LANGUAGE SAMPLES

ASSIGNMENT 2: RECOGNIZING WRITTEN TONE

Most of the time we can recognize the tone when someone is speaking, but writers face a more difficult problem – getting their tone across to their readers by using words alone. How is recognition of tone in speaking different from recognition of tone in writing? What helps us understand an author’s tones in written passages? Is recognizing written tone as easy as recognizing oral tone?

Each student will be responsible for one or more tone words from the list of words used in the last assignment. Write a sentence expressing that tone without using the word itself. You can “suggest” a tone through your choice of words (as authors often do). Then when you are called upon, write your sentence on the board, and the class will try to determine the tone you are suggesting. There should be no oral discussion; the purpose of this assignment is to recognize written tone.

EXAMPLE: compassion  Seeing the poor, little, furry lamb caught in the wire fence, Crista quickly ran to free it and to carry it gently back to its mother. (Words which are clues to the tone: poor, little, furry, ran, free, carry, gently.)

TONE WORDS FOR WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT

- boredom     frustration
- concern      horror
- despair      indifference
- determination irritation
- doubt        sarcasm
- eagerness    scorn
- egotism      snobbery
- elation      surprise
- enthusiasm   suspicion
- exhaustion   sympathy
- fear         weariness
DICTION / WORD CHOICE / LANGUAGE

All three terms have the same meaning and are used interchangeably on the AP exam; this unit will normally use the term “diction.” In the Detail unit you learned about using facts, words with no connotation. And you also learned that some writers have an exceptional ability to write using detail. Now you will be studying another element, another technique of writing for which many authors are known: this element is diction. Diction / word choice / language includes words which do have connotation. The sentences below show you what diction does when compared to detail.

BASIC SENTENCE: Robbie reached for the basketball.

DETAIL: Hoping to win, Robbie reached for the ball, successfully took possession, pulled it to his chest, looked at the basket, then aimed, threw, and watched it make the winning point.

DICTION: Desperate to win, Robbie lunged for the ball.

Look at the underlined words in each sentence.

_Hoping_ to win -- little connotation; everyone has hoped for something. It is something that everyone does at times, but it holds little or no connotation. Desperate to win, however, holds much connotation. The word "desperate" suggests much stronger emphasis than "hoping."

The same comparison could be made for use of the words "reached," which has no connotation, and "lunged" which immediately brings to mind a picture of the action of lunging. “Lunge” is highly connotative.

DICTION may be defined as

(1) the choice of appropriate language for your audience
   a. technical = example: computer manual
   b. formal = example: application letter to a college
   c. informal = example: a story about an experience that you read to a class
   d. familiar = example: a letter to your best friend

(2) the specific choice of words for their meaning or for their connotation (associations and emotional overtones that have become attached to a word). The connotation suggested by each word may be different for different people. For example, look at the word “cat.” You may call that affectionate little fur ball that you love so much “Sweetie Pie” or “Babykins.” However, your cousin “Macho Bubba,” who was scratched by Babykins when he tried to tease her with
a little catnip, may call your sweet kitty “The Demon” (or maybe even “Target”). People have different connotations about the same thing, based on their personal experiences. A cat is not simply a cat to everyone. An author’s specific word choice – a “ferocious feline” or a “fuzzy furball”—influences the reader and often creates tone.

(3) Special Types of Diction
   a. slang = informal, substandard language which most of us use regularly
   b. dialect = words and pronunciation of a certain place or of a particular people (ie. that drawl and “y’all” of Southerners; a mountain dialect; the New England dialect with the letter “r” dropped from “park” and added to “Cuba” as exemplified in some of John F. Kennedy’s famous speeches). *Huckleberry Finn* contains numerous dialects which make the people seem more realistic.
   c. jargon = language which is appropriate for particular groups (ie. computer jargon, medical jargon)

The simplest way to understand diction may be to consider the menus for different restaurants. Think of a popular, “nice” restaurant and the menu from there.

*Steak* -- juicy rib-eye, cut-it-with-a-fork tender, char-broiled with a hint of mesquite and garlic; our idea of perfection

*Garlic Mashers* – creamy, melt-in-your-mouth, with a hint of butter, cheese, sour cream, and bacon; luscious

*Temptation Chocolate Cake* – devilishly delicious; crunchy pecans in a creamy, milk-chocolate filling, surrounded by rich, buttery cake, crowned with yummy, deep, dark chocolate icing; devilishly different

Diction Words: *juicy, cut-it-with a fork tender, char-broiled, hint of mesquite and garlic; creamy, melt-in-your, hint of butter, etc., luscious; devilishly delicious; crunchy, creamy, surrounded by rich, etc., crowned, deep, dark*

Many diction words. Yummy. Makes you hungry, huh? This is why good diction is so effective.

Now compare this menu to that of a fast-food restaurant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hamburger</th>
<th>French Fries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cheeseburger</td>
<td>Onion Rings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grilled Chicken Sandwich</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Diction Words: none. *Boring, huh?* So you see, concise use of diction makes a tremendous difference. Consider diction as the spice of writing. A command of good diction makes a defining contribution to an author’s style. And it can do the same for your writing style.
Although many diction words are adjectives, don’t neglect to recognize verbs which function as diction. The choice of specific, appropriate verbs is very important in writing. Many students have problems using a variety of verbs and often use some verbs over and over again. (boring!) You must learn to use a variety of verbs, and you must use specific verbs. Some students tend to over-use certain verbs, a habit which often results in dull, vague writing. The use of specific rather than broad words can influence the effectiveness of the work. Consider the following example:

I found my father sleeping at his desk and had to cover up my laugh. (no specific or colorful diction words)

And then the improved sentence might read:

I stumbled upon my father dozing at his desk, but I was able to muffle my giggles so that no one heard. (much better)

Quite a difference in those two sentences, right?

This assignment is designed to help you recognize effective diction verbs and to help you use these verbs in place of vague verbs in your own writing. These particular verbs have been chosen because they are some of the most commonly used in student writing.

Each person in your group will be assigned one or more verbs, and you may work together with the other members of your group. Do the following:

1. Using a thesaurus and a dictionary, find a minimum of four closely related verbs for each of your words.
2. Define each word.
3. Arrange the words in an intensity chart, ranging from least to most. Some verbs with similar meanings may be about the same in intensity.
4. Then write five sentences, each incorporating one of these five words in a context which uses the specific word appropriately. You will need to provide a legible copy of this assignment so copies can be made for the entire class.

EXAMPLE (intensity is measured on a 1 to 3 scale, with 3 being the most intense.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTENSITY</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>doze</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nap</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>snooze</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sleep</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>slumber</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EXAMPLE DEFINITIONS

3 sleep – the natural, regular, suspension of consciousness during which the body rests and is rejuvenated; to rest and be rejuvenated regularly
3 slumber – sleep

2 nap -- to sleep briefly, especially in daytime
2 snooze – to nap

1 doze – to sleep lightly

EXAMPLE SENTENCES

I need to sleep eight hours nightly to feel rested.

Bob only slumbers six hours per night, but he always feel restored the next day.

Jeff needs very little sleep at night, but he always naps for an hour or so each afternoon.

I would also like to snooze for an hour each afternoon.

If Mary doesn’t sleep well at night, she often dozes off at work in the afternoon.

NOW YOU TRY.

Use these verbs to complete the assignment. Make sure to use the VERB form of the words.

1. analyze  15. jump
2. ask      16. laugh
3. beat     17. pretend
4. blame    18. rest
5. change   19. rise
6. confuse  20. see
7. cry      21. show
8. cut      22. talk
9. fall     23. think
10. find    24. throw
11. fix     25. understand
12. float   26. walk
13. fly     27. want
14. grab
EXAMPLE
PROMPT
Read the following excerpt from *The Gettysburg Address* by President Abraham Lincoln. Then write an analysis paragraph in which you discuss his use of parallel structure to inspire and encourage the soldiers to continue fighting for freedom.

“Four-score and seven years ago, our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation or any nation so conceived and so dedicated can long endure. We are met on a great battle field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that this nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this. But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate – we can not consecrate – we can not hallow – this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember, what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be here dedicated to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us – that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion – that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain – that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom – and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.”

*So what is the next step after you have read and highlighted the passage?*
Next USE THE SYNTAX QUICK CHECK to evaluate syntax. Simply read each question and decide whether it is relevant to the syntax used in the passage. If it is not, skip it. If it is relevant, respond to it. See the following example:

SYNTAX / SENTENCE STRUCTURE QUICK CHECK

I. PURPOSE OF USING SYNTAX
   BUILD INTENSITY TO MAKE A POINT: Lincoln wants to convince his audience that these soldiers have not died in vain, but rather to preserve freedom and democracy in the nation

II. WAY THE AUTHOR CONVEYS HIS PURPOSE
   Persuasion created by use of rhetorical techniques
   A. VARIETY OF SENTENCE LENGTHS
      Keeps passage flowing
   B. CUMULATIVE
      Last sentence

III. PUNCTUATION
   Dashes for emphasis; rhythm

IV. REPETITION
   Sentences 1 and 2: conceived, dedicated; dedicate(d)
   used six times in passage; honoring soldiers; committing to preserve freedom and democracy

V. PARALLEL STRUCTURE
   Major form of syntax used; for emphasis and to build intensity

VI. RHYTHM
   Repetition, parallel structure, punctuation
You have been analyzing both fiction and non-fiction for the various techniques/elements which authors use, such as detail, syntax, diction, figurative language, and imagery similar to the analysis paragraph examples above. Actually, there are several different ways to analyze, and you have just read one of these ways, a method of analyzing which you have learned to do well; this method is logical and appropriate.

How else might you have analyzed this passage? There is another method that is considered more challenging and probably preferred by many, including AP graders. This approach is called "weaving," and it means just what it says. Rather than writing a paragraph about one of the elements, you focus on what the prompt indicates: attitude / tone or characterization or purpose or meaning or experience. Analyze the topic as it is developed through the passage, sometimes sequentially or otherwise as logically indicated, using examples of syntax, or figurative language, or imagery, etc., as appropriate.

In other words, as a mature writer, do not write one paragraph on detail and another on imagery. Instead, incorporate your examples of detail and imagery, etc., smoothly into your analysis of the topic: tone, characterization, purpose, understanding, or recreating an experience. If the prompt asks for purpose, you will know when to start a new paragraph when there is a change affecting purpose. If the prompt asks for attitude, you will change paragraphs when the tone/attitude changes or when the situation changes. Change is sometimes indicated naturally in the passage.

(CONTINUED)

The following is an example of analysis through weaving using the Canassatego passage. Read the explanations throughout the analysis carefully.

PROMPT
Write an essay analyzing Canassatego's attitude toward the white man's method of education. Discuss two rhetorical techniques that he uses to express his attitude.
(First you need to identify attitudes: polite and mocking. Next you decide which techniques are appropriate: detail and syntax. In weaving you don't discuss techniques / elements / devices individually in separate paragraphs. Instead, you respond directly to the prompt and what it asks -- in this case "attitude" toward the white man's method of education. You are to discuss the attitude that the elements create / express as you find it throughout the passage.)
"We know you highly esteem the kind of Learning taught in these Colleges, and the maintenance of our young Men, while with you, would be very expensive to you. We are convinced, therefore, that you mean to do us Good by your Proposal; and we thank you heartily. But you who are so wise must know that different Nations have different Conceptions of things; and you will not therefore take it amiss, if our ideas of this kind of Education happens not to be the same with yours. We have had some experience of it. Several of our young People were formerly brought up in the Colleges of the Northern Provinces; they were instructed in all your Sciences; but, when they came back to us, they were bad Runners, ignorant of every means of living in the Woods, unable to bear either Cold or Hunger, knew neither how to build a Cabin, take a deer, or kill an enemy, spoke our language imperfectly, were therefore neither fit for Hunters, Warriors, nor Counselors, they were totally good for nothing. We are however not the less obliged for your kind Offer, tho' we decline accepting it; and to show our grateful Sense of it, if the Gentlemen of Virginia shall send us a Dozen of their Sons, we will take great care of their Education, instruct them in all we know, and make Men of them."

PRE-WRITING WORKSHEET PART 1

1. Read the prompt carefully.
2. Identify tones. polite, mocking
3. Identify author’s purpose (if appropriate). to tell the white man "thanks but no thanks" for the offer
4. What does the prompt ask you to do? to identify the tones which Canassatego uses to express his response to the offer; to identify and analyze two rhetorical techniques which create and develop the tones

Following you will see that the focus of the first paragraph is polite tone, not detail. You take the same information as the example above, but you arrange it differently. If it seems awkward at first, don't worry. Soon it will become natural to you.

PRE-WRITING WORKSHEET PART 2

BODY PARAGRAPH 1: polite tone

5. TOPIC 1 (what you are trying to prove): polite tone developed through use of detail.
Detail examples:
highly esteem
expensive
do us good
thank you
you who are so wise

*You may want to argue diction instead of detail, or even a combination of the two (esteem, expensive, wise may be more diction-like than detail). The example uses detail because it seems more compatible with a polite -- but insincere -- tone in Canassatego's early remarks, but either diction or detail or both would work."

6. TOPIC 2 (what you are trying to prove): polite tone developed through use of syntax

Syntax examples
first two sentences compound-complex, lengthy
ends second sentence with brief thank you

7. In response to the prompt, what major points (2-4) can you discuss?
A. uses several phrases to begin passage with polite tone
B. in lengthy first two sentences, he politely and carefully states his appreciation for the offer; ends with abrupt thank-you

8. Looking at these major points, what opinion can you form as a response to the prompt? This opinion will be your topic sentence for the first body paragraph.

TOPIC SENTENCE: In the first part of this passage, Canassatego carefully chooses his words, phrases, and sentences to respond politely to the offer from the Virginia government, reserving his expression of other feelings until later. (words, phrases indicate detail; sentences indicate syntax)

And in this part you are focusing on mocking tone rather than syntax.

PART 2
BODY PARAGRAPH 2: mocking tone

9. TOPIC 1 (what you are trying to prove): mocking tone developed through use of detail

Detail Examples:
after initial polite response, he shifts to a mocking tone with comments about young Native Americans' unfortunate experiences with white man's method of education ignorant, unable to bear Cold, Hunger knew neither how to build a Cabin, etc., good for nothing
10. **TOPIC 2 (what you are trying to prove):** mocking tone developed through use of syntax

   Syntax Examples:
   - uses long sentence to list problems with white man's education of Native American boys; list creates a rhythm which builds to point: "good for nothing"
   - Ends passage using lengthy sentence with "polite words" and mocking tone with counter offer to "make men" of white boys

11. In response to the prompt, what major points (2-4) can you discuss?
   A. states a factual list of complaints
   B. uses another short, abrupt introductory sentence to lead mockingly into cumulative sentence; builds rhythm to make a point--"good for nothing"

12. Looking at these major points, what opinion can you form as a response to the prompt? This opinion will be your topic sentence for the second body paragraph.

   **TOPIC SENTENCE:** Here the Iroquois leader's tone shifts to mockery, employing a combination of facts and sentence structure throughout the rest of the passage to reveal his disdain for the value of the white man's "education."

   (CONTINUED)