Analyzing the Prose Analysis Essay

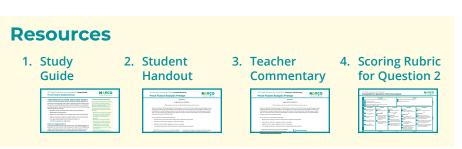


NOTES

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Duration

Two 40-minute class sessions



Objectives of Lessons

- To develop a prose analysis essay
- To apply the Prose Fiction Analysis rubric to a student essay

College Board Objectives from the 2019–20 CED

- LAN 7: Develop textually substantiated arguments about interpretations of part or all of a text.
- LAN 7.D: Select and use relevant and sufficient evidence to both develop and support a line of reasoning.
 - **The following skills are practiced and assessed as progress monitoring, but are not explicitly taught in this lesson.**
 - LAN 7.A: Develop a paragraph that includes 1) a claim that requires defense with evidence from the text, and 2) the evidence itself.
 - LAN 7.B: Develop a thesis statement that conveys a defensible claim about an interpretation of literature and that may establish a line of reasoning.
 - LAN 7.C: Develop commentary that establishes and explains relationships among textual evidence, the line of reasoning, and the thesis.
 - LAN 7.E: Demonstrate control over the elements of composition to communicate clearly.

Student Activities

- Students will dissect the prompt.
- Students will analyze the passage in groups.
- Students will develop the prose analysis essay.



How to Use This Lesson

These lessons are designed to monitor students' progress in developing a prose analysis essay. Beginning with the Marco Learning Prose Fiction Prompt provided, students will first work in small groups to analyze the "Wuthering Heights" excerpt by Emily Bronte by identifying how the author uses literary elements and techniques to portray the position Heathcliff holds within the Earnshaw family. Then, students will develop their own full prose analysis of the excerpt, using the Marco Learning Prose Fiction Analysis Essay Study Guide. This activity allows students to support one another as they work through a difficult task. Additionally, it allows you as a grader to target students' strengths and weaknesses in both reading and writing.

Day One: Analyze the Prose Prompt

- For this activity, you will need six poster-sized sticky notes or pieces of chart paper and several packs of regular-sized sticky notes.
- Begin by breaking students into small groups (three to four students is an ideal size).

Step One: Dissecting the Prompt

- Give each student a copy of the Student Handout: Prose Analysis prompt and each table a stack of the smaller sticky notes.
- To begin this lesson, it is important for students to closely read the prompt and dissect it for information. Ask students to read the prompt and to underline critical information and highlight or circle what their task is. Students may do something similar to what you see below:

In this excerpt from "Wuthering Heights" by Emily Bronte, written in 1847, Mr. Earnshaw has just brought a young orphan boy, Heathcliff, to join his family in their isolated house on the English moors. His daughter Catherine and son Hindley have strong feelings about him, as does the narrator of this excerpt, Nelly. Read the passage carefully. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze how the author uses literary elements and techniques to portray Heathcliff's complex position in the Earnshaw family.

Step Two: Study Guide Review

After reading and dissecting the prompt, hand out the Prose Fiction Analysis Essay Study Guide. Direct students' attention to the introduction and the Common Literary Elements in the top side box. Explain to students that since this is a practice exercise, they will be working with the following elements in this box as the focus of their analysis: Syntax, Diction, Simile, Imagery.

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It would save class time to have students read the rest of the study guide for homework in preparation for their essay the next day. You want students to have as much time in their groups to focus on the analysis exercise as possible.

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Step Three: Preparing for the Poster Activity

- At the top of each poster, write one of the following literary elements/ techniques: Syntax, Diction, Simile, Imagery.
- Place the posters in places around the room so that students can easily access them. They will need to get to them in the next part of the lesson.

Step Four: Analyzing the Passage

- After analyzing the prompt, students are ready to work through the passage. Remind them that they are looking for which literary elements and techniques portray Heathcliff's complex position in the Earnshaw family. Students should be able to define *what his position is* and *what makes it complex*.
- For this activity, students are looking for evidence of literary techniques that demonstrate Heathcliff's position. They should focus on Syntax, Diction, Simile, and Imagery. When students find a piece of evidence that supports Heathcliff's position in the family, they need to:
 - 1. Determine which element/technique this evidence falls under.
 - 2. Write the evidence on the sticky note (exact quotes).
 - 3. Write a sentence explaining HOW this quote proves Heathcliff's position within the family. (This may need to go on the back of the sticky note.)
- With five minutes left in the period, students should have at least one sticky note for each poster. They should put their notes on the posters, then take a walk around the room to look at what other groups used for evidence. They can flip the notes over to read the analysis on the back if they need to see the logic behind the choice (especially for some of the less obvious but more sophisticated pieces of evidence).
- This activity is great because students develop a visual representation of the primary methods of development they could use to defend their assertion.

Step Five: Assigning Day one Homework

- Ask students to draft a statement that addresses the following four questions:
 - 1. What is Heathcliff's attitude toward his new family?
 - 2. What is the family's attitude toward Heathcliff?
 - 3. How does Bronte demonstrate this relationship?
 - 4. Why is this relationship significant in establishing Heathcliff's complex position in the family?

The analysis portion of this lesson could be completed independently, but you may want students to do this in their small groups. This will allow them to have discussions about which pieces of evidence are most effective in demonstrating specific literary techniques. Encourage students to try to find unique evidence and to avoid replicating evidence between groups by analyzing different evidence in a new way. This could lead to a more sophisticated understanding of the excerpt.

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• This statement will be the basis of the introductory paragraph that students will write in the next class session.

Day Two: Writing the Prose Essay

Step One: Reviewing the Homework Statements

- Encourage students to take out their homework and share their statements with their shoulder partners. Have the partner green-light the statement or offer revision suggestions. This should take about five minutes. Students who did not do their homework will not be able to participate in this part of the lesson, but they can still write the essay, even if they didn't do their homework; they just don't have the head-start that the other students do. They can work on drafting their statements while the classmates who have theirs ready are discussing with a partner.
- Ensure that each student has a copy of the Prose Fiction Analysis Study Guide and the Student Handout: Prose Fiction Analysis Prompt. They will need to reference these as they write their essays.

Step Two: Writing the Prose Analysis Essay

- As students prepare to write the essay, make sure that the posters are on display. Encourage students to get up and look at the posters during the essay if they need. Allowing them to view the posters while they write will hopefully result in better analysis and a more organized essay. It will also allow you, the grader, to more effectively monitor students' abilities to create commentary. They have illustrated that they can identify Heathcliff's position within the family, but can they explain that complex relationship? Can they evaluate how the choices Bronte makes demonstrate the complexity of his position? This should be evident in student essays.
- For this essay, we recommend that you time the students. It is imperative that students start working under a time constraint early in the year—perhaps not in the first few weeks, but once they develop a comfort level with the content. Students have already read the passage and developed somewhat of an outline with the posters; therefore, we believe 40 minutes is an appropriate amount of time to accomplish this task. As always, modify as you see fit.

Remember, the prose analysis essay is incredibly difficult for many students. Therefore, we recommend that you allow students to use resources to help them work through the essay at the beginning of the year. As the semester continues, you may add parameters such as allowing students to only use one resource of their choice and work toward eliminating them completely.

As students finish their essays, we recommend that you ask them to highlight their thesis statements in one color, their evidence in another color, and their commentary in a third color. This simple task allows the students to see the balance of evidence and commentary within their essay. Additionally, it may help you grade more efficiently.

Prose Fiction Analysis Essay



THE PROSE FICTION ANALYSIS ESSAY

The Prose Fiction Analysis essay includes a prompt that gives a preview of the passage, then asks a specific question about how the author uses literary elements and techniques to accomplish a particular goal. The prompt will instruct you to do the following four things in your essay:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible interpretation.
- Select and use evidence to support your line of reasoning.
- Explain how the evidence supports your line of reasoning.
- Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating your argument.

How to Approach it

You have 40 minutes to write each essay. The following gives a guideline for how much time to spend on each of the following steps, but these are not set in stone. As you practice, you can experiment with whether you'll do better with a little more time for reading, a little more time for planning, exactly the suggested times, or something else.

1. Read the Prompt—2 minutes

- Read carefully, and identify what the question is asking. Read twice to be sure you understand.
- There's no need to read the four bullet points (reproduced above)—they'll be the same on every exam.

2. Read the Passage—8 minutes

- While reading the passage, focus on the task presented in the prompt. Your essay needs to address the question in the prompt to earn points.
- Read the passage through once, focusing on a basic understanding. Translate difficult language to yourself as you go, and if there are parts you can't make any sense of (or get bored with), skip over them.
- Read the passage through a second time, looking for evidence you can use in your essay. Look for literary elements that you can identify and underline them, and then make notes in the margins about what you notice. Don't worry about interpretation at this point; just focus on identifying things that stand out to you.
- It doesn't matter if you can attach a fancy name to any particular technique the author uses; you just need to be able to identify it. You might note that the author uses the text of letters that characters write to each other without being able to name that "epistolary intrusion," and you'll still get your point across.

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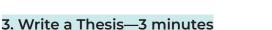
COMMON LITERARY ELEMENTS

As you read the text, here's a partial list of literary elements you can look for. You won't find all of these things in every passage, nor is this list exhaustive; it's just meant to help you get started thinking about how to read a prose fiction passage:

- Syntax: is the sentence structure consistent or varied? Does this contribute to the way in which meaning is conveyed in the passage?
- Diction: how does the author's word choice contribute to your understanding of the passage?
- **Symbolism:** are there things in the passage that represent something other than what they are literally?
- Simile and Metaphor: does the author use comparisons to enrich your understanding of characters or situations?
- **Imagery:** does the passage include descriptive language that appeals to your physical senses?
- **Personification:** does the author give human characteristics to inanimate objects?

NOTES

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- Look at your notes about the evidence that you identified in step 2, and look for trends.
- Look back at the question in the prompt, and think about how the evidence you identified structures an answer to that issue.
- Write down a 1–2 sentence draft thesis statement. Don't worry about perfection here—you can revise it as you write your essay in step 5.

4. Plan the Essay—3 minutes

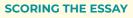
- *Introduction*: your first paragraph should provide a brief summary of the situation in the passage as it relates to the prompt. Include your thesis at the end; the thesis statement can earn you a point, so make it easy for the graders to find it.
- *Body paragraphs*: plan to write two well-developed body paragraphs in which you cite the evidence you identified in the passage and provide commentary on how it contributes to your interpretation of the passage. In planning your essay, note what the main focus of each paragraph will be (this can either be a specific literary element, or it can be a theme of the passage that is achieved through more than one element). In your outline, also jot down specific line numbers, so you know where to find the relevant evidence while you're writing.
- *Conclusion*: the most important aspect of the conclusion is that you have some type of conclusion. If it's really well-written, it can contribute to earning the point for sophistication, but there is no separate scoring category for the conclusion itself, so don't get stuck trying to compose the perfect wrap-up to your essay.

5. Write—24 minutes

Monitor the time you spend writing, as the proctor won't tell you when to move on to the next essay.

- Write as fast as you can while still keeping your handwriting legible. Also write as much as you can—longer essays tend to earn more points.
- Don't worry if your body paragraphs don't seem to logically flow from one to another—your graders understand that this essay is essentially a rough draft.
- Focus more on explaining how the evidence you cite connects to your interpretation of the passage than on your writing style or vocabulary. Evidence and commentary are worth up to four points, while sophistication is only worth one point, and you have limited time.

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Thesis: 0–1 points Evidence & Commentary: 0–4 points Sophistication: 0–1 points

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Visit www.marcolearning.com for additional resources.



Prose Fiction Analysis Prompt



Question 2

Suggested time: 40 minutes

(This question counts for one-third of the total essay section score.)

In this excerpt from "Wuthering Heights" by Emily Bronte, written in 1847, Mr. Earnshaw has just brought a young orphan boy, Heathcliff, to join his family in their isolated house on the English moors. His daughter Catherine and son Hindley have strong feelings about him, as does the narrator of this excerpt, Nelly. Read the passage carefully. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze how the author uses literary elements and techniques to portray Heathcliff's complex position in the Earnshaw family.

In your response you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible interpretation.
- Select and use evidence to support your line of reasoning.
- Explain how the evidence supports your line of reasoning.
- Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating your argument.

Miss Cathy and he were now very thick; but Hindley hated him: and to say the truth I did the same; and we plagued and went on with him shamefully: for I wasn't *Line* reasonable enough to feel my injustice, and the mistress

5 never put in a word on his behalf when she saw him wronged.

He seemed a sullen, patient child; hardened, perhaps, to ill-treatment: he would stand Hindley's blows without winking or shedding a tear, and my

- 10 pinches moved him only to draw in a breath and open his eyes, as if he had hurt himself by accident, and nobody was to blame. This endurance made old Earnshaw furious, when he discovered his son persecuting the poor fatherless child, as he called him.
- 15 He took to Heathcliff strangely, believing all he said (for that matter, he said precious little, and generally the truth), and petting him up far above Cathy, who was too mischievous and wayward for a favourite.
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 16 He was not insolent to his benefacted insensible; though knowing perfectly the said precious little.

So, from the very beginning, he bred bad feeling

- 20 in the house; and at Mrs. Earnshaw's death, which happened in less than two years after, the young master had learned to regard his father as an oppressor rather than a friend, and Heathcliff as a usurper of his parent's affections and his privileges; and he grew bitter with
- 25 brooding over these injuries. I sympathised a while; but when the children fell ill of the measles, and I had to tend them, and take on me the cares of a woman at once, I changed my idea. Heathcliff was dangerously sick; and while he lay at the worst he would have me

- *30* constantly by his pillow: I suppose he felt I did a good deal for him, and he hadn't wit to guess that I was compelled to do it. However, I will say this, he was the quietest child that ever nurse watched over. The difference between him and the others forced me to be
- *35* less partial. Cathy and her brother harassed me terribly: he was as uncomplaining as a lamb; though hardness, not gentleness, made him give little trouble.

He got through, and the doctor affirmed it was in a great measure owing to me, and praised me for my care. I

40 was vain of his commendations, and softened towards the being by whose means I earned them, and thus Hindley lost his last ally: still I couldn't dote on Heathcliff, and I wondered often what my master saw to admire so much in the sullen boy; who never, to my recollection, repaid 45 his indulgence by any sign of gratitude

He was not insolent to his benefactor, he was simply insensible; though knowing perfectly the hold he had on his heart, and conscious he had only to speak and all the house would be obliged to bend to his wishes. As

- 50 an instance, I remember Mr. Earnshaw once bought a couple of colts at the parish fair, and gave the lads each one. Heathcliff took the handsomest, but it soon fell lame, and when he discovered it, he said to Hindley— "You must exchange horses with me: I don't like mine;
- 55 and if you won't I shall tell your father of the three thrashings you've given me this week, and show him my arm, which is black to the shoulder.'



Write or type your response in this area.

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Commentary

- (1) Bronte's use of berating **diction** from Nelly at the opening of her narrative serves to reveal the plight of this poor orphan brought to live at Wuthering Heights. Heathcliff's position in the family is established early in this excerpt with both Hindley, Mr. Earnshaw's son, and Nelly, the servant, establishing themselves as allies against Heathcliff. If Hindley had been the only one to be picking on Heathcliff and was intent that Heathcliff is "plagued," then it might stand to reason that Hindley was jealous and worried about being usurped as the inheritor of his family estate. But since Nelly the servant also took to "shamefully" causing Heathcliff undue pain, it establishes Heathcliff's status as less than a guest, less than a member of the family, and less than a servant within the house. He is more "other" than anyone else in the family, and even though he and Miss Cathy (Catherine) are "thick" and enjoy each other's company, she doesn't seem to be regarded highly by Nelly or Hindley.
- (2) Nelly is telling this portion of the tale in a flashback, and Bronte crafts her as being candid in her tale. We learn of her pinching Heathcliff for no real reason, but in this instance, the **syntax** of the narrative shifts and Nelly inserts a sidenote directly to the reader. We learn through this parenthetical note that Heathcliff spoke little and "generally the truth," which is an admirable quality, one that she doesn't include in the main narrative, but as an aside. While readers might think this adds to her charm in admitting all these years later that Heathcliff was a generally well-mannered child, it may also provide cause to question the reliability of her as a narrator, making Heathcliff's position within the family even more complex.

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35 less partial. Cathy and her brother harassed me terribly:
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 "You must exchange horses with me: I don't like mine;"
- 55 and if you won't I shall tell your father of the three thrashings you've given me this week, and show him my arm, which is black to the shoulder.'

- (3) In this **simile**, Heathcliff is being compared to a lamb, but Bronte did not craft a soft, fluffy Heathcliff. She needs us to know, even this early in the novel, that Heathcliff is no soft lamb, instead, she has Nelly negate this simile instantly, stating that "though hardness, not gentleness, made him give little trouble." He was a good kid and not because he was gentle as a lamb. No, it was because he was uncomplaining as a lamb; that is a difference in the simile that Bronte makes certain Nelly states, thus establishing Heathcliff's role in the family as both a hardened member kept at the outskirts and also a quiet onlooker causing no trouble. He isn't fully part of the family, behaving as the Earnshaw children do to being ill, but he is also still being cared for by Nelly during his time of need, further distancing him from both the family and the servant in regards to his role in the house.
- (4) Earlier in the passage, Bronte ensured that we knew that Heathcliff was "hardened" by Hindley's treatment, but in this scene, Bronte is certain that we see it through **imagery** and with action, even if through the lens of memory. Heathcliff's guiling behavior in this scene establishes that even though he knows he isn't living within the main part of this family as an original member, he knows how to use that original membership to get what he wants. He is ruthless in his desire to get what he wants, and yet still tells no lies, simply uses what was done to him as leverage, thus giving him the upper hand amongst the children.

Scoring Rubric for Question 2: Prose Fiction Analysis



0 POINTS			1 POINT			
Does not meet criteria for any of the following reasons:			Defensible interpretation of the passage			
No defensible thesis			Responds to the prompt			
Simple restatement of prompt only						
Summary of passage with no connection to prompt						
Thesis does not address	s prompt		*Thesis m	nay be more than one sentence and	may appear anywhere in the essay	
0 POINTS	1 POINT	2 POINTS	5	3 POINTS	4 POINTS	
 Simple restatement of thesis (if existing) OR Incoherent writing OR Writing irrelevant to prompt OR No textual references made/opinion based OR Simply repeats provided information 	 EVIDENCE: Generalized evidence AND COMMENTARY: Focuses on overall plot or description of the passage rather than on specific details or techniques Literary elements and devices mentioned but not explained 	 EVIDENCE: Some specific evidence Relevant evidence AND COMMENTARY: Some evidence til argument Mixes specific evidence til argument Lacks a line of real and progression Simplistic, repetitil inaccurate explant 	e ed to idence alizations asoning of ideas :ive, or	 EVIDENCE: Sufficient and relevant evidence supports all claims AND COMMENTARY: A line of reasoning is supported with some evidence Evidence uniformly supports claims Words and details from passage build the interpretation Line of reasoning and progression of ideas faulty or lacking Exploration of at least one literary technique with connections to meaning 	 EVIDENCE: Specific and relevant evidence AND COMMENTARY: Offers support for all claims Well-organized line of reasoning with multiple supporting claims and clear explanations Explains the significance of specific words and details, and connects them to the interpretation Explains writer's literary techniques with multiple examples that are tied to the interpretation 	
0 POINTS			1 POINT			
O POINTS Does not meet the criteria for any of the following reasons: Sweeping generalizations of context			Demonstrates sophisticated thinking			
Sweeping generalizations of context			Develops a complex literary argument			
Ineffective use of language				Explores complexities and tensions in passage		
 Oversimplifies the passage's complexities Thematic interpretation not consistently developed 				Places interpretation into a larger context		
Thematic interpretation not consistently developed				Employs a vivid and persuasive writing style		
Alternative interpretations missing or only hinted at				Engages in multiple interpretations of the passage		

TOTAL POINTS EARNED: / 6

Self-Evaluation for Question 2: Prose Fiction Analysis



Student's Name:

SELF OR PEER ASSESSMENT	SELF-ASSESSMENT			
Thesis	Effort Assessment			
Locate the thesis in the response and copy it into the space below:	On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being low and 5 being high, how much effort did you put into writing this essay? Select the corresponding number and then write a sentence explaining your choice.			
	○1 ○2 ○3 ○4 ○5			
	Explanation:			
Is the thesis: defensible? a clear response to the prompt? 	3 Areas of Strength			
Evidence and Commentary				
Is the evidence:				
specific and relevant?				
explained in connection to the prompt?				
Organization and Sophistication	3 Areas for Improvement			
Is the essay:				
following a line of reasoning?				
well organized?				
well developed?				
vivid and persuasive?				
complex and insightful?				