

2. He strikes us as having a good agenda: He seems to believe that the United States regularly needs to assess its political leaders' character traits and goals, and he apparently sees Franklin as a good role model for our leaders today.
3. He seems to share with us common sentiments about what makes a person a good person: hard work, humility, a sense of humor.

In short, Isaacson seems credible because he shows his intelligence, his good character, and his good will. Coincidentally, in his classic *Art of Rhetoric*, Aristotle in the fourth century B.C.E. noted these same three sources of an appeal to *ethos*: In his native Greek he called them *phronesis*, or practical intelligence; *arête*, or good character; and *eunoia*, or good will.

Hypothesizing about the Emotional Effect of the Text

Texts do more than convey a take-home idea, achieve purposes, convey tone, and establish credibility. They make readers *feel*, and having a hypothesis about what we think is the central emotion appeal of a text is as vital as having a hypothesis about its main idea, purpose, tone, and credibility. A text's establishment of emotional effect is clearly related to the author's tone, his or her attitude toward the subject matter. As we hinted above, Isaacson's tone might be characterized as *amused by* and *loyant about* about Franklin's profile and its relevance for twenty-first-century America. Do you think Isaacson wants us to feel *uplifted* and *optimistic*? We do!

ACTIVITY

Trying Your Hand at the Big Central Question and the Four Related Ones

Return to Abraham Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address. Reread it, if necessary. Then, with a classmate or in a group, discuss your hypothetical questions, and their answers, about Lincoln's take-home idea, his purpose, his tone, his credibility, and the emotional effect of his address.

"Going Deep" with One of the Elements: Analyzing Tone

Once you have learned to hypothesize about a text's take-home idea, purpose, tone, author's credibility, and the text's emotional effect, you can then choose in an analysis to "go deep" on any one of these features. Let's take a look at Louise Erdrich's poem, "Indian Boarding School: The Runaways," to learn how to delve more deeply into tone.

You may be asking, "Rhetorical analysis of a poem? We've considered a contemporary piece about Ben Franklin and an inaugural address by Abraham Lincoln, and we've studied how these texts craft their central idea, but does a poem have a central idea that we can analyze?" Most poems do: In an artistic way, they forward a central idea that you can discern and analyze; they have a purpose and tone; they ask you to construct (and perhaps question) the narrator's

credibility; they have an emotional effect on readers. In other words, we could do a full-fledged rhetorical analysis of many poems. In this case, however, let's just focus on tone.

In the first two chapters, we talk about how as a reader you make predictions and speculations about the tone of what you're reading. Understanding tone helps you *hear* the voice speaking and that helps you make decisions about the argument the writer might be making and about how the writer might want you to respond.

After you read Erdrich's poem, look back to see where you speculated about the tone—the narrator's attitude toward the subject matter—and write down three or four adjectives that you think describe that tone. Then take those adjectives and find places in the poem that directly illustrate the adjective you've chosen.

Here's an example: We might choose the adjective *tense* to describe the tone in the first nine lines of the poem. Then we might argue that the images in that section—boxcars that don't wait for the runaways, young children running to get into the boxcars in order to escape from the boarding school, a guard striking a match that pierces the darkness—have been deliberately crafted by Erdrich to convey her tone. Now, how would you follow this model with the adjective *pained* or the adjective *bitter*?

In completing this activity, you see how the general idea (what are adjectives that describe the tone of Erdrich's poem?) derives from particular moments in the text (what lines show how that adjective fits?). There might be tone shifts—a change in language that signals a change in attitude—or it might be that the tone you hypothesize at the beginning might get amplified as the writer moves through the lines of the poem. In any case, analyzing how tone works to establish aim and make connections to readers is a primary strategy for you to use when you are interpreting and analyzing what you read.

Taking the Next Step: Moving from the Starting Points to the Component Parts

Hypothesizing about what you think is the take-home idea, as well as the purpose, tone, credibility, and the emotional effect of a text, gives you a menu of possible *starting points* for reading and writing analytically. As the activities above suggest, you need to examine the moments or components of the text, see what its components are, and determine *how* those component parts work together to grasp the take-home idea, the purpose, and the emotional impact of the piece. Think about it this way: Every analysis *begins* with an argument: *You*, the analyst, *argue* that A is the take-home idea, B is the purpose, C is the tone, D is the credibility, and E is the emotional effect. You might discuss all or some of these factors. But whichever ones you include, you will look at the component parts of a text for evidence to support your arguments.

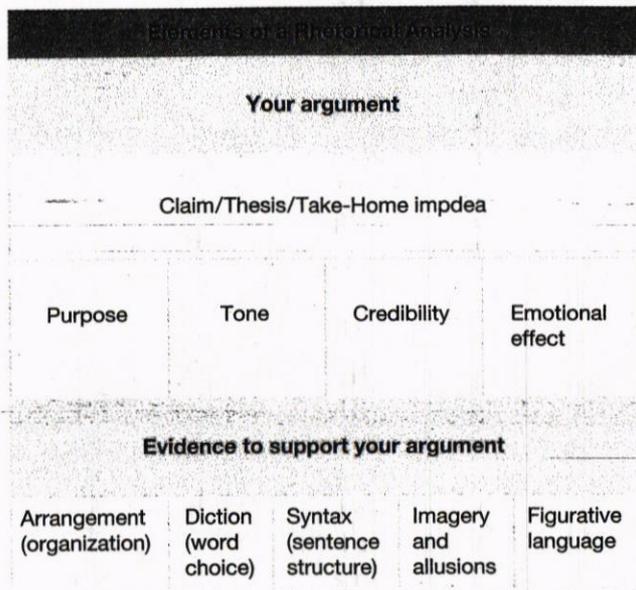


FIGURE 4.2

Working with written texts, you can divide these component parts into five categories: arrangement, diction, syntax, imagery and allusion, and figurative language (see Figure 4.2).

The key to a successful analysis, and a successful analytic paper, is not simply to point out interesting features of arrangement, diction, syntax, imagery, and figurative language. The key to a successful analysis is to understand, and show in your composition, *how* these features *bring to life* the main idea, purpose, tone, credibility, and effect. In the remainder of this chapter, let's examine how this connection happens.

Arrangement: The Shape of the Text

When you examine the arrangement of a text, you analyze how the shape of the text—its parts, its transitions, its beginning, middle, and end, help convey the writer's purpose and control the effect on readers. Pretty much every text you encounter can be described as having a beginning, a middle, and an end and points within it that signal shifts between these sections. Analyzing a text's *arrangement*, you can ask specific questions.

Questions for Analyzing a Text's Overall Arrangement

- Does the text state directly the central question it will answer, issue it will address, or argument it will develop? Where does the text suggest how its plan will proceed?

- How does the text offer support for its argument? Where does it develop these points with examples, illustrations, details, and reasons?
- How does the paper draw together its main ideas and supporting material to address the final "so what" question: What should the readers ultimately think or do now that they've read the text?
- What words or phrases signal the beginnings and ends of the sections of the text?

Once you've identified these general structural moves of arrangement, you begin to ask the important analytic question about function. What are these arrangement features *doing* to help readers understand the central idea, realize the purpose, be affected by the tone, believe in the credibility of the writer?

Analyzing a text's functional arrangement, therefore, involves two steps: (a) You divide a text into sections that make sense to you, and (b) you ask about each section, "What is this section as a whole doing and what is happening within it to convey the main idea, purpose, tone, credibility, or effect?"

Identifying the Parts of a Text The following questions can help you accomplish the first of these two steps. As you analyze a text, ask these questions, remembering that *not every text you examine is going to have all these parts*.

Questions for Identifying the Parts of a Text

- Is there a section that introduces the subject and writer's purpose in discussing it? Where does the section begin and end? Does the section indicate the text's central argument?
- Is there a part that gives readers background information? If so, where does this section begin and end?
- Is there some sentence or paragraph that focuses the readers' attention on some particular issue, aspect, or theme of the subject?
- Is there some section that purposefully supports the central question or argument? If so, where does this section begin and end?
- Is there a part that examines possible objections to the claims? If so, where does this section begin and end?
- Is there a section where the writer suggests what readers might or should think and do with what they've read?

Answering these questions, you get a sense of the parts of a text and how they work.

Analyzing the Arrangement of Each Part of a Text Now you can turn your attention to the second of the two steps and analyze how the arrangement of the text works *within* the parts. Keep in mind that with every question, you consider the response in terms of its effect on you as a reader.

Questions for Analyzing a Section about Subject and Purpose

- Are the subject and purpose directly stated or implied?
- Is some angle foregrounded and other material downplayed?
- Is there a statement that suggests the course that the remainder of the paper will take?

Questions for Analyzing a Section with Background Information

- Is there a statement about the direction the text will take or terms or phrases that signal how a reader moves from one section to another?
- Is background information arranged in some order—chronological (by time), spatial (by location), incremental (by importance)?
- Do words or phrases suggest that the writer is adding to the background material, or showing a consequence of it, or providing contrasting information?

Questions for Analyzing a Section That Supports the Central Claim

- Are there words or sentences that map out the direction this part of the paper will take?
- Does support include any of the following: telling stories, describing scenes and evoking sensory details, defining terms, dividing the whole into parts, categorizing the parts according to some principle, or providing cause-and-effect reasoning?

Questions for Analyzing a Section That Presents Objections to the Claim

- Is there language that suggests the writer wants to counter objections?
- Does some language suggest that the writer wants to concede the objections?

Questions for Analyzing a Section That Indicates What Readers Might Think or Do

- Is there a direct charge to readers to think or act in a new way after reading the piece, or does the writer imply new ways of thinking and acting? How does the degree to which these elements are revealed (or perhaps concealed) persuade you?
- What does the writer do with the words, phrases, and sentences in this work to give the text a sound of finality? What effect does this language have on you as a reader?

If you can generate good answers to these questions by referring to places in the text, you will have done a thorough analysis of arrangement.

ACTIVITY Analyzing the Parts of Lincoln's Inaugural

Take another careful look at Lincoln's Second Inaugural. Divide it into parts—as many as you think are sensible. Then, with a classmate or in a group, describe what each part does to contribute to the construction of the main idea, the achievement of a purpose, and the creation of an emotional effect.

Diction: Words That Make Meaning, Purpose Come to Life

Just as you can analyze how the arrangement of a text helps to develop its central meaning, purpose, tone, credibility, or effect, so you can investigate how specific words in a text make these features come to life for readers. Experienced analysts often use the term **diction**, from the classical Greek *dictio*, or “choice of words.”

Analyzing diction offers you the opportunity to look carefully at several distinguishing features of words. But a word of caution: When you recognize something distinctive in a text's diction, you *always* need to ask yourself a “so what” question, such as “So what does this word choice *do* for the meaning or the effect?” It's not just “does the text use jargon?” or “are there formal and long words?” but *why* are those words used and *what* effect does it have on your reading?

General versus Specific Words Twentieth-century language expert S. I. Hayakawa describes a phenomenon he calls “the ladder of abstraction.” At the top of the ladder he places abstract terms like *transportation* and *justice*; near the middle rungs slightly more specific terms like *automobiles* and *juvenile court*; and at the bottom of the ladder are specific, concrete terms like *my 2008 green Cobalt* and *the offender's five-year probation sentence for shoplifting*.

Ladder of Abstraction		
Abstract term	Transportation	Justice
More specific term	Automobiles	Juvenile court
Very specific, concrete term	My 2008 green Cobalt	Five-year probation for shoplifting

FIGURE 4.3

Not all texts need to employ specific diction—sometimes writers need to talk about abstract terms and concepts—but generally, the more concrete and specific a text's diction is, the more vivid the main idea, purpose, tone, credibility, and emotional effect are.

Denotation versus Connotation Intuitively, we all know that words can be loaded, carry attitudes and emotions as well as definitions. Careful readers are