

Analysis:

what an essay's made of

Why bother?

- It's about communication:

Good analysis builds credibility: the care it takes is rhetorically effective.

It also ensures that your reader sees the text your way: it is the only way of being sure to communicate your ideas.

NOTE: Since it is about communication, value clarity and ideas above sounding 'fancy' or academic.

Analysis, itself

- All analysis gets beyond mere description and into examination and explanation.

Summarizing = *WHAT*

Analyzing = *HOW & WHY*

- We already analyze, in our daily life, when we “ask what...something *means*....ask *how* something does what it does or [ask] *why* it is as it is.”

Analysis, itself, ctd.

- So now, you just need to pay attention to it, and make your thought process explicit in writing. Remember how Didion said writing is the tactic of a ‘secret bully’? You need to be that bully.
- Being able to clearly explain, in detail, how an idea or thing works is a crucial communicative skill in many fields.

Good Analysis requires that you:

- Suspend Judgment
- Define significant parts and how they're related
- Make the implicit explicit (!!!!)
- Look for patterns, and for anomalies
- Be open to trial and error

Analysis, in the RA

- Make sure it is rhetorical **analysis**, not interpretation or paraphrase. Make sure you're focused on answering HOW and WHY questions, when you analyze.
- Don't forget to 're-quote' bits when necessary.
- Use opportunities to complicate or limit your claim

Where analysis happens

- You've *announced* in the thesis/statement of purpose, and now in the body you go about *proving*, by *dissecting* the text.
- Think about paragraphs as part of argumentative MOVES you need to make to prove your thesis.
- Consider organizing your analytical sections around INTENT or EFFECT, or perhaps large-scale strategy-- not specific device.

Paragraphs cohere around claims:

- ‘Topic sentences’ are better called CLAIM sentences
- A claim should GROW and DEVELOP across a paragraph (or 2), not stay static.

What else do ¶s do?

- Use convincing and appropriate **evidence** to support the claim.
- Give the **context** of the evidence
- Follow up with a solid **analysis** of the evidence, explaining **how the evidence proves the claim.**
- Build to explaining **how the claim relates to a larger idea** (i.e., conclusion sentence)
- The paragraph should be **organized internally** by Claim, Context/Evidence, and Analysis.

Tips

- When you're re-reading your paper, be sure that you always have in sight a clear central point that connects back to the main idea.
- Watch out for too many ideas at once -- too many claims and too few supporting examples. **SLOW DOWN**
- Also watch out for too much evidence with little to no explanation of how the evidence works. **SLOW DOWN**

Student Sample 1—

Great, but what would make it better?

Junot Diaz appears to limit his audience even more with his use of a very particular type of Dominican Spanish slang; however, one critic notes that he “writes in a sort of streetwise brand of Spanglish that even the most monolingual reader can easily inhale,” making it plausible that limiting his audience to only Spanish speakers may not be Diaz’s goal in intermixing Spanish into the telling of the story (Kakutani).

Although the reader may not understand every reference to Mr. Diaz’s Latino culture or the many Spanish words riddled throughout the story, there is enough of the story written in plain English for anyone to understand what is being communicated. Rather than pushing certain readers away from his book by using this diction, Diaz welcomes all people into the Dominican, immigrant, bilingual culture he, Oscar, and Yunion grew up in. Speaking English out in the world and Spanish at home, many immigrant families end up with a sort of ‘spanglish’ as their native tongue, and implementing this into *The Brief wondrous life of Oscar Wao* gives credibility to the reality of the narrator and the story as a whole. Through his diction, Diaz allows the reader to walk in Oscar’s shoes and live in the world that Oscar lives in. Ultimately, Diaz’s Spanish does not push English only speakers away but draws them further into Oscar’s life.

Student Sample 2–

notice that the contextualization of the evidence ALSO deepens the claim

Throughout the novel, Goldman constantly influences the reader through reminders of the active role of the narrator. *At times, the narrator accomplishes this goal by directly addressing the concerns of the audience, which usually is only possible through the presence of an actual person. For instance, during the scene when Buttercup is in the water surrounded by ravenous sharks, the narrator interjects with an anecdote of when he was told this part of the story by his father:*

She does not get eaten by the sharks at this time,” my father said.

I looked up at him. “What?”

“You looked like you were getting too involved and bothered so I thought I would let you relax. (98)

During that moment in time, Billy (the narrator’s younger self as a child) is the audience, and his father is the narrator. This parallels the present situation, in which Goldman is the narrator and the reader is the audience. Referencing a past but relevant occurrence of storytelling interaction reminds the reader that the narrator is not faceless and irrelevant, but personable and integral to the telling of the story. He has not left the reader nor will stop interacting with him/her, because in oral storytelling, the audience is also part of the storytelling process. The audience decides what to accept, reject, and pass on in future iterations of the story. Thus, it is crucial that the audience is actively interpreting and critically thinking about events that occur in the story.

Student Sample 3

A SAMPLE PARAGRAPH FOR STUDY

THESIS: Virginia Slims uses strong female images promoting powerful women. Further, the “girl power” stereotype entices women into believing smoking will make them more powerful and more successful in life. At the same time, the advertisement downplays all the health risks associated with smoking.

A SUPPORTING paragraph using a quote:

The model portrayed in the Virginia Slims advertisement is portrayed as an “in charge” woman. Thus, the appeal of the cigarettes is to associate smoking with power and freedom. In particular, the advertisement cleverly associates smoking with the idea of “girl power” or women’s progress. The advertisement shows this association through the line, “you’ve come a long way, baby.” This line implies that women used to be at a lower place in society in the past. However, women today have “come a long way,” or advanced their position in society. By associating its cigarettes with women’s progress, the Virginia Slims advertisement implies that part of women’s progress is the ability to smoke. While in the past women had less rights and presumably were unable to smoke, today, they can smoke freely. So, Virginia Slims associates smoking with the having more rights, and the power to do as one pleases. In this way, Virginia Slims is able to lure women to smoke by making it seem as if smoking leads to more freedom for women.

Here’s a break-down of how this paragraph works:

- 1) IDEA—uses two sentences to make its point which is ok for complex ideas. The second sentence contains part of the thesis, “power,” and explains exactly how this advertisement uses this idea to lure women.
- 2) DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS: The writer explains how the ad works to promote certain values, luring its customers. The writer uses many specific details to support her points! In addition, she cleverly unravels the ad’s language, analyzing the deeper meaning of the slogan.