



Analysis

Analysis is a process in which you closely examine a text, a film, music, art and just about anything else, including people. Analysis enables you to better understand a topic, make new meaning, and discover new ideas. Effective analysis takes time and requires approaching a topic from multiple angles. This handout focuses on written texts, but the same ideas can be applied to all kinds of artifacts.

Step 1: Read, read, read!

You can't understand something if you don't know what it says. Be prepared to read the entire text more than once, especially if it is a complex or unfamiliar topic.

Step 2: Write, write, write!

Taking notes while you read will help you figure out what is going on. Write a one sentence summary about each paragraph. These short summaries will help you understand how the author's text renders a specific conclusion.

Step 3: Apply these questions!

- Who is the primary audience? Who is the secondary audience? (NOTE: Just because you are reading it doesn't make you the intended audience.) Identifying where the work was published, the author's tone (casual, academic), and diction (word choice, formal or informal language, industry jargon, etc.) will give you some clues.
- What is the author trying to do? Inform the audience about something important? Entertain an audience or persuade them to believe or act in a certain way?
- If the authors are making an argument, how do they support it? What facts, evidence, examples, or scenarios do they use? Are they relying on academic journals or popular websites? Are these reliable sources for this topic? Does the text do a good job convincing the audience the authors are right? Why or why not?
- Do you know what all the words mean? Are they being used in a way that is new to you because it is for a certain genre or field? Ask yourself if the author chose to use certain words to narrow the possible interpretations of a text.



Analysis (Continued)

A quick note about analytical writing:

Analysis is not the same as summary writing. While summary writing communicates the author's main ideas, analytical writing enables you to arrive at a new understanding about the topic. For example, a summary of a news article will inform readers of the who, what, where, and when; whereas analysis will move into an examination of why something happened.

Example:

When you go in for a doctor's appointment, you are given a lot of information – blood pressure, cholesterol, heart rate, etc. This is a summary of your health, but it doesn't explain what these numbers mean or tell you what you should do about it. The analysis is when the doctor explains why your high cholesterol number indicates that your diet is likely unhealthy and then suggests you stop eating junk food for breakfast, lunch, and dinner.