

Strong vs. Weak Verbs

To help you move away from summary and toward **ANALYSIS**, you need to begin to incorporate strong verbs into your writing when discussing the writer's rhetorical choices. Below is a list of verbs that are considered weak because they imply summary and a list of verbs that are considered strong because they imply analysis. Strive to use the stronger verbs in your essays to help push yourself away from summary and toward analysis: "The writer flatters..." NOT "The writer says..."

WEAK VERBS (Summary)

says	relates	goes on to say	tells
this quote shows	explains	states	shows

STRONG VERBS (Analysis)

implies	trivializes	flatters	qualifies	processes	describes
suggests	denigrates	lionizes	dismisses	analyzes	questions
compares	vilifies	praises	supports	enumerates	contrasts
emphasizes	demonizes	establishes	admonishes	expounds	argues
defines	ridicules	minimizes	narrates	lists	warns

**Powerful and meaningful verbs to use
in your analyses**

Alternatives to “show”

Acknowledge

Address

Analyze

Apply

Argue

Assert

Augment

Broaden

Calculate

Capitalize

Characterize

Claim

Clarify

Compare

Complicate

Confine

Connect

Consider

Construct

Contradict

Correct

Create

Convince

Critique

Declare

Deduce

Defend

Demonstrate

Deny

Describe

Determine

Differentiate

Disagree

Discard

Discover

Discuss

Dismiss

Distinguish

Duplicate

Elaborate

Emphasize

Employ

Enable

Engage

Enhance

Establish

Evaluate

Exacerbate

Examine

Exclude

Exhibit

Expand

Explain

Exploit

Express

Extend

Facilitate

Feature

Forecast

Formulate

Fracture

Generalize

Group

Guide

Hamper

Hypothesize

Identify

Illuminate

Illustrate

Impair

Implement

Implicate

Imply

Improve

Include

Incorporate

Indicate

Induce

Initiate

Inquire

Instigate

Integrate

Interpret

Intervene

Invert

Isolate

Justify

Locate

Loosen

Maintain
Manifest
Manipulate
Measure
Merge
Minimize
Modify
Monitor
Necessitate
Negate
Nullify
Obscure
Observe
Obtain
Offer
Omit
Optimize
Organize
Outline
Overstate
Persist
Point out
Possess
Predict
Present
Probe
Produce
Promote
Propose
Prove
Provide
Qualify
Quantify
Question
Realize
Recommend
Reconstruct
Redefine
Reduce
Refer
Reference
Refine
Reflect
Refute

Regard
Reject
Relate
Rely
Remove
Repair
Report
Represent
Resolve
Retrieve
Reveal
Revise
Separate
Shape
Signify
Simulate
Solve
Specify
Structure
Suggest
Summarize
Support
Suspend
Sustain
Tailor
Terminate
Testify
Theorize
Translate
Undermine
Understand
Unify
Utilize
Validate
Vary
View
Vindicate
Yield

Analyzing DICTION

Diction is simply the **words** the writer chooses to convey a particular meaning.

When analyzing diction, look for **specific words** or short phrases that seem stronger than the others (ex. Bragg's use of *slingshot* instead of *travel*). Diction is NEVER the entire sentence!

Also, look for a **pattern** (or similarity) in the words the writer chooses (ex. Do the words imply sadness, happiness, etc?). This pattern helps to create a particular kind of diction.

This pattern can also include **repetition** of the same words or phrases. Repeating the same word or phrase helps the reader emphasize a point, feeling, etc.

Below are just a few words that you may use to **describe the type of diction** used by the writer. You may want to add words to this list or circle the ones you use frequently.

abstract	learned	literal
academic	loaded	
ambiguous	lyrical	
biting	melodious	
bombastic	monosyllabic	
brusque	nostalgic	
cacophonous	obscene	
casual	obscure	
caustic	offensive	
concrete	ordinary	
colloquial	ornate	
colorful	passionate	
common	patriotic	
connotative	pedantic	
cultured	picturesque	
crisp	plain	
curt	poetic	
denotative	political	
detached	polysyllabic	
divisive	precise	
emotional	pretentious	
esoteric	provincial	
euphemistic	romantic	
euphonious	scholarly	
everyday	sentimental	
exact	shocking	
fanciful	sincere	
flowery	slang	
figurative	subdued	
folksy	symbolic	
formal	tame	
grandiose	technical	
idiomatic	trite	
inflammatory	unifying	
inflated	uppity	
informal	vague	
insincere	vulgar	
jargon		

Analyzing TONE

Tone is the writer's attitude or feeling about the subject of his text.

It is a special kind of rhetorical strategy because **tone is created by the writer's use of all of the other rhetorical strategies.**

- Diction & Tropes
- Syntax & Schemes
- Details & Lack of Details

When discussing an author's tone, you must be careful to **choose the right word**. Below is a small list of tone words (there are hundreds). Use them in your essays to describe the tone of the piece but only if you are sure you know the word's meaning (not sure – look it up in a dictionary).

Angry	sad	sentimental	cloying	bitter
Sharp	cold	fanciful	dramatic	audacious
Upset	urgent	complimentary	provocative	benevolent
Silly	joking	condescending	didactic	tired
Boring	poignant	sympathetic	proud	frivolous
Afraid	detached	contemptuous	giddy	irreverent
Happy	confused	apologetic	pitiful	seductive
Hollow	childish	humorous	restrained	sweet
Joyful	peaceful	horrific	somber	objective
Allusive	mocking	sarcastic	candid	nostalgic
Vexed	vibrant	zealous	dreamy	shocking
Sarcastic	patriotic	serious	mocking	satiric
Motivational	tactful	respectful	humorous	