

Process 1 – Follow SOAPSTone

SPEAKER

STEP 1: DETERMINE THE SPEAKER. Identify who is telling the story or giving the information. Is it an omniscient narrator, a character in the story, or the actual author? Why do you think the author chose that person to be the speaker? What details about this person are important to know?

OCCASION

STEP 2: RECOGNIZE THE OCCASION. The occasion refers to the time and place of the story or written document. When and where do the events take place? From what geographical and chronological context is the speaker thinking and acting? How does the time and place affect and inform the text? What details are given about the occasion in the text itself?

AUDIENCE

STEP 3: DESCRIBE THE AUDIENCE. Consider the primary, secondary, and even tertiary audiences of this text. Who was the text written for? Why was it written for them? What characteristics do you know about the audience and how do you know that the text was written with them in mind?

PURPOSE

STEP 4: ESTABLISH THE PURPOSE. Why would the author write this particular text for the audience you noted above? Determine the meaning and message underlying the prose and ask yourself: what value does this give to my audience? What does the author think or hope the audience of the text will think about the text or do as a result of it? How does the author effectively (or ineffectively) make his or her purpose clear and realize the purpose's goals?

SUBJECT

STEP 5: INVESTIGATE THE SUBJECT. Knowing the audience and purpose of the document, in conjunction with the occasion and speaker allows you to better understand the subject or topic of the text. What is the author really getting at? What belies the story or prose, possibly providing a deeper meaning? What does the author reveal (or not reveal) when addressing the subject?

TONE

STEP 6: DISSECT THE TONE. Evaluate the word choice, organization, and rhetorical patterns in the prose. How do the textual elements make the audience feel? How does the author feel about the subject? Is the message heavy-handed, or is it subtle? What can you say about the syntactical construction and structure of the text in regards to tone?

Process 2 –Consider the Impact

IMPACT

STEP 8: WHAT EFFECT DOES IT HAVE? Determine what impact or effect each of the rhetorical devices has on the interpretation of the text. If it has a positive effect, why? If it has a negative effect, why? What is the author trying to persuade you to think and why?

Process 3 – Outline

CHUNK

STEP 9: BREAK THE TEXT INTO CHUNKS. Following the organizational pattern of the author, determine how best to break the overall text into chunks so that there is a clear introduction that will include the title, author, purpose, and thesis (stemming from SOAPSTone), a clear set of body paragraphs that are organized around the evidence, reasoning, and rhetorical methods used; and last, a clear conclusion for the overall author's thoughts relating to their purpose but wrapping up the essay.

Process 4 – Write