Analysis of a Poem

When you analyze a poem, you examine how its style reveals its deeper meaning. In this workshop, you will write an analysis of a poem in which you examine how a poet uses stylistic elements to create certain effects to convey meaning.

Complete the workshop activities in your Reader/Writer Notebook.

WRITE WITH A PURPOSE

WRITING TASK

Choose a poem, and write an analysis. In your essay, analyze the poet’s use of stylistic elements and their effects, using quotations and other evidence from the poem to support your ideas and help your audience gain a new understanding of the poem’s meaning.

Idea Starters

• effects of imagery in Elizabeth Bishop’s poem “The Fish”
• impact of sound effects in “Ex-Basketball Player” by John Updike
• effect of structure in William Shakespeare’s “Sonnet 18”

THE ESSENTIALS

Here are some common purposes, audiences, and formats for a literary analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PURPOSES</th>
<th>AUDIENCES</th>
<th>FORMATS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>to make sense of</td>
<td>classmates and teacher</td>
<td>essay for class</td>
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<tr>
<td>the meaning of a</td>
<td>fans of a poet</td>
<td>journal</td>
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<td>poem</td>
<td>readers of a literary</td>
<td>blog</td>
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<td>magazine</td>
<td>oral presentation</td>
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<td>Web users</td>
<td>podcast script</td>
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<td>message-board posting</td>
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<td>to understand</td>
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<td>how a writer</td>
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<td>uses language</td>
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<tr>
<td>to affect readers</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

COMMON CORE TRAITS

1. DEVELOPMENT OF IDEAS

• presents an engaging introduction
• develops a controlling idea that offers an analysis of the poet’s style
• supports key points of analysis with relevant details and quotations from the poem
• concludes with a summary of key points and insights

2. ORGANIZATION OF IDEAS

• organizes ideas in a logical way
• uses varied transitions to create cohesion and connect ideas

3. LANGUAGE FACILITY AND CONVENTIONS

• establishes and maintains a formal style and objective tone
• includes precise language and domain-specific vocabulary
• incorporates complex sentences
• employs correct grammar, usage, and spelling

Writing Online

Go to thinkcentral.com.
KEYWORD: HML10N-828
Planning/Prewriting

Getting Started

**CHOOSE A POEM**
For your essay, you need to choose a poem to analyze. Reread poems you have enjoyed. Consider what each means to you. Read each aloud to catch subtleties and deeper meanings through the sound of the language. Think about the **stylistic elements**—techniques such as word choice and imagery—that are used in each poem, and their **effects** on the reader.

**THINK ABOUT AUDIENCE AND PURPOSE**
As you begin to think about the poem you have selected, keep in mind that your **purpose** is to respond to stylistic elements that shape the poem's meaning and to share your insights with your **audience**. Your audience is likely to include people who have read the poem and have their own ideas about its meaning.

**GATHER DETAILS**
Read the poem a second or third time. Look for **stylistic elements** that the poet uses. List the elements you identify and record your ideas about their **effects** in a chart.

**WRITE A CONTROLLING IDEA**
Review your chart and look for a **controlling idea** behind the stylistic elements you have listed. Then, draft a controlling idea that explains the overall effect of these stylistic elements.

**ASK YOURSELF:**
- What does this poem mean to me?
- What stylistic elements does the poet use, and how do they affect my understanding of the poem's meaning?

**WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stylistic Element</th>
<th>Ideas about Effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>repetition</td>
<td>explains teen's thoughts and feelings; we understand and sympathize with him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>personification</td>
<td>conveys loneliness of being a teen; we identify with him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>line breaks</td>
<td>draws us into teen's world; we go with him and identify with him</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In "Fifteen," William Stafford uses a variety of stylistic elements to draw readers into the confusing world of a teenager and help them experience the boy's feelings, dreams, and realities.
Getting Started

Collect Evidence
Gather relevant (related) evidence to support your controlling idea. Look for concrete details that support each of your key points about the effects of the stylistic elements. Cite the details in one of the following ways:
- quotation: quote exact words from the poem
- paraphrase: restate lines in your own words
- summary: sum up main ideas and important details

What Does It Look Like?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Point</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use of personification helps you enter the world of the speaker and experience his loneliness as a teen</td>
<td>• quotation—“that / companion, ready and friendly”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• paraphrase—When he touches the handle of the bike, it seems to respond.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• summary—The description of parts of the motorcycle suggests it is a living being. Its engine sounds like a heartbeat. Its sides are called flanks. Its headlights look like shy eyes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Organize Your Ideas
Present your ideas in a logical structure. Think about how you can present your ideas to achieve your purpose and make your analysis clear to the audience. You can discuss each stylistic element separately by order of importance.

Introduction and controlling idea
A. Personification of motorcycle
   1. Engine has heartbeat
   2. Friendly, confident
   3. Speaker’s loneliness
B. Run-on lines
   1. Create a flow
   2. Help you identify with speaker
C. Repetition of “I was fifteen”
   1. At end of first three stanzas
   2. Explains teen’s thoughts and feelings
   3. Creates sympathy

Peer Review
Share your key points and supporting evidence with a classmate who is familiar with the poem. Ask him or her to identify which key points need more support in the form of quotations, paraphrases, or summaries. Use this feedback to collect additional supporting evidence.

In your Reader/Writer Notebook, develop your writing plan. Record a working version of your controlling idea. Then, use a chart like the one above to organize your key points and evidence. Consider these tips as you gather evidence:
- Cite evidence to back up every statement you make. Explain exactly how each detail supports your ideas.
- Double-check any quotations you plan to use. Record the exact words from the poem and enclose them in quotation marks. Use ellipses (…) to indicate omitted words.
- In addition to quotations, use paraphrases and summaries as supporting evidence.
Drafting

The following chart shows how to organize your draft to create an effective analysis of a poem.

### Organizing Your Analysis

#### INTRODUCTION
- Engage your **audience** by relating the **meaning** of the poem to experiences people share.
- Provide the **poet’s name** and the **title** of the poem.
- Explain your analysis in a **controlling idea** that identifies the overall **effect** of **stylistic elements**.

#### BODY
- Organize your key points by **order of importance** to help your audience follow your ideas.
- Cite **details, quotations**, and other **evidence** from the text to support each key point.
- Use appropriate and varied **transitions**—such as *also, by this point*, and *however*—to connect major sections and create cohesion.
- Establish and maintain a **formal style** and **objective tone**.
- Use **domain-specific vocabulary**, such as literary terms, to identify **stylistic elements**. (Consult the Handbook section.)

#### CONCLUDING SECTION
- Summarize your **key points** and reflect on their overall **meaning**.
- End with a **question, statement**, or **insight** for your audience to consider.

### Grammar in Context: Using Quotations Correctly

When you include direct quotations from the poem as evidence, follow these rules:
- Use quotation marks at the beginning and end of material quoted directly from a poem.
- To indicate the end of a line in a poem, use a slash (/) and insert a space on either side of the slash.
- Follow the exact capitalization and punctuation of the poem in your quotation.
- Whenever possible, use the quotation in your own sentence to provide context.

**Examples**

- *The speaker is vague about where and when the action takes place, saying only that it was “back of the willows one summer / day.”*
- *There is nothing vague, however, about the motorcycle the boy finds: “it lay on its side, ticking over / slowly in the high grass.”*

Develop a first draft of your essay, following the structure outlined in the chart above. As you write, use quotations correctly as supporting evidence for your key points.

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**Writing Workshop**

- **W 4** Produce clear and coherent writing.
- **W 9a (RL 1)** Draw evidence from literary texts to support analysis.
- **L 2** Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.
Revising

When you revise, you consider the content, organization, and style of your essay. Your goal is to determine if you have achieved your purpose and effectively communicated your ideas to your intended audience. The questions, tips, and strategies in the following chart can help you revise and improve your draft.

Literary Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ask Yourself</th>
<th>Tips</th>
<th>Revision Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Does the introduction grab the audience’s interest? Does it include the</td>
<td>Put a star by sentences that get the audience interested. Put a</td>
<td>Add an interesting opening sentence. Add the name of the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>name of the poet and the title of the poem?</td>
<td>check mark by the name of the poet and the title of the poem.</td>
<td>poet and the title of the poem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Does the introduction identify the stylistic elements and state a</td>
<td>Circle the stylistic elements and effects mentioned in the</td>
<td>Rewrite your controlling idea to include an overarching idea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>controlling idea?</td>
<td>controlling idea.</td>
<td>about the effect of the author’s stylistic elements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Is each stylistic element illustrated with well-chosen and relevant</td>
<td>Underline each piece of evidence. Draw an arrow from each item to</td>
<td>Add evidence such as quotations, paraphrases, and summaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>textual evidence such as concrete details and quotations?</td>
<td>the point it supports.</td>
<td>to support your key points. Rearrange evidence so that it is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Are appropriate and varied transitions used to link ideas?</td>
<td>Place a check mark next to each transitional word or phrase.</td>
<td>in the paragraph containing the point it supports.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Does the writing establish and maintain a formal style and objective</td>
<td>bracket contractions, casual slang, and informal or biased</td>
<td>Replace informal or vague language with more formal, precise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tone?</td>
<td>language.</td>
<td>Revise subjective wording to maintain a neutral tone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Does the concluding section summarize key points and provide an insight</td>
<td>Place a check mark above the restatement of the controlling</td>
<td>Add a summary of key points or a statement regarding the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>into the effect of the author’s style?</td>
<td>idea and circle the concluding insight.</td>
<td>connection between style and effect as necessary.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Peer Review

Exchange your essay with a classmate, or read your analysis aloud to your partner. As you read and comment on your classmate’s essay, focus on the controlling idea and supporting evidence. If necessary, provide concrete suggestions for improvement, using the revision strategies in the chart.
Writing Workshop

ANALYZE A STUDENT DRAFT

Read this draft; note the comments on its strengths as well the suggestions for improvement.

Being Fifteen
by Allison Chen, Markham High School

Have you ever wanted to escape into another world? In his poem “Fifteen,” William Stafford creates a vivid snapshot of the dreams and realities of a teenager. Stafford’s use of several stylistic elements helps readers enter the world of this fifteen-year-old and identify with his thoughts and feelings.

Stafford draws readers into the teen’s world immediately through the use of stylistic elements. The speaker is vague about where and when the action takes place, saying only that it was “back of the willows one summer / day.” He does not reveal his name or describe himself except for the statement “I was fifteen.” There is nothing vague, however, about the motorcycle the boy finds: “it lay on its side, ticking over / slowly in the high grass.” The machine sounds almost like a living thing with a heartbeat.

Stafford also uses human qualities to describe the motorcycle to show us how the bike has captured the speaker’s imagination. The speaker describes the motorcycle as a “companion, ready and friendly.” He refers to its metal parts as flanks. Its headlights look shy to him. Through the figure of speech used to compare the bike to a person, we sense the teen’s loneliness.

The speaker describes the adventures he is dreaming up for himself and his two-wheeled friend. The bike is ready to go, responding to a pat on its handle with “a confident opinion.” By this point, we are ready to go, too. The line breaks in each stanza have helped transport us completely into the world of the speaker. Stafford does not end a sentence at the end of a line. He continues a sentence or thought from one line to the next. His use of run-on lines creates a flow that carries us along through the teen’s fantasy.

Evidence in the form of quotations from the poem supports Allison’s key points.

The introduction presents Allison’s controlling idea, or overarching analysis of the poem.

LEARN HOW Use Domain-Specific Vocabulary

In the third paragraph Allison discusses the figure of speech in which human qualities are given to an object, animal, or idea. She needs to refer to this device with the correct literary term, personification.

Allison’s Revision to Paragraph 3

Stafford also uses human qualities to describe the motorcycle to show us how the bike has captured the speaker’s imagination. . . . Through the figure of speech used to compare the bike to a person, we sense the teen’s loneliness.

W 2d Use domain-specific vocabulary to manage the complexity of a topic.

W 5 Develop and strengthen writing as needed by revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.
Another stylistic element used by the author is repetition, in this case, of the statement “I was fifteen.” Why does the speaker repeat this? I think Stafford wants the statement to serve as an explanation of the thoughts, feelings, and dreams of the teen. Each time it appears, it tells us something else about the speaker. The repetition of “I was fifteen” helps us understand the speaker and sympathize with him.

The speaker starts thinking realistically about the situation. He goes looking for the owner of the motorcycle and finds him lying injured in the grass. When the motorcyclist thanks the speaker for his help, calling him “good man,” we see the contrast between the two characters. The speaker dreams of being an adult. An adult can climb on a roaring machine and take off for exciting adventures. However, he is still just a boy. He is left behind as the motorcyclist speeds away. Stafford uses personification, run-on lines, and repetition to convey what it feels like to be a teenager, trapped between childhood and adulthood. “I stood there, fifteen,” the boy says in the last line of the poem. Soon, but not yet, he will be old enough to “meet / the sky on out Seventeenth.”

**LEARN HOW** Add Evidence from the Text  As she reviewed her draft, Allison noticed that she had not included evidence from the text to support her key point about the use of repetition. She decided to add paraphrases as evidence.

**ALLISON’S REVISION TO PARAGRAPH 5**

At the end of the first stanza, the repetition of “I was fifteen” gives a reason for his excitement about finding the motorcycle. At the end of the second stanza, it helps explain why he imagines the bike as a companion. In the third stanza, the statement almost seems to be given as an excuse for his wild fantasies.

. . . Each time it appears, it tells us something else about the speaker. The repetition of “I was fifteen” helps us understand the speaker and sympathize with him.

**YOUR TURN** Use the feedback from your peers and teacher as well as the two “Learn How” lessons to revise, rewrite, or try a new approach to your essay. Evaluate how well you conveyed your controlling idea and addressed what is most significant for your specific purpose and audience.
Editing and Publishing

In the editing stage, you proofread your essay to make sure that it is free of grammar, spelling, usage, and punctuation errors. With this final step, you prepare your essay for public appearance.

**GRAMMAR IN CONTEXT: COMPLEX SENTENCES**

Using a variety of sentence structures is one way to keep your readers interested in your ideas. After drafting your essay, evaluate it for sentence variety. In addition to including simple and compound sentences, look for opportunities to create complex sentences.

A complex sentence contains one independent clause and at least one subordinate clause. If two sentences are unequal in importance, you can combine them into a complex sentence by turning the less important idea into a subordinate clause and attaching it to the other sentence (which then becomes an independent clause in the complex sentence).

While editing her essay, Allison sees an opportunity to combine two sentences that discuss the same idea into a single complex sentence.

The speaker dreams of being an adult. An adult can climb on a roaring machine and take off for exciting adventures. However, he is still just a boy. He is left behind as the motorcyclist speeds away.

Allison then decides to expand this new sentence by turning it into a subordinate clause attached to another related sentence to create a new complex sentence.

Although the speaker dreams of being an adult who can climb on a roaring machine and take off for exciting adventures. However, he is still just a boy who is left behind as the motorcyclist speeds away.

**PUBLISH YOUR WRITING**

Finally, you can decide how best to make sure your analysis reaches your intended audience. Here are some options:

- Submit your essay to a literary magazine.
- Share your essay in an online discussion group.
- Adapt your essay to deliver as an audio podcast.
- Include parts of your essay in an e-mail to a living poet.

Proofread your essay for grammar, usage, and spelling errors. Revise to create sentence variety with complex sentences. Then, publish your final essay where your intended audience is likely to see it.
Scoring Rubric

Use the rubric below to evaluate your analysis from the Writing Workshop or your response to the on-demand task on the next page.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCORE</th>
<th>COMMON CORE TRAITS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **6** | **Development** Has an engaging introduction; includes a controlling idea with an insightful analysis of the author's style; supports key points with relevant evidence; ends powerfully  
**Organization** Arranges ideas in an effective, logical order; uses varied transitions to create cohesion and connect ideas  
**Language** Consistently maintains a formal style and objective tone; uses precise language; shows a strong command of conventions |
| **5** | **Development** Has an effective introduction; provides a controlling idea that offers an original analysis of the author's style; supports key points with evidence; has a strong concluding section  
**Organization** Arranges ideas logically; uses transitions to connect ideas  
**Language** Maintains a formal style and objective tone; uses precise language; has a few errors in conventions |
| **4** | **Development** Has an introduction that could be more engaging; includes a controlling idea that states an analysis of the author's style; could use some more evidence; has an adequate concluding section  
**Organization** Arranges ideas logically; could vary transitions more  
**Language** Mostly maintains a formal style and objective tone; needs more precise language at times; has a few distracting errors in conventions |
| **3** | **Development** Has an adequate, though not memorable, introduction; has a controlling idea that makes an obvious statement about the author's style; lacks sufficient support; has a routine concluding section  
**Organization** Has some flaws in organization; needs transitions to connect ideas  
**Language** Frequently lapses into an informal style or subjective tone; uses some vague word choices; has some significant errors in conventions |
| **2** | **Development** Has a weak introduction and a controlling idea that does not relate to the writing task; lacks specific evidence; has a weak concluding section  
**Organization** Has organizational flaws; lacks transitions throughout  
**Language** Uses an informal style and vague or biased language; has many distracting errors in conventions |
| **1** | **Development** Has no introduction or controlling idea; offers unrelated points as evidence; ends abruptly  
**Organization** Includes a string of disconnected ideas with no overall organization  
**Language** Uses an inappropriate style and vague, tired language; has major problems with grammar, mechanics, and spelling |
Preventing for Timed Writing

1. Analyze the Task

Read the task carefully. Then, read it again, noting the words in the task that tell the type of writing, the topic, the audience, and the purpose.

**Writing Task**

If I can stop one heart from breaking,  
I shall not live in vain;  
If I can ease one life the aching,  
Or cool one pain,  
Or help one fainting robin  
Unto his nest again,  
I shall not live in vain.  
—Emily Dickinson

**Type of Writing/Topic**

Write an analysis of this poem to post as a blog for fans of the poet.

**Audience**

In your essay, explain the effects of stylistic elements, using quotations and other evidence from the poem to support your analysis.

2. Plan Your Response

First, identify stylistic elements in the poem, list examples of each, and record your ideas about their effects. Then, review your ideas and write a controlling idea that explains how the stylistic elements in the poem help shape its meaning as you understand it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stylistic Element</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Controlling Idea:**

3. Respond to the Task

Begin drafting your analysis. Start with a question or comment about the subject of the poem. As you write, keep the following points in mind:

- In the introduction, include a controlling idea that explains your overarching analysis of the effect of stylistic elements in the poem.
- In the body, present evidence, such as quotations, paraphrases, and summaries that support your controlling idea.
- In the concluding section, include an insight based on your analysis.

4. Improve Your Response

**Revising**

Compare your draft with the task. Does your draft analyze the effect of stylistic elements in the poem? Does your draft include evidence that supports your analysis? Do you conclude with an insightful comment?

**Proofreading**

Find and correct any errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Make sure that your analysis and any edits are neatly written and legible.

**Checking Your Final Copy**

Make sure your final draft is your best work.
Creating a Class Blog

Whether you want to share your own review of a new blockbuster with moviegoers or a personal response to a favorite poem with other readers, creating a blog, or Web log, is an effective and direct way to exchange ideas.

Complete the workshop activities in your Reader/Writer Notebook.

Planning and Producing the Blog

Creating a class blog requires preparation. These tips can help you:

- **Decide on Your Topics** Which topics do you think would spark a lively discussion? Work with your classmates to set ground rules for choosing topics and develop a plan for settling potential disagreements. You might want to limit your categories to a few focused topics.

- **Determine Your Discussion Threads** Include a separate discussion thread—a chain of related posts—for each topic you want users to discuss. Clearly label each thread. For example, “Top Ten Movies to See and Why” is a good label because it tells readers what to expect.

- **Map Out Your Home Page** Sketch the home page of your blog, visually representing how users will link to the different threads. Decide what other information and elements the page should feature. For instance, you might include interesting formats for headers, graphics such as figures or tables, or links to multimedia to make important connections and distinctions.

- **Assign Roles** As a class, decide how to divide the work equally. One person might research free Web sites that you can use to build your blog. Another might create a logo for the home page. In addition, each person should assume responsibility for writing the first post within one thread. Later, you can add posts that build on your classmates’ ideas.

- **Build a Blog** With the assistance of your teacher, the school technology coordinator, or another adult with technology expertise, assemble your blog using the Web site you chose.
Participating in an Online Discussion

Sharing your ideas in a blog is different from writing a review or a literary analysis or delivering it orally. Here are some tips for participating in a meaningful online discussion:

- **Clearly State and Support Your Ideas**  Present your controlling idea, information, and supporting evidence clearly and logically so readers can follow your line of reasoning. Use a style and organization appropriate to your purpose and audience.

- **Make It Brief**  Most bloggers don’t want to scroll down indefinitely. Keep each post short and to the point. Formatting key ideas with bullet points can make them easier to read.

- **Use a Respectful Tone**  In an online discussion, your audience can’t see you face-to-face so it’s important to maintain a polite tone. Though you don’t have to agree with every idea proposed, you should welcome other perspectives and respond thoughtfully to them. Use these discussion starters in your conversation.

  **Effective Discussion Starters**
  
  “I understand what you are saying, but I disagree because …”
  
  “That’s a valid point, but …”
  
  “Have you thought about …?”
  
  “Your evidence sounds reasonable, but I’m still not convinced that …?”
  
  “Could you clarify your point about …?”

- **Keep the Discussion Going**  Participation is what makes a blog discussion successful. Incorporate others into the discussion by posing questions, and respond thoughtfully to the questions of others. Make connections between the discussion thread and larger ideas in order to broaden the perspective. Don’t be afraid to challenge ideas or conclusions, but make sure you respect others’ thoughts and opinions.

- ** Invite Other Bloggers**  Do you have friends, teachers, or family members who might be interested in the topics discussed in your blog? Motivate others to participate in the discussion by sending an e-mail with a link to your blog.

Plan and produce a blog using the guidelines on these pages. Once you’ve launched your blog, challenge yourself to post messages several times a week. As a team, plan to add a new discussion every couple of weeks.