**Passage Analysis Tips0**

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Passage analysis questions on the AP exam often suggest which stylistic terms the writer should address. Even when the questions mention no stylistic terms, it is wise to include references to **diction, syntax, figures of speech, and tone**. Students should pay particular attention to the main verbs in the question: verbs like “**characterize**” and “**analyze**” call the writer to emphasize style with appropriate terms.

When analyzing **diction**, consider such questions as:

* Is the language **concrete** or **abstract**?
* Are the words **monosyllabic** or **polysyllabic**?
* Do the words have interesting **connotations**?
* Is the diction **formal** or **colloquial**?
* Is there any **change in the level** of diction in the passage?
* What can the reader **infer** about the speaker or the speaker’s attitude from the words choice? (See tone below.)

When analyzing **syntax**, consider such questions as:

* Are the sentences **simple** and direct, or **complex** and convoluted?
* How do the **dependent clauses** relate to the **main clauses**?
* Does the author use **repetition** or **parallel structure** for emphasis?
* Does the author write **periodic** or **cumulative** sentences?
* Are there instances of **balanced sentences** or **antithesis**?
* Are there **rhetorical questions** in the passage?
* How is the passage **punctuated**, and what is the effect?

When discussing **figures of speech**, consider such questions as:

* Are there interesting **images** or **patterns of imagery** in the passage?
* Does the author create **analogies**, like **similes** and **metaphors** or broader comparisons?
* Does the author make use of **personification** or **apostrophe**?
* Is there deliberate **hyperbole** or **understatement** in the passage?
* Does the author employ **paradox** or **oxymoron** to add complexity?
* What do the rhythm and sound devices like **assonance,** **consonance**, or **onomatopoeia** play in the passage?

When discussing **tone**, consider such questions as:

* What seems to be the **speaker’s** **attitude** in the passage?
* Is **more than one attitude** or point of view expressed?
* Does the passage have a noticeable emotional **mood** or **atmosphere**?
* Can anything in the passage be described as **irony**?

**Never** substitute terminology for analysis. **Always** connect the literary term(and example) directly to the effect it creates in the passage.