

DIDLST - Examining the connection between form and meaning

How does an author's use of diction, imagery, details, language, sentence structure, & tone affect the meaning of a text?

Diction: Write down words that have a strong negative or positive connotation. Are the words monosyllabic or polysyllabic? Are the words concrete or abstract? Are the words denotative (dictionary definition) or connotative (feeling or association)? Are the words euphonious (pleasant sounding) or cacophonous (harsh sounding)?

Images: Write down words or phrases that create mental pictures by appealing to the senses. What types of images prevail in the passage? Visual? Auditory? Tactile (touch)? Gustatory (taste)? Olfactory (smell)? Kinetic (motion)? Is the imagery a combination of these? Are these details effective? Why or why not?

Details: Note facts given by the author that contribute to the tone (the attitude or emotion the author is trying to express) of the passage and note the order of the details. What information is stressed or repeated? What has been omitted or left out? How does the author use details to shape the attitude of the piece?

Literary language: Identify and analyze the author's use of literary devices and how they contribute to the tone of the passage. Are there examples of personification, simile, metaphor, hyperbole, symbolism, allusion (subtle reference), irony (contrast between expectation & reality), juxtaposition (placement of two

things side by side), antithesis (contrasting or opposing ideas), repetition?

What kind of language is used? Informal? Formal? Jargon (unique to a profession)? Slang? Dialect (unique to a place & particular group of people)? Archaic (outdated)?

Sentence structure: Look at the lengths of the sentences. Does the length vary? Does the length fit the subject matter? Is the sentence length effective? Why or why not? What types of sentences are used? Declarative (states idea)? Imperative (gives order)? Interrogative (asks question)? Exclamatory (shows emotion)? Simple (independent clause)? Compound (more than one independent clause)? Complex (independent & dependent clause)? Compound-Complex (at least two independent clauses & one dependent clause)?
Is there a pattern?

Tone: Look for shifts in tone by examining the following:

Key words - But, yet, nevertheless, however, although

Punctuation - Dashes, periods, colons, semicolons, question marks

Paragraph divisions

Sharp contrasts in diction

Changes in sentence length

Mr. B-G's instructions: When responding to a piece of writing using the DIDLST examination method, pick any four of the six DIDLST traits and write four to six sentences for each focus area. When asked to select specific words or phrases, pick at least three for each DIDLST element. Be sure to cite the page number(s) or section of text you are referring to. When citing phrases or sentences, remember to use quotation marks.