

ESSAY ANALYSIS

1. **Pre-Reading:** What is the **title** of the essay? What clues does it give you as to what the essay may be about?

Post-Reading: Explain the meaning of the **title** in relation to the essay. Is the title effective or ineffective? Why?

2. What is the **topic/subject** of the essay?

This can be as short as a word or phrase: war; colonialism; the causes of climate change.

3. What is the **thesis** of the essay? What type of thesis statement does the author use?

*A **thesis** must always be written as a full **statement** (not a phrase or topic or question).*

Thesis - an idea or theory that is expressed as a statement and is discussed in a logical way.

Explicit Thesis Statement – a thesis statement that is obvious and directly stated within an essay; a thesis statement that can be quoted word for word directly from the essay

Initial – a statement found at the beginning of the essay; usually in the first paragraph

Delayed – a statement found later in the essay (other than the first paragraph); often found at the end of the essay

Implicit Thesis Statement - a thesis statement that is not directly stated, but must be inferred by the reader; readers must connect ideas/phrases together to understand the main idea conveyed in the essay

4. Summarize the **main arguments** or ideas expressed by the author.
5. State which **organizational form (type of essay)** is used by the author to give the essay structure, and explain how it is applied to the essay.

Compare and Contrast – Subject by Subject, Point by Point; Cause and Effect – Causal Chain, Single Cause – Multiple Effects, Multiple Causes – Single Effect; Definitional; Narrative

6. What specific **methods** does the author use in order to **develop the argument** and thereby prove the thesis?

Examples, facts, statistics, tables/charts, comparisons, analogies, quotations, definitions, references to authority, anecdotes, reflections, emotional appeals, description, classification, process analysis, enumeration

7. What specific **writing techniques** does the author use in order to reinforce the argument? Why are they effective given the context and purpose?

Rhetorical questions, repetition, climactic or anticlimactic order of words or sentences, variety of sentence length and construction, metaphors, similes, personification, alliteration, hyperbole, litotes, puns, irony, humour, allusions, parallelism (see Literary Terms handout)

8. What is the **tone** of the author's writing?

Tone refers to the "attitude" an author conveys toward a subject or an audience. Tone is generally conveyed through the choice of words, or the viewpoint of a writer on a particular subject. Tone, in a piece of literature, decides how the readers read a literary piece, and how they should feel while they are reading it. The tone can be formal, informal, serious, comic, sarcastic, sad, cheerful, optimistic, pessimistic, bitter, critical, condescending, or it may be any other existing attitude.

9. How does the author **argue** and **persuade**? Does the essay argue the thesis logically, persuade the reader through emotion, or try to do both? Provide examples of the author's attempt to prove his/her thesis logically and examples of his/her attempt to appeal to the reader's emotions.

Consider the following statements. Which one appeals to your logical side (brain)? Which one appeals to your emotional side (heart)? Which one is more persuasive?

- *Last year six (6) illegal immigrants were arrested for criminal activities. This consists of .006% of all illegal immigrants who crossed the border.*
- *A number of illegal immigrants were arrested this year for committing heinous acts and crimes against our trusting citizens.*
- *Sea levels are expected to rise by 2 feet within the next 20 years.*
- *Horrifically, places like the idyllic Solomon Islands will no longer exist once the oceans begin to rise.*