

Annotation Acronyms

The following acronyms may help students to remember different elements of writer's craft to consider when annotating a text.

D.U.C.A.T.S. – The “6 gold pieces” of writer's voice

Diction refers to a writer's word choice with the following considerations:

- denotation / connotation of a word
- degree of difficulty or complexity of a word
- level of formality of a word
- tone of a word (the emotional charge a word carries)
- the above will often create a subtext for the text

Unity refers to the idea that all of the ideas in a written piece are relevant and appropriate to the focus.

Some considerations:

- each claim (assertion, topic sentence) supports the thesis
- each piece of evidence is important and relevant to the focus of the paragraph or the piece of writing as a whole
- occasionally, a writer may choose to purposely violate the element of unity for a specific effect (some humorists / satirists will sometimes consciously do this)
- it is important to consider what has been omitted from a piece and examine the writer's intent in doing so

Coherence refers to the organization and logic of a piece of writing; some considerations include:

- precision and clarity in a thesis and supportive arguments
- the arguments ordered in the most effective way for the writer's intent
- the sentences and paragraphs “flow smoothly” for the reader; there should not be any abrupt leaps or gaps in the presentation of the ideas or story (unless the writer makes a conscious choice for a specific and appropriate effect)

Audience refers to the writer's awareness of who will be reading his or her piece of writing; some considerations are:

- Who are the targeted readers?
- How well informed are they on the subject? What does the writer want the reader to learn as a result of this piece?
- What first impression is created for the reader and how does the author's voice shape this first impression?
- How interested and attentive are they likely to be? Will they resist any of the ideas?
- What is the relationship between the writer and the reader? Employee to supervisor? Citizen to citizen? Expert to novice? Scholar to scholar? Student to teacher? Student to student?
- How much time will the reader be willing to spend reading?
- How sophisticated are the readers in regard to vocabulary and syntax?

Tone refers to a writer's ability to create an attitude toward the subject matter of a piece of writing; the tools a writer uses to create tone:

- Diction, Figurative language, Characterization, Plot, Theme

Syntax refers to the arrangement--the ordering, grouping, and placement--of words within a phrase, clause, or sentence. Some considerations:

- Type of sentence
- Length of sentence
- Subtle shifts or abrupt changes in sentence length or patterns
- Punctuation use
- Use of repetition
- Language patterns / rhythm / cadence
- How all of the above factors contribute to narrative pace
- The use of active and/or passive voice

D.I.T.S. – The elements of tone

Diction refers to a writer's (or speaker's) word choice; besides the dictionary definition of a word (its denotation) a word can have an emotional charge or association that creates a secondary meaning (its connotation) "*The difference between the right word and almost the right word is the difference between lightning and a lightning bug.*" Mark Twain

Imagery refers to mental pictures or sensations that a writer evokes in a reader. Look carefully at the pictures that a writer creates; note his/her descriptive details in the setting such as: colors, objects, weather, seasons, use of light or darkness, look at any symbols and what feelings they may suggest.

Theme refers to the author's message or to the overarching idea that the text leads the reader to consider. Think about the author's message; what attitude comes through in his/her main point?

Style refers to the writer's use of language; is it formal, informal, technical? What details did the writer choose to include or omit? Examine the various elements of characterization; assess what messages the writer is sending through his characters' actions, reactions, thoughts, speech, physical description or other character's comments. What feelings are created by the writer's plot? What feelings are created by the conflict and how it is solved or resolved?

Note: A huge thank you goes out to Sarah Ross for compiling the following list of acronyms for her students at Olympia in the form of a *Literary Analysis Guide*. Whenever possible, the original source is acknowledged.

T.A.P.S. - General literary analysis

Topic: What is the topic of the text?

Audience: To whom is the message directed?

Purpose: What is the writer's goal?

Speaker: What can be inferred about the speaker's attitude toward the topic or the audience?

S.O.A.P.S.Tone - Analyzing point of view

Speaker: Is there someone identified as the speaker? Can you make some assumptions about this person? What class does the author come from? What political bias can be inferred? What gender?

Occasion: What may have prompted the author to write this piece? What event led to its publication or development?

Audience: Does the speaker identify an audience? What assumptions can you make about the audience? Is it a mixed in terms of: race, politics, gender, social class, religion, etc.? Who was the document created for? Does the speaker use language that is specific for a unique audience? Does the speaker evoke: Nation? Liberty? God? History? Hell? Does the speaker allude to any particular time in history such as: Ancient Times? Industrial Revolution? World Wars? Vietnam?

Purpose: What is the speaker's purpose? In what ways does the author convey this message? What seems to be the emotional state of the speaker? How is the speaker trying to spark a reaction in the audience? What words or phrases show the speaker's tone? How is this document supposed to make you feel?

Subject: What is the subject of the piece? How do you know this? How has the subject been selected and presented by the author?

Tone: What is the author's attitude toward the subject? How is the writer's attitude revealed?

D.I.D.L.S. – A mnemonic for literary analysis

Diction: the denotative and connotative meanings of words

- different words for the same thing often suggest different attitudes (e.g., happy vs. content)
- denotative vs. connotative (e.g., dead vs. passed away)
- concrete vs. abstract (e.g., able to perceive with 5 senses, tangible, vs. an idea or concept that exists in one's mind, intangible)
- cacophonous vs. euphonious (e.g., harsh sounding, e.g., raucous, croak **or** pleasant sounding, e.g. languid, murmur)

Imagery: Vivid appeals to understanding through the five senses

Details: Facts that are included or those that are omitted

Language: The overall use of language such as formal, clinical, informal, slang, syntactical structure

Sentence Structure: How the author's use of sentence structure affects the reader

S.O.L.L.I.D.D.D. - Analyzing rhetorical elements and author's style

Syntax: Sentence structure

Organization: The structure of sections within a passage and as a whole

Literary Devices: Metaphor, simile, personification, irony (situational, verbal and dramatic), hyperbole, allusion, alliteration, etc.

Levels of Discourse: Cultural levels of language act, with attendant traits (does the narrator's voice represent a particular social, political, or cultural viewpoint or perspective?)

Imagery: Deliberate appeal to the audience's five senses

Diction: Word choice and its denotative and connotative significance

Detail: Descriptive items selected for inclusion

Dialogue: Spoken exchange selected for inclusion

S.M.E.L.L. – Evaluating argumentation and persuasion (with rhetorical appeals)

Sender/receiver relationship: Who is the speaker? Who is the audience? What is the tone directed from one to the other?

Message: What is the content and/or claim?

Evidence: What kind of evidence is given and to what extent?

Logic: What is the quality of the reasoning? What types of appeals are being used?

Language: What stylistic and rhetorical devices are being employed?

3. **SIFTT** Sifting a book is used to pick out specific evidence from the text in order to discover and support the authors overall message.
- The **S** in **SIFTT** stands for symbols. A symbol is a literal real thing that also stands for something else, like a flag, or a cross, or fire. Most anything might be a symbol and finding these symbols help to discover a whole new layer of meaning the author included into the book.
 - The **I** in **SIFTT** stands for imagery. Imagery includes any words the author adds that appeal to one or more of the five senses. Of course, if a place were described in such vivid description that every single imagery detail was covered, you would have a very long book. Authors carefully choose which images to include when writing a book. Close attention to imagery is important in understanding an authors message and attitude toward a subject.
 - The **F** in **SIFTT** stands for figurative language and works closely with the imagery. Figurative language includes things like similes, metaphors, and personification. Figurative language can be used to compare things to other things which, like imagery, can reveal an authors attitude toward a subject.
 - The **T** in **SIFTT** stands for tone. Tone is composed of imagery and figurative language along with diction and other elements. Tone is the overall mood of a piece of literature. Tone can carry as much meaning to the story as the plot does.
 - The second **T** in **SIFTT** stands for theme. In literature, a theme is a broad idea in a story, or a message or lesson conveyed by a work. This message is usually about life, society or human nature. Themes explore timeless and universal ideas. Most themes are implied rather than explicitly stated. Deep thematic content is not required in literature; however, some readers hold that all stories inherently project some kind of outlook on life that can be taken as a theme, regardless of whether or not this is the intent of the author. Themes arise from the interplay of plot, setting, character, conflict, and tone.