

AP English Language—Terms and Vocabulary

Argument

ambiguity - A statement with two or more meanings that may seem to exclude one another in the context.

There are two types of ambiguity, **lexical** and **structural**.

Lexical ambiguity is by far the more common. Everyday examples include nouns like 'chip', 'pen' and 'suit', verbs like 'call', 'draw' and 'run', and adjectives like 'deep', 'dry' and 'hard'. There are various tests for ambiguity. One test is having two unrelated antonyms, as with 'hard', which has both 'soft' and 'easy' as opposites.

Structural ambiguity occurs when a phrase or sentence has more than one underlying structure, such as the phrases 'Tibetan history teacher', 'a student of high moral principles' and 'short men and women', and the sentences 'The girl hit the boy with a book' and 'Visiting relatives can be boring'. These ambiguities are said to be structural because each such phrase can be represented in two structurally different ways, e.g., '[Tibetan history] teacher' and 'Tibetan [history teacher]'

anecdote - a usually short narrative of an interesting, amusing, or biographical incident

appeals – ethos, logos, pathos (see handouts)

concession - when you show an audience that you have anticipated potential opposition and objections, and have an answer for them, you defuse the audience's ability to oppose you and persuade them to accept your point of view. If there are places where you agree with your opposition, *conceding* their points creates goodwill and respect without weakening your thesis.

deductive – Deductive reasoning works from the more general to the more specific. Sometimes this is informally called a "top-down" approach. We might begin with thinking up a *theory* about our topic of interest. We then narrow that down into more specific *hypotheses* that we can test. We narrow down even further when we collect *observations* to address the hypotheses. This ultimately leads us to be able to test the hypotheses with specific data -- a *confirmation* (or not) of our original theories.

inductive - Inductive reasoning works the other way, moving from specific observations to broader generalizations and theories. Informally, we sometimes call this a "bottom up" approach (please note that it's "bottom up" and *not* "bottoms up" which is the kind of thing the bartender says to customers when he's trying to close for the night!). In inductive reasoning, we begin with specific observations and measures, begin to detect patterns and regularities, formulate some tentative hypotheses that we can explore, and finally end up developing some general conclusions or theories.

logical fallacies (*ad hominem*, begging the question etc.) – see your handout

sylllogism - In a syllogism the primary premise is a general statement. The primary premise is always universal, and may be positive or negative. The secondary premise may also be universal or particular so that from these premises it is possible to deduce a valid conclusion.

Everything that lives, moves (primary premise)

No mountain moves (secondary premise)

No mountain lives (conclusion)

enthymeme - An enthymeme is a partial syllogism. It is based on the probable rather than positive premises and is based on implicit conjectures that are shared by the speaker and the audience. The speaker gives the primary premise and assumes that the audience will supply the missing knowledge in order to reach the conclusion.

Everything that lives, moves (primary premise)

No mountain lives (conclusion)

Rhetorical Strategies/Terms

abstraction – an idea disassociated from any specific instance; expresses a quality apart from an object

aesthetic - A guiding principle in matters of artistic beauty and taste; artistic sensibility

allegory - the expression by means of symbolic fictional figures and actions of truths or generalizations about human existence

alliteration – the repetition of the same sound at the beginning of successive words

allusion A reference, explicit or implicit, to something in previous literature or history.

ambiguous – a word, phrase, or sentence whose meaning can be interpreted in more than one way

analogy – an extended comparison between two things/instances/people etc. that share some similarity to make a point

anaphora – Repetition of the same word or group of words at the beginning of successive clauses, sentences, or lines.

anastrophe – normal word order is reversed or rearranged

antithesis – the rhetorical contrast of ideas by means of parallel arrangements of words, clauses, or sentences

aphorism - a brief saying embodying a moral, a concise statement of a principle or precept given in pointed words.

apostrophe - when an absent person, an abstract concept, or an important object is directly addressed.

appositive - a noun or noun phrase that renames another noun right beside it.

assonance - the repetition of vowel sounds but not consonant sounds

asyndeton – conjunctions are omitted, producing a fast-paced and rapid prose

atmosphere - The mood or pervasive feeling insinuated by a literary work.

audience – part of your rhetorical situation (speaker, subject, audience); the person or persons to whom comments are directed (affects tone, meaning)

bildungsroman – this genre of literature denotes the story of a single individual's growth and development within the context of a defined social order. The growth process, at its roots a quest story, has been described as both "an apprenticeship to life" and a "search for meaningful existence within society."

cacophony - harsh, discordant sounds. Opposite of euphony. Example:

chiasmus - Repetition of ideas in inverted order.

climax – writer arranges ideas in the order of importance

colloquialism - characteristic of spoken or written communication that seeks to imitate informal speech

concrete – opposite of abstract; identifies things perceived through the senses (touch, smell, sight, hearing, and taste), such as soft, stench, red, loud, or bitter.

connotation - The set of associations implied by a word in addition to its literal meaning
consonance - the repetition of consonant sounds, but not vowels, as in assonance.

denotation - the literal meaning of a word, the dictionary meaning. Opposite of connotation

detail – think of “The Rattler” (oh no!). The snake “turned a little to watch what I would do.” This quote is strictly detail, creating a simple image, with no connotation at all.

dialect - <http://www.shortbus.net/dialect.html> to visit The Dialect Translator (I particularly enjoy ‘Jive’) a regional variety of language distinguished by features of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation from other regional varieties and constituting together with them a single language (think Jim in *Huck Finn*)

diction - A writer's choice of words, phrases, sentence structures, and figurative language, which combine to help create meaning

didactic – tone; instructional, designed to teach an ethical, moral, or religious lesson.

dramatic monologue - a character (the speaker) addresses a distinct but silent audience imagined to be present in the poem in such a way as to reveal a dramatic situation and, often unintentionally, some aspect of his or her temperament or personality

elegiac – tone; Of, relating to, or involving elegy or mourning or expressing sorrow for that which is irrecoverably past

ellipsis - the omission of one or more words that are obviously understood but that must be supplied to make a construction grammatically complete

epigraph - a quotation set at the beginning of a literary work or one of its divisions to suggest its theme

epistrophe - Ending a series of lines, phrases, clauses, or sentences with the same word or words. The opposite of anaphora.

euphemism - the substitution of an agreeable or inoffensive expression for one that may offend or suggest something unpleasant

euphony - soothing pleasant sounds. Opposite of cacophony. Example: O star (the fairest one in sight)

extended metaphor - differs from a regular metaphor in that several comparisons similar in theme are being made

figurative language/figures of speech – language used to create a special effect or feeling; most commonly alliteration, hyperbole, metaphor, etc.

generalization – an idea or statement that emphasizes the general characteristics rather than the specific details of a subject

genre – a category or type of literature based on its style, form and content.

hyperbole – exaggeration done deliberately for emphasis

hypotactic – see syntax handout

idiolect - A person's idiolect is their own personal language, the words they choose and any other features that characterize their speech and writing (related to style, voice)

idiomatic - Of or pertaining to, or conforming to, the mode of expression peculiar to a language; use of figures of speech

imagery – the words or phrases a writer uses to represent objects, feelings, actions, or ideas; appeals to one or more of the five senses.

inflection - the change of form that words undergo to mark such distinctions as those of case, gender, number, tense, person, mood, or voice

invective - of, relating to, or characterized by insult or abuse

irony

- verbal: stating the opposite of what is said or meant
- situational: what happens is the opposite of what is expected
- dramatic: the audience is aware of something the characters onstage are unaware of

juxtaposition - placing two or more things side by side for comparison or contrast

metaphor – an implied comparison between two unlike things

metonymy - a figure of speech consisting of the use of the name of one thing for that of another of which it is an attribute or with which it is associated

mood – the feeling a piece of literature arouses in the reader

motif - a usually recurring salient thematic element *especially* a dominant idea or central theme

onomatopoeia – the use of words whose sound reinforces their meaning

oxymoron - a combination of contradictory or incongruous words (“cruel to be kind”)

pacing – use when discussing organization; point out where action/syntax begins to speed up, slow down, is interrupted, etc.

paradox(ical statement) - apparently self-contradictory statement, the underlying meaning of which is revealed only by careful scrutiny. The purpose of a paradox is to arrest attention and provoke fresh thought

parallel (structure, parallelism) – A repetition of sentences using the same grammatical structure emphasizing all aspects of the sentence equally

parenthetical expression – an expression that is inserted into the flow of thought. It may be in the middle of a sentence or between sentences, but it does not deal directly with the topic at hand. These are set off by dashes or parentheses.

parody – mimicking someone else’s work or style in a humorous or satirical way.

pastoral -- from the Latin *pastor*, “shepherd,” is literally the poetry or songs of the shepherds. Part of the pastoral ideal is *otium* – leisure – of or relating to the countryside.

persona (of narrator) – when the narrator takes on a persona of his own, rather than remaining objective, the reader must take into consideration his biases and intents.

personification – attributing human qualities to an inanimate object

point of view – literary term for the perspective from which a story is told (first, third, omniscient, limited)

polysyndeton – the use of many conjunctions has the effect of slowing the pace or emphasizing the numerous words or clauses.

pun – a humorous play on words.

repetition – using the same word or phrase over and over; takes forms such as

- anaphora – repetition of the same word or group of words at the beginnings of successive clauses
- epanalepsis – repetition at the end of a clause a word that occurred at the beginning
- epistrophe – repetition of the same word or group of words at the ends of successive clauses

rhetoric – the art or study of speaking and writing effectively.

rhetorical situation (see SOAPS) – the triangle created by the speaker/writer, the audience, and the occasion; affects what is said or written

rhetorical question – questions that do not require an answer; may be

- directed to the reader, meant to involve the reader
- addressed to the writer, meant to review ideas raised
- criticizing
- asking and answering, meant to highlight the author’s method of development of ideas¹

sarcasm – a type of irony in which a person appears to praise something but actually insults it; its purpose is to injure or hurt.

satire -- A composition ridiculing human vice or folly; a keen or severe exposure of what in public or private morals deserves rebuke

schemes – figures of speech in which word order is altered from the usual or expected

semantics – the study of the larger system of meaning created by words

sentences: (on handout)

balanced

complex, compound, compound-complex, simple

declarative, exclamatory, imperative, rhetorical

fragment

inverted

loose

natural

periodic

shift (in person, syntax, tone etc.) – when a section of the text undergoes a noticeable or subtle change

simile – an explicit comparison between two unlike things signified by the use of ‘like’ or ‘as.’

stream of consciousness -- technique that records the thoughts and feelings of a character without regard to logical argument or narrative sequence; reflects all the forces, internal and external, affecting the character’s psyche at the moment.

style – the phrase “the author’s style” is often seen in AP prompts and is asking the student to discuss how the author uses words, phrases, and sentences to form ideas. In other words, analyze the rhetorical techniques.

symbol – a person, place, thing, or event used to represent something else.

synecdoche -- the rhetorical substitution of a part for the whole

synesthesia – a rhetorical device that mixes elements of the senses

syntax – see handouts

thesis – a statement of purpose, intent, or main idea in a literary work

tropes – figures of speech in which meaning is altered from the usual or expected

understatement (also litotes) -- Deliberate understatement, especially when expressing a thought by denying its opposite.

vernacular – the characteristic language of a particular group (see also colloquialism); often slang or informal

voice -- The Voice is the writer coming through the words, the sense that a real person is speaking to us and cares about the message. It is the heart and soul of the writing, the magic, the wit, the feeling, the life and breath

wit -- a message whose ingenuity or verbal skill or incongruity has the power to evoke laughter (see also parody, pun, satire)

zeugma – when two different words that sound exactly alike are yoked together; when a preposition or verb has two or more objects on different levels

Allusions (see your allusions log)

Garden of Eden/ Paradise	Pandora's Box
Betrayed with a Kiss/ 30 Pieces of Silver	Good Samaritan
Faust/ Faustian	Pound of Flesh
Belly of the Whale	Peter and Paul (rob Peter to Pay Paul)
Doubting Thomas	Sodom and Gomorrah / Lot's Wife
Writing on the Wall	/Pillar of Salt
David and Goliath	Burning Bush
Cain and Abel/ Brother's Keeper	Pearls Before Swine
Utopian / Utopian	

Tone and Attitude Glossary (by no means complete!)

Angry	affectionate	aggravated	agitated
Aloof	apathetic	appreciative	arrogant
calm	clandestine	condescending	contradictory
cynical	dejected	depressed	desperate
despondent	didactic	disappointed	disinterested
disgusted	earnest	ecstatic	elegiac
encouraging	enthusiastic	excited	facetious
happy	haughty	hurt	inspiring
ironic	joyful	languid	light-hearted
manipulative	melancholy	nervous	nonchalant
paranoid	passive	patronizing	plaintive
pleading	proud	romantic	sad
sardonic	scornful	sincere	soothing
superficial	sympathetic	whimsical	wistful
vibrant			

Terms to Describe Language

(different from tone, 'language' describes the force or quality of the diction, images, details, etc.)

archaic (old, antiquated)	learned
artificial	literal
bombastic (overblown, pompous, inflated)	lyrical (expressing intense emotion)
concrete	metaphorical
colloquial (conversational)	moralistic
connotative (suggestive)	mundane (commonplace)
cultured	obscure
deflated (reduced in importance)	obtuse (not clear/precise)'
detached	ordinary
emotional	pedantic (ostentatiously learned)
esoteric (for the initiate)	picturesque (quaint, charming)
euphemistic (inoffensive, agreeable)	plain
exact	poetic
fantastic (flights of fancy)	pompous
figurative	precise
formal	pretentious (showy)
grotesque (bizarre, incongruous)	provincial (narrow, unsophisticated)
homespun (simple, homely)	scholarly
idiomatic (dialect)	sensuous (appealing to the senses)
informal	simple
insipid (dull, flat)	slangy
jargon (technical vocab of a particular group)	trite (boring from overuse, hackneyed)
	vulgar

Analyzing Rhetorical Situation

SOAPSTone: Identify these elements whenever possible to read contextually.

- S – Subject
- O – Occasion
- A – Audience
- P – Purpose of speaker
- S – Speaker
- T – Tone

TABASCo (for analysis of synthesis documents)

- T - Topic
- A - Author
- B - Bias
- A - Audience
- S- Summary
- C- Context

Showing, not Telling, In Analysis Essays

Telling	Showing
Peppering prose with Latin and Greek laundry list of terms	Demonstrating understanding of the effects of those strategies
“The writer appeals to pathos”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “the author appeals to the emotions of the audience when he...” • “the author makes the audience afraid of the consequences, and so sways their opinion when she...”
“The writer uses logos”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “the writer uses a carefully-reasoned cause-and-effect argument that shows unequivocally that X leads to Y.” • “the writer uses plenty of examples to support her point that...” • “the writer reaches a logical conclusion that...”
“The writer uses ethos”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “the writer establishes his authority by...” • “the writer makes herself sympathetic to the audience by...” • “the writer clearly has a good reputation because...”

Words to Use Instead of ‘says’ or passive verbs

· writes	· demonstrates	· repudiates	· predicts
· observes	· exemplifies	· refutes	· suggests
· notes	· illustrates	· dispels	· hints
· remarks	· explains	· reverts	
· adds	· informs the		
· declares	reader/ his/her	· embodies	· sustains
· claims	audience	· inspires	· manipulates
· states	· elucidates	· regales	· enhances
· comments	· clarifies	· empowers	· discerns
· thinks	· paints	· constrains	· masters
· portrays			· meanders
· depicts	· alleges	· constructs	· transforms
· conveys	· affirms	· creates	· solidifies
· implies	· asserts	· transcends	
· reveals	· argues	· pervades	
		· foreshadows	