

Device to Meaning Statements and Examples:

NOTE: In general, a connection of device to meaning should be 3-5 sentences long. The templates below are a starting place; you will eventually learn to vary them to suit your purposes. A connection must articulate the meaning a device *suggests* and **HOW** this suggestion is achieved.

Diction

- Identify the grammatical unit (phrase, noun, verb, adjective, adverb, etc.) and provide the context in which it appears in the text. Consider connotation as well as denotation. Do NOT write: *The writer uses diction.* That's like saying: *The writer uses words.*
- Connect the diction to the meaning of *this* text. Avoid generic commentary. Provide an original insight. Pay attention to *your own diction.* It enhances your analysis.

Model:

The phrase* _____ used to describe/identify _____

conveys _____ since / because / in that _____

_____. This is significant because _____.

* or the noun, verb, adjective, adverb

Example:

The phrase, "a thin beard of ivy," used to describe Jay Gatsby's mansion conveys both intrigue and inexperience. Since the ivy is "thin," Fitzgerald suggests a wealth without lineage, newly formed and barely veiled; yet, the ivy as a "beard" suggests a worldly desire to conceal. This is significant because through the description of his mansion, Gatsby is portrayed as both ingénue and chameleon, alerting the reader to the protagonist's dual and perhaps contradictory nature.

Syntax

- Identify the syntactical choice the author has made and provide the context in which it appears in the text. Do NOT write: *The writer uses syntax.* Since syntax refers to the order and structure of words, phrases, etc, it always exists – even if you do not find it noteworthy.
- Connect the syntax to the meaning of *this* text. Avoid generic commentary. Provide an original insight. Pay attention to *your own diction.* It enhances your analysis.

Model:

The _____ function(s) to _____

_____. This structure supports

the author's purpose to _____.

Example:

Gatsby's interrupted sentences dramatize his nervousness and hesitation as he discusses his upcoming meeting with Daisy at Nick's bungalow. Stuttering, "Why, I thought – why, look here, old sport, you don't make very much money, do you," Gatsby reveals his true vulnerability and weakness showing a stark contrast to the "greatness" that has been established in the early chapters of the novel. Fitzgerald continues to reveal chinks in Gatsby's armor as the novel progresses preparing the reader for protagonist's ultimate fall.

Helpful hint:

Some other examples of purposeful syntactical choices an author might make: **parallelism, anaphora, rhetorical question, appositives, polysyndeton, asyndeton, prepositional phrases**, etc. According to Jeff Sommers and Max Morenberg, authors of *The Writer's Options*, **appositives** define, summarize, and clarify. **Prepositional phrases** may elaborate and clarify by indicating how, where, when, why.

Imagery

(word pictures appealing to one of the 6 senses (visual, auditory, gustatory, olfactory, tactile, kinesthetic) – if you can't identify which one, it isn't a valid example of imagery)

- Identify the image and provide the context in which it appears in the text.
- Connect the image to the meaning of *this* text. Avoid generic commentary. Provide an original insight. Pay attention to *your own diction*. It enhances your analysis.

Model:

The image of _____ depicts a (picture, sense, state, etc.) of _____
 _____ because the reader (sees, envisions, realizes) that _____
 _____. This is
 significant because _____.

Example:

The image of an "argument . . . pull[ing]" Nick back to the party "as if with ropes" conveys his helpless struggle to get away from the gathering in Tom and Myrtle's apartment at the same time that it dramatizes his fascination with the inebriated and adulterous events that are occurring. The reader can see that much as ropes confine, restrain, and render one helpless, Nick, due perhaps to a lack of experience or a flawed moral code, remains discomfited yet seems unable to confront or reject the lies and pretenses of the party guests. This is significant because the reader must question Nick's declaration that he is tolerant and honest.

Figurative Language: Metaphor or Simile

- Identify the metaphor or simile and provide the context in which it appears in the text.
- Connect the metaphor or simile to the meaning of *this* text. Avoid generic commentary. Provide an original insight. Pay attention to *your own diction*. It enhances your analysis.

Model:

The subject of (x) _____ is compared to (y) _____. This is fitting
 because (x) _____ and (y) _____ share these characteristics: (a)
 _____ and (b) _____. This is
 significant because _____.

Example:

In his "I Have a Dream" speech, Martin Luther King, Jr. compares the condition of poverty to a "lonely island." This is a fitting comparison because poverty and a lonely island share these characteristics: (a)

isolation and alienation from the “vast ocean of material prosperity” which surrounds them and (b) both are small, singled out, vulnerable, and surrounded by something they don’t possess. This comparison causes the audience to consider the tangible social barriers created by an invisible financial limitation to feel sympathy for the isolated poor.

Figurative Language: Personification

(a figure of speech in which animals, abstract ideas, or inanimate things are referred to as if they were human)

- Identify the animal, abstract idea, or inanimate thing and provide the context in which it appears in the text. Identify the human characteristic that is ascribed to it.
- Connect the effect of the personification to the meaning of *this* text. Avoid generic commentary. Provide an original insight. Pay attention to *your own diction*. It enhances your analysis.

Model:

In _____, _____ is personified as possessing the human characteristic(s) of _____. The author employs personification in order to _____.

Example:

"Today, we begin a new chapter in the history of Louisiana. I've said throughout the campaign that there are two entities that have the most to fear from us winning this election. One is **corruption** and the other is **incompetence**. **If you happen to see either of them, let them know the party is over.**"

-- Bobby Jindal, *Louisiana Governor-Elect victory Speech* (as posted on americanrhetoric.com)

In Bobby Jindal’s victory speech, the abstract ideas of corruption and incompetence are personified as possessing human form and consciousness. The governor-elect suggests that members of his audience might encounter or “see” them and should inform them that their “party” is over. Through this characterization, Jindal simultaneously emphasizes his strength as a leader and sends a strong message, without naming specific perpetrators, that those who may possess those qualities will be driven out of the state’s government.

Figurative Language: Hyperbole

(deliberate exaggeration used to heighten effect or create humor – remember that this is a figure of speech not meant to be interpreted literally – e.g., I’m so hungry I could eat a horse.)

- Identify what is being exaggerated and provide the context in which it appears in the text.
- Connect the effect of the hyperbole to the meaning of *this* text. Avoid generic commentary.
- Provide an original insight. Pay attention to *your own diction*. It enhances your analysis.

Model:

The deliberate exaggeration of _____ serves to express _____. Through this heightened image, the reader _____.

Example:

From Robert Frost’s poem, “After Apple-Picking”

For I have had too much
Of apple-picking: I am overtired
Of the great harvest I myself desired.
There were ten thousand fruit to touch,

Cherish in hand, lift sown, and not let fall.

In Frost’s poem, “After Apple-Picking,” the speaker deliberately exaggerates the number of apples in order to emphasize his shift from excitement and desire to his extreme weariness during the harvest. The speaker has had “too much” as a result of the “ten thousand” fruit to touch. Through this image, the reader comes to understand that the speaker is not only weary of body, but is also “overtired” in spirit as well.

[Example taken from A Contemporary Guide to Literary Terms by Edwin J. Barton and Glenda A. Hudson (Houghton Mifflin, 2004)]

Symbol

- Identify both the concrete and abstract meanings of the symbol and provide the context in which it appears in the text.
- Connect the symbol to specific characters in this text. Avoid generic commentary. Provide an original insight. Pay attention to *your own diction*. It enhances your analysis.

Model:

The _____ symbolizes _____
 _____ *concrete* _____ *abstract*
 for _____ because it represents _____
 _____ Through this symbol, the author _____.

Example:

The pearls Daisy Buchanan rescues from the trash and subsequently wears “around her neck” symbolize her ultimate choice of money over love because they represent Tom’s vast wealth (they were “valued at three hundred and fifty thousand dollars”) in contrast to Gatsby’s avowal of love, symbolized by the letter she “wouldn’t let go of.” By highlighting Daisy’s donning of the pearls, Fitzgerald comments on the shallow and misguided values of the 20th Century American, one who pursues the elusive “dream” instead of concrete relationships.

Detail

- Identify the detail and provide the context in which it appears in the text.
- Describe the function of the inclusion of that detail in *this* text. Avoid generic commentary. Provide an original insight. Pay attention to *your own diction*. It enhances your analysis.

Model:

The detail of _____ conveys _____
 _____ since/because/in that _____
 The author wants the reader to see _____ because/so that _____

Example:

The detail of the string of polo ponies Tom Buchanan brought east with him from Chicago conveys his vast wealth and hedonism. Moving the ponies is expensive and unnecessary, suggesting that Tom does not need to concern himself with cost but does concern himself with appearing more powerful than his peers. Fitzgerald wants the reader to see Tom as spoiled and self-indulgent so that Tom will appear distasteful even before the reader learns of his current affair.

Allusion

- Identify the allusion (*indirect* reference by an author to another text, historical occurrence, or to myths and legends) and provide the context in which it appears in the text.
- Describe the function of the allusion in *this* text. Avoid generic commentary. Provide an original insight. Pay attention to *your own diction*. It enhances your analysis.

Model:

The author or speaker alludes to _____ in order to _____ . Through this reference, the reader connects _____ to _____ and can more fully understand the author's purpose to _____ .

Example:

“For us, they fought and died, in places like Concord and Gettysburg; Normandy and Khe Sahn.”
Barack Obama

Obama's allusions to Concord, Gettysburg, Normandy, and Khe Sahn offer examples of struggles that Americans have faced in the past which parallel the unique struggles Americans believe they are currently facing with our economy, environment, and world conflict. Even though the references are meant to show these struggles, the president's desired effect is to provide hope and resolve to the listener since these battles resulted in victories for America. Citizens are reminded that they can be victorious in our modern struggles.

Sample Tone Paragraph:

In the first eight lines of the poem, the speaker grows increasingly despondent as he reflects upon his situation in life. He begins with a description of his state of “disgrace” and his laments of being “outcast” and “all alone.” His frustration builds as he complains that his laments are “bootless” and that “deaf heaven” will not respond to his urgings. This frustration grows to desperate self-loathing when the speaker lists his shortcomings until he reaches what seems to be his breaking point admitting he is “contented least” by what he would customarily enjoy the most. The volta occurs in line nine when the seemingly rock bottom speaker “haply” thinks on a loved one. Although the word “haply” literally means by chance, it sounds like the more pleasant word “happily” which suggests the mood is changing to a positive one. Now the speaker's state is “arising” and “[singing] hymns” as he remembers the “wealth” of his “sweet love.” The now blissfully content speaker can look upon his “state” with contentment rather than the regret expressed in the first eight lines.

POETRY FOCUS STATEMENTS

A poetry focus statement is a one to two-sentence summary of the narrative situation, theme, and tone of a poem. It serves as a concise note about a poem and can be used also as a potential thesis for a free-response poetry question on the AP Literature exam.

CRITICAL ATTRIBUTES:

- ✓ *Includes the title of the poem and the name of the poet*
- ✓ *Is written in literary present tense*
- ✓ *Specifies the narrative situation of the poem*
- ✓ *Includes a thoughtful but concise indication of theme*
- ✓ *Identifies the tone(s) of the poem. These may be differing but complementary. Shifts in tone may be identified as well.*
- ✓ *The syntax of poetry focus statements is compound or complex because you are addressing both the literal (the narrative situation) and the thematic.*

Model:

