



The Writing Center

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO
DENVER | ANSCHUTZ MEDICAL CAMPUS

3 Levels of Analysis

Analysis interprets, explains, or breaks down evidence. Done effectively, analysis helps readers see evidence the same way you do, explicitly linking the evidence to the claim(s) you've made by answering, "So what?" "Who cares?" and "How's it all related?" Without analysis, ten different readers might interpret your evidence in ten (or more) different ways, which means you've lost control of the essay's focus.

This guide introduces and explains three levels of analysis: 1) close reading, 2) local analysis, and 3) global analysis. If you're just starting out with analysis, aim to provide all three levels whenever you use evidence. As you grow more comfortable (and with context/your reader in mind), you may find one or two levels sufficient.

Close Reading

The first step of analysis transitions from evidence to interpretation of evidence. Begin your close reading by translating a direct quotation, identifying key words or phrases that are important to your topic, or by appraising the quality of the evidence/source. After providing a piece of evidence, imagine readers asking some or all of the following questions: "So what?" "Why this piece of evidence?" "What elements of the evidence are important to focus on?"

Thesis: Shakespeare uses imagery to give the audience a more complex understanding of his characters.

Paragraph Claim: *Romeo and Juliet* uses metaphorical imagery so the audience can understand the text in terms of concepts they already know.

Evidence: In Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, Romeo says Juliet is the sun and asks, "rise, fair sun and kill the envious moon / who is already sick and pale with grief / that thou, her maid, art far fairer than she" (Act II, lines 418-21).

Close Reading: Romeo compares Juliet to the sun, which is more luminous than the moon, and states that the moon is jealous of Juliet's bright beauty.

Reminder

At this close reading level, analysis might be viewed as a translation of meaning as opposed to a connection to a claim. The above example interprets elements of the evidence within the context of the claim.

Local Analysis

The next step of analysis addresses the significance of the evidence in relation to the paragraph's claim. Explain exactly how the evidence supports the claim of the paragraph. This might feel like overexplaining or being redundant, but for the reader it makes connections clearer and enhances comprehension. Readers are relying on you to make the logical connections explicit.

[Continued from previous example]

Local Analysis: Shakespeare's audience would have been familiar with the concept of the moon as a beautiful goddess, so to describe the moon as jealous of Juliet's beauty shows the audience that Juliet is tremendously beautiful.

Global Analysis

The final step of analysis connects the evidence to the main claim/thesis statement. How does this evidence support the overall argument of the paper? What makes it significant?

[Continued from previous example]

Global Analysis: Since Romeo describes Juliet as outshining the beautiful and jealous moon goddess, the audience gets the subconscious understanding that Juliet is beautiful and that Romeo, a romantic young man, is very much in love. This shows how Shakespeare is giving a complex understanding of his characters through imagery.

Reminder

As you begin using the three levels of analysis, aim to create a distinct sentence for each level. However, as your analysis becomes more complex, you might have multiple sentences for each level, and the different levels can overlap; they don't always have to be separate sentences.

Additional Example

Thesis: Cultural influence contributes to a general distrust of news sources.

Paragraph Claim: Distrust of factual evidence is prevalent in our culture.

Evidence: It is common to hear the phrase, "30% of statistics are made up on the spot."

Close Reading: This quote, which is itself a false statistic, states that a good portion of statistics are false.

Local Analysis: While this quote is often used as a joke, its pervasiveness emphasizes widespread distrust of statistical facts.

Global Analysis: This skepticism of statistics reflects the general distrust of news sources as purveyors of fake news.