

GENERAL NOTES ON TONAL ANALYSIS

Tonal analysis is the study of the techniques used by a writer to convey his tone (attitude towards his subject.) For the AP test, you will be analyzing prose writing which includes: speeches, historical documents, autobiographical works, essays, and narratives.

All prose writing has a tone, and good prose writing usually has a very specific tone which the writer is trying to convey. The tone is conveyed in many different ways, but we will concentrate on four specific techniques that writers use. They are: imagery, diction, syntax, and structure.

Imagery – These are the descriptive details that were used by the writer. You must learn to understand the reasons why the writer selected the details in the writing. Do the details create a certain atmosphere or mood? Usually, imagery is carefully controlled by the writer to convey a consistent tone. For example, if I wanted to convey how much I hated something, I would only use negative details to describe it. These negative details would make my hatred clear to the reader. Pay attention to the details which are used. Try to see what unifies them and why they were selected.

Diction – This refers to the words which are used by the writer in his writing. There are many words in the English language which are highly connotative – that is, they have meanings and associations which go beyond the literal definitions. For example, look at the following list of words which essentially describe the same thing (beauty) and see how the words differ in their connotative meaning: lovely, attractive, cute, beautiful, hot, pretty, sexy. Usually, the diction helps the writer to convey his tone clearly. Learn to distinguish which words are used by the writer to make his tone clear.

Syntax – This refers to the sentence structures present in a piece of writing. Some common syntactical features which are used by writers include repetition and parallel structure. The use of a short sentence can emphasize a point clearly, while a long sentence can be used to delay or obscure the main point. A good writer uses different syntactical strategies to convey his tone clearly.

Structure – This is a term which covers a broad category of devices a writer can use to manipulate his writing. Structure includes such things as organization, arrangement of ideas, point of view used, style of writing used, etc.

In this class, we will be studying writing samples to determine what tone is present in them and then analyze how the aforementioned structures are used to make this tone clear. This first step – learning to see and understand these structures is the most difficult. It requires “active reading” in which you ask questions about the reading. Ask “why” and “how” questions instead of “what?” While an understanding of the content of the writing is important, the emphasis is on *how* and *why* the writer conveys his tone. The exercises we will do in class will emphasize this skill. As you become more comfortable and proficient with this skill, we will move on to organizing and defending your findings in a persuasive essay.

Dialectical or Double Entry Journal

Reading is too often a passive experience for many students. They sit down with a book or article, pass their eyes over the words, and say that they have done the reading assignment hoping that the most difficult post-reading task they'll encounter will be a short quiz primarily composed of recall questions. One way to get students involved is through the use of the dialectical journal. The term indicates the tension between reader and text that occurs when students struggle to derive meaning from a difficult or unfamiliar work.

What is it?

The journal is a double-entry, note-taking process done while reading any genre of literature. It is an attempt to transfer a reader's interior monologue on paper by providing two columns which are in dialogue with one another, not only developing a method of critical reading but also encouraging habits of reflective questioning/thinking.

Why it is Important:

In the right-hand column, the reader "owns" or "comments" on important text that has been identified. The dialectical journal helps readers critically think about the text they are reading. By keeping a dialectical journal, students are brought to think "for themselves" about a text and offer their own interpretations.

How is it done?

Draw a line down the middle of a piece of notebook paper, thereby making two columns. The left column, labeled "text" or "note taking" is used for traditional note forms of direct quotations and citations or summaries. Thus, when they finish they have a summary of the material they have read.

The right column is used for commenting on the left-column notes. Here students record their questions, comments, and ideas next to the text that has piqued their interest. As students take notes, regularly re-read previous pages of notes and comments, drawing any new connections in a right column summary before starting another page of note-taking/note-making. The top 1' margin of the page is reserved for biographical information, teacher directed comments, or any pre-reading information that might help the reader better understand and appreciate the text.

Different Ways to Keep a Double Entry Journal

Left Hand Side	Right Hand Side
Quotes from the text	Visual commentary (drawings, visual analogies, doodles)
Quotes from the text	Written reactions, reflections, commentary, musings ("Hmmm...")
Quotes from the text	Connections <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Text to text ➤ Text to Self ➤ Text to world
Observations, details revealed by close reading	Significance
What the text says...	Why the text says this...
Questions: "I wonder why..."	Possible answers: "Maybe because..."
Quotes from texts	Quotes from the text
Quotes from texts	Social Questions (Race, class, gender inequalities)
Quotes from texts	Memories
Quotes from texts	Naming Literary or Persuasive (Rhetorical) Techniques

***You may utilize this graphic organizer to complete your dialectical journal for In Cold Blood.
Remember – you’re completing five entries for each section of the book***

Example Quote	Analysis
<p>“A month passed, and another, and it snowed some part of almost every day. Snow whitened the wheat-tawny countryside, heaped the streets of the town, hushed them” (254).</p>	<p>I noticed the structure of the sentences, the way Capote shows time passing with “and another.” Then we have the image of the snow. Does the whitening of the snow suggest a kind of purity/return to innocence? Or his Capote emphasizing the cold? The idea of the snow hushing them suggests a quiet peace. I also like the structure of the sentence – the way Capote uses the parallel structure of the verbs – whitened, heaped, hushed. I like the way he doesn’t use the “and” we expect to see before hushed. Somehow it emphasizes the hushing.</p>
Quote 1	Analysis

Quote 2	Analysis
Quote 3	Analysis

Quote 4	Analysis
Quote 5	Analysis

