selections below are taken from a speech delivered in 1861 by Wendell Phillips, a prominent white American abolitionist. The speech, written near the beginning of the Civil War, when Northerners were debating whether to allow African Americans to serve in the military, celebrates the achievements of the Haitian general Toussaint-Louverture (c. 1744-1803). Toussaint-Louverture was a former slave who led the struggle to liberate other enslaved Haitians. At one time, he was the most powerful leader in Haiti, which was threatened alternately by French, Spanish, and British armies.

Read the selections carefully. Then write an essay in which you analyze the strategies that the speaker uses to praise his subject and move his audience.

If I stood here tonight to tell the story of [Napoleon](#), I should take it from the lips of Frenchmen, who find no language rich enough to paint the great captain of the nineteenth century. Were I here to tell you the story of Washington, I should take it from your hearts—you, who think no marble white enough on which to carve the name of the Father of his Country. [Applause.] I am about to tell you the story of a negro who has left hardly one written line. I am to glean it from the reluctant testimony of Britons, Frenchmen, Spaniards—men who despised him as a negro and a slave, and hated him because he had beaten them in many a battle. All the materials for his biography are from the lips of his enemies. . . .

[Toussaint] forged a thunderbolt and hurled it at what? At the proudest blood in Europe, the Spaniard, and sent him home conquered; at the most warlike blood in Europe, the French, and put them under his feet; at the pluckiest blood in Europe, the English, and they skulked home to Jamaica.

[Applause.] Now if Cromwell was a general, at least this man was a soldier. I know it was a small territory; it was not as large as the continent; but it was as large as that Attica, which, with Athens for a capital, has filled the earth with its fame for two thousand years. We measure genius by quality, not by quantity.

I would call him Cromwell, but Cromwell was the only soldier, and the state he founded went down with him into his grave. I would call him Washington, but the great Virginian held slaves. This man risked his empire rather than permit the slave trade in the humblest village of his dominions.

You think me a fanatic tonight, for you read history, not with your eyes, but with your prejudices. But fifty years hence, when Truth gets a hearing, the Muse of History will put Phocion of the Greek, and Brutus for the Roman, Hampden for England, Fayette for France, choose Washington as the bright, consummate flower of our earlier civilization, and John Brown the ripe fruit of our noonday, then, dipping her pen in the sunlight, will write in the clear blue, above them all, the name of the soldier, the statesman, the martyr, [Toussaint Louverture](#). [Long-continued applause.]

Consider this prompt in light of the major aspects of analysis discussed above – considerations of context, audience, and purpose and common rhetorical devices to fulfill purpose. In the case of the above prompt, students are provided with numerous helpful details of the context. Encourage students to read those carefully. For example, discuss the importance of the 1861 date and the comment that this is the very beginning of the Civil War; people may still need to be educated about its purposes, including the value and/or the moral imperative of abolition; people are not yet weary of the War; people may be wary of its value for them personally, and so forth. All of these factors can impact the audience. Of course, the detail of context that this author is a “white American abolitionist” (Wendell Phillips) is critical to an understanding of his perspective and agenda in delivering this speech. Discuss with the students ways in which Phillips establishes his ethos as a highly educated man able to make numerous historic and classical allusions. Finally, the background information about Toussaint-Louverture as a powerful leader, able to defeat the major Western European military forces of his time, is crucial to understanding the value of Phillips’ selection of this figure to make his point.

The specific task asked of the students is to “analyze the strategies” employed by this speech giver (Phillips). It is NOT, for example, to analyze the value of the content regarding the feasibility of freeing the slaves, nor to analyze Phillips’ specific purpose in giving this particular speech. In fact, the purpose of the speech is clearly stated in the prompt -- “to praise the subject and move his [Phillips’] audience.” Certainly, a very important basic strategy for assisting your students is having them practice reading the prompt and determining *very carefully* what it is really asking them to do. Understanding the specific context, audience, and purpose is, however, extremely helpful for conducting an analysis of the “strategies” (the prompt request), employed by the speaker in his attempt to accomplish that purpose with that audience. Let’s examine this prompt closely for those strategies.

To establish a credible *ethos*, Phillips begins by establishing his knowledge of history through his references to Napoleon. He also contributes to an ethos of dedicated patriot and appeals to his audience’s emotions of patriotic empathy

providing a personal appeal to this American audience by acknowledging that their hearts are inscribed with a nationalistic pride in our founder George Washington. Phillips then uses the strategy of simultaneously juxtaposing comparison and contrast. He first compares a nearly illiterate Negro with examples of universally-acknowledged examples of greatness in Western culture (i.e., Napoleon and Washington) thus, placing him in the company of saviors and fathers of nations. Then he simultaneously contrasts the Anglos' legacies of praise from countless fans with the slave's legacy of greatness coming from the "lips of his enemies" (those very white European nationals whom he defeated). The irony of mixing these figures and the sharp contrast of the sources of the praise is one of his first powerful linguistic strategies.

Immediately after drawing upon the two well-known figures of Western culture, Phillips elevates Toussaint-Louverture's status even further, by subtly comparing him to a God, through the use of a classical allusion of hurling thunderbolts. Even if students do not recognize the allusion to Zeus, they should note the figurative language, the obvious exaggeration, indeed, impossibility of a mere mortal to "forge a thunderbolt and hurl it at" someone. Thus, implying, but not explicitly stating, that Toussaint-Louverture possess super-human status.

Phillips then asks the rhetorical question "at what?" does he hurl the thunderbolt, immediately answering it with three poignant examples using specific proper nouns – Toussaint defeated the Spaniard, the French, and the English. Notably, Phillips employs two other powerful language strategies in this short passage. First, he repeats a parallel phrase three times in a row -- "at the proudest blood,.. at the most warlike blood... at the pluckiest blood," -- which provides an emphatic rhythm contributing to the escalating emotional tone of the speech. This is an example of both "anaphora" (repetition of the beginning word in a string of phrases) and of "isocolon" (repetition of phrases or clauses of equal grammatical structure and length). Surely, the specific names of the figure of speech are less important than students recognizing that the speech writer is intentionally manipulating language to accomplish specific effects. That said, it would be useful if students can identify and properly label at least some commonly-used figures of speech, recognizing their power as tools of language. Secondly, Phillips personalizes his attack by indicating that Toussaint sends the "people" home in disgrace, that is, he says the Spaniard, the French, and the English, as opposed to naming Spain, France, and England as the enemies; Phillips recognizes people are more vulnerable and more culpable than nations.

In the next section, Phillips returns to his use of Greek mythology to emphasize the godlike stature of Toussaint, in his reference to Attica (be sure to remind your students to pay close attention to footnotes). He then employs the short, but effective, contrasting phrase, "by quality, but by quantity," again capitalizing on linguistic devices of repetition and parallelism.

Phillips returns to his opening technique of comparing and simultaneously contrasting Toussaint with figure of national and international prominence; he entertains comparing Toussaint with Cromwell or Washington, but immediately dismisses the comparison as inadequate with the use of the powerful conjunction, "but." That little, three-letter word has the potential of negating

everything stated before it with its stark simplicity. Instructing students to note details like this can significantly contribute to their skills as analytic writers.

Phillips then turns to address his audience even more directly, claiming to read their minds, assessing they view him as “fanatic.” He blatantly attacks the audience, notably not until after having won them over numerous times as indicated by the applause comments inserted, by accusing them of reading history with bias. Once again he uses contrasting, but repetitive and similarly constructed phrases, as he states “you read history, not with your eyes, but with your prejudices.” Phillips’ use of parallelism is, indeed, a powerful tool throughout this speech, as he convinces his audience of one element and then quickly shifts gears, demanding compliance to the opposite.

Phillips continually adopts a lofty tone of a position of influence through his possession of incredible knowledge, employing numerous classical allusions. He reinforces the loftiness of his ending with his use of a lengthy, periodic sentence, including a series of embedded clauses. Discuss the effect of this with the students, noting especially that the impact of his concluding words is intentionally delayed through this technique. It is a way of holding the audience in suspense before he delivers his ultimate blow, so to speak. He is, in essence, bringing his audience to a heightened emotional state, before imposing his final message. He quickly follows this with an effective use of the metaphor of the “flower” for Washington (the man responsible for the blossoming of our nation) and “ripe fruit” for John Brown (a popular abolitionist – note the applause – whose time is now. Within this long ending sentence, Phillips also effectively weaves his use of personification through the image of the “Muse of History” . . .” dipping her pen in the sunlight.” In other words, the very course of history will record the greatness of this man against the vastness of the physical universe. Notice how Phillips continues to increase the density of his use of figures and tropes to magnify his message, underscoring the grandeur of the occasion, percolating the emotions of his audience, which he moves toward releasing like a potent gas under intense pressure.

Finally, Phillips employs a common rhetorical strategy for building emotional intensity, namely, using a string of terms without the use of “and” to link them together (“the soldier, the statesman, the martyr, Toussaint-Louverture). He also uses gradually accelerated terms, in that “statesman” trumps “soldier” in importance, and in turn, “martyr” trumps both. Phillips moves his audience to applaud Toussaint by stirring his audience with national pride, moving them to acknowledge white weakness, and to confront the shame of national prejudice. Thus, Phillips not only succeeds in praising his dead hero, but also moves his audience to tacitly acknowledge that abolition is the only option if greatness is to be justly acknowledged.

Leading students through numerous specific examples of a detailed analysis of prompts such as this is crucial for honing their analytic skills. Students must remember to pay close attention to all details of the writing prompt, to all clues of context, including the authorial information, audience, and purpose. Finally, they must be taught to recognize commonly employed linguistic elements to establish a particular *ethos* of a speaker, the use of *pathos* to move an audience, and the varied means to construct an argument (the *logos*) of a text, particularly,

the wide range of language strategies aspects of an argument, pointing out the specific strategies that a writer/speaker employs to achieve his or her effect that a skilled writer and/or orator will employ. Recognizing these strategies enables the student to analyze the message and impact achieved and in turn, to construct an effective analytic essay of his or her own. If prepared like this, students should succeed, not only on the AP English Language Exam, but also when they face the complex demands of analytical writing in its varied forms and places within college, and perhaps, most importantly, as they prepare to be critically-thoughtful citizens of our future world.