

The Writing Center

DLA: Building Better Analysis



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Student Name:

Important Note

To get completion credit for this DLA, make sure you complete all the required activities. If you'd like help while working on a specific DLA, you can meet with a specialist at the Writing Center. Keep in mind that you might need to schedule a second appointment to review your work, check your understanding, and get your completion credit. You can only review **ONE** DLA per appointment. (Check the last section of this DLA for information on making your appointment and receiving completion credit for your work).

Activities (approximately 1 hour)

Read the information, complete the activities that follow, and be prepared to discuss your answers when you meet with a tutor.

Introduction

Creating analysis can seem like a daunting task in academic writing. Professors expect analysis to reflect critical thinking skills and close reading of texts; however, producing analysis onto the page can be tricky. This DLA provides tips and strategies to address the challenges of creating analysis such as:

- Summarizing most professors' expectations about analysis
- Discussing the importance of finding and integrating "golden lines" as textual support
- Providing steps on how to analyze quotes and create effective explanations
- Providing and explaining examples of poor and strong analysis

Understanding Analysis

Where does analysis go?

Whenever professors ask you to create analysis, they are typically referring to the body paragraphs of your essay. If you follow the MEAL body paragraph structure, the analysis should come after you provide examples or evidential support (direct quotes or passages from a book, a journal article, a movie, etc). (*for further practice on MEAL, see our "Paragraph Development: The MEAL Plan" DLA*)

What is the purpose of analysis in my essay?

Analysis should relate to the example or direct quote and explain *how and why* the example or direct quote in your body paragraph supports the main idea of your topic sentence(s) and your thesis.

How long should analysis be?

There is no specific rule that states how much analysis a student must provide, but it is helpful to follow the ratio 1:3+. This ratio is designed to help you estimate how many sentences you should write when it comes to each quote you provide.

- For each single sentence quote, you should aim to write three or more sentences of analysis for that quote.
- If your quote is two sentences, provide five or more sentences of analysis. Basically, based on how long your quote is, you should double the amount of sentences and explanation for it.

- Avoid using block quotes often since this requires a full paragraph or about a page of analysis. Unless you are confident in writing long, detailed analysis, it is advised to look for stronger, shorter direct quotes instead of block quotes.

Textual Support for Analysis

What are “golden lines”?

Finding “golden lines” in whatever text, book, or literary work you are analyzing is a type of reading strategy.

“Golden lines” are lines of text that are:

- especially meaningful, thought provoking, and significant.
- quotes/examples that make *you*, as a reader, think critically.
- the best supporting evidence of a theme or main idea.

Adapted from the authors of Reading for Understanding How Reading Apprenticeship Improves Disciplinary Learning in Secondary and College Classrooms, Ruth Schoenbach, Cynthia Greenleaf, and Lynn Murphy

Why should I use “golden lines” in my papers?

The importance of “golden lines” are that they ground your claims and thesis in evidential support and clearly illustrate to the reader how your claims are warranted. Your direct quotes, summaries, and/or paraphrased examples should clearly relate to the main idea of the topic sentences and your thesis.

Instead of just finding quotes because it is a requirement, if you practice the mindset of looking for “golden lines” and integrating them effectively into your body paragraphs, you will find it easier to produce stronger analysis and clearer main ideas.

Building Better Analysis

How do I create strong analysis?

The following guidelines are to help you organize and develop analysis, but they are not fixed rules to creating analysis.

- Use the WH-questions to help you develop your analysis for your examples. WH-questions are what, how, and why. We typically use these words to ask questions, but they can also be utilized to form questions that will help you organize your claims and create clear analysis.
- For instance, whenever you analyze your “golden lines,” you will want to ask yourself:
 - WHAT: Your analysis should explain: **so what?** What is important about this quote? What is the underlying meaning of the quote? What keywords or phrases in the quote connect to my topic sentences and thesis?
 - HOW: How does it support my topic sentence and main idea? How do the words or specific phrases in the quote symbolize or represent the support for the main idea?
 - WHY: Why is this example/quote significant? Why does it support my topic sentences and my thesis?

Always use your analysis to relate the “golden lines” to the topic sentences and thesis. By staying focused on the main ideas in your analysis, this is how you can create an organized and developed essay.

Like any form of academic writing, these are templates and strategies to help organize your ideas and claims, but do not forget to integrate your own voice and ideas within your analysis. Remember, analysis is based off your examinations and inferences, so the purpose of your analysis is to make your claims and ideas clearer for the reader.

Sample Body Paragraphs:

Read the following paragraphs to see examples of poor and strong analysis and the descriptions that explain the different levels of analysis.

*The following body paragraphs follow the MEAL body paragraph structure.

The main idea is in SMALL CAPS. The evidence is highlighted. The analysis is in **bold**. The link back is *italicized*.

Paragraph 1

The following paragraph is an example of **poor analysis**.

Thesis: According to Sean Blanda's article, "The 'Other Side' Is Not Dumb," social media has caused division in the United States because of the focus on narcissism, the refusal to hear opposing views, and the promotion of division in media.

SOCIAL MEDIA CREATES DIVISION BECAUSE OF NARCISSISTS ONLINE. In the article, "The 'Other Side' Is Not Dumb," Blanda says that there are people online that have their own perspectives and do not want to hear the opinions of other people (213). **They do not like to hear other people's opinions because they like their own ideas. They are narcissists, so they only want to listen to themselves and not others. There is division because they do not want to hear what others have to say especially if it is an opinion that is different from theirs.** *This is why social media creates division.*

The above paragraph demonstrates **poor analysis** because of the generalized topic sentence, the weak evidential support, and the repetitive analysis and closing sentences.

- THE TOPIC SENTENCE does not expand on the thesis but repeats itself with no development on the analytical claim or thesis.
- **The textual support** is paraphrased, and even though paraphrasing can be an effective way to introduce examples, in the above paragraph, the paraphrase is not specific enough nor does it provide more development to the main idea.
- **The analysis** is repetitive and never develops the main points nor does it clearly explain to the reader the connection to the thesis and main idea.
- **The closing sentence** should effectively summarize the main point, but the example's closing sentences generalizes the paragraph and uses vague phrasing such as, "*This is why...*".

Paragraph 2

The following paragraph is an example of **strong analysis**.

Thesis: According to Sean Blanda's article, "The 'Other Side' Is Not Dumb," social media has caused division in the United States because of the focus on narcissism, the refusal to hear opposing views, and the promotion of division in media.

BECAUSE SOCIAL MEDIA ENCOURAGES A SELFISH PERSPECTIVE, AMERICANS HAVE BECOME DIVIDED AND WOULD RATHER DISCREDIT THE OPINIONS OF OTHERS RATHER THAN LISTEN TO OPPOSING VIEWS. In the article, "The 'Other Side' Is Not Dumb," Blanda argues that "this holier-than-thou social media behavior is counterproductive; it's self-aggrandizement at the cost of actual nuanced discourse, and if we want to consider online discourse productive, we need to move past this" (213). **Because the purpose of social media is to advocate for one's self and interest, it has caused Americans and those who use social media to chastise any person who goes against their views. Americans are more concerned about making themselves appear 'the best'; therefore, the chance to discuss and to listen to opposing ideas becomes lost in the act of praising one's self.** Blanda argues that if we want to progress and move forward as a country, then we need to find a way to be open to everyone's opinions even if they are different. **Listening to each side, whether we agree or disagree, enables us to understand the whole issue.** In fact, "if you can't make your opponent's point for them, you don't truly grasp the issue" (Blanda 216). **What this means is that the ability to recognize and, perhaps, even empathize with the Other Side creates a more conscious respect for the Other Side's feelings and the reasoning behind their views. Once we can acknowledge the Other Side's perspective, then it will be easier for us to create discussions rather than accusations.** *Therefore, social media can either create division or unity, but that path depends on whether both sides are open to exchanging ideas, or if they are more focused on demeaning each other and elevating their own self interests.*

Direct quotes taken from the authors of They Say/ I Say with Readings (4th edition), Gerald Graff, Cathy Birkenstein, and Russel Durst

The above paragraph illustrates **strong analysis** because of the specific topic sentence, the clear and supporting textual support, and the development of analysis and closing sentences.

- THE TOPIC SENTENCE expands on the thesis and creates more development by providing an analytical claim that expands on the connection of the subtopic (*focus on narcissism*) to the main argument (*how social media causes division*).
- Two examples of textual support are provided in the paragraph. The first direct quote supports *why* and *how* social media is creating narcissistic behaviors/beliefs. The second quote supports the claim about *why* it is important to listen to differing views. Both quotes link to each part of the claims presented in the topic sentence.
- Analysis is created for each supporting quote. Each section of analysis explains *what* the underlying meaning of the quote is, then explains *how* social media has caused division or the effects of maintaining selfish views, then explains *why* the points relate to the thesis and the significance of each quote.
- The closing sentences effectively summarize the main point, and they elaborate on the main idea of the whole body paragraph.

Activities

Check off each box once you have completed the activity.

1. DLA Review

Write your answers to the questions below.

1. What is the purpose of analysis in an essay?
2. What are “golden lines”?
3. Why do we need “golden lines” in our paper to create strong analysis?
4. How do you create strong analysis?

□ 2. Matching and Explanation

For this activity, you must complete ALL three parts: *Part I, II, and III*.

Part I. Read the following thesis and body paragraph.

Thesis: “The Danger of a Single Story” by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie demonstrates that the media must take responsibility to accurately tell other people’s stories to avoid spreading stereotypes or misinformation about cultures.

Because the media heavily influences our perceptions and beliefs, the stories that are generated have the power to either distort or deliver truthful depictions of certain places and cultures. According to Adiche, if we do not provide multiple sides, representations, and credibility to one story, the people or producers telling the story have the power to misrepresent a whole culture, which can create inaccurate stereotypes and prejudice portrayals of different cultures (41). Adiche argues, “Start with the story with the arrows of the Native Americans, and not with the arrival of the British, and you have a different story. Start with the story of the failure of the African state, and not with the colonial creation of the African state, and you have an entirely different story” (41).

Part II. Select the analysis that best explains and develops the body paragraph above.

- A. This example shows exactly why the media needs to take responsibility for how they represent other cultures. They can misrepresent other societies because they do not show the whole picture. This is why it is important to show every side of a story, good and bad.
- B. In order to avoid damaging the representations of different cultures, storytellers need to consider the viewpoints of each party involved. Without shedding light on every side of the story, we silence the voices of minorities and marginalized groups; we create the possibility of establishing a villain and a hero; we limit the reader’s ability to gain understanding of the full history of an event. Because the media can direct society on what is truth or fiction, it needs to include all sides of each story if society ever wants to move past cultural stereotypes and inappropriate representations.
- C. Adichie argues that we need to start with beginning of each story, the middle, and the end. She states that we will have a different story if we include all sides of the story. The media needs to include all sides of the story to ensure that each person is presented appropriately. If we present the sides of every person involved, then we could avoid misrepresentations of other cultures and societies. The media must take on this responsibility so that every side of the story is told accurately.

Part III. Which analysis did you choose? Explain your selection for Part II and why you believe it is the best analysis for the body paragraph:

Works Cited: Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. “The Danger of a Single Story.” *The Norton Reader: An Anthology of Nonfiction*. Shorter 15th ed., W.W. Norton & Company, 2020.

□ 3. Writing Practice

Follow the instructions to complete each section of this activity.

Read the community poem, [“Today, I Am A Witness To Change” by Rachel Martin.](#)

1. As you are reading, write down below at least three “golden lines” from the reading.

2. Create an analytical topic sentence for your body paragraph:

3. Now, write down the best “golden line” from the ones you selected previously.

4. Now write an analysis for your “golden line(s)” that answers the WH-questions:

WHAT: So what? What is important about this quote? What is the underlying meaning of the quote?

HOW: How does it support my topic sentence and main idea? How do the words or specific phrases in the quote symbolize or represent the support for the main idea?

WHY: Why is this example/quote significant? Why does it support my topic sentences and my thesis?

5. Now, add closing sentences that summarize the main point of the body paragraph.

6. Finally, put everything from 1-5 together in one paragraph.

4. Review the DLA/Receive Completion Credit

1. Go to [EAB Navigate](#) and make an appointment (online or in-person).
2. Attend your session and be prepared to explain your understanding of the information you've learned in the DLA. Consider the main concept you learned and how you might use this in your future assignments/classes.
3. If your professor asks you to provide proof, you can review the "appointment summary report" through EAB Navigate (app or desktop). You will find all Writing Center appointments under "appointment summary reports" (app or desktop). Look for the summary report for your DLA appointment. This is where your writing specialist will indicate the title of your DLA and state whether it is "completed" or "not completed." If it is marked as "not completed," book a follow up appointment to complete.

Note: Appointment summary reports are also sent weekly to your instructor on record. If there is an issue, please contact us at writingcenter@mtsac.edu or (909) 274-5325.

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