

Writing a text analysis

It is the aim of a text analysis to analyse the content and the structure of a text as well as to identify the formal elements of language and to show their function and effect as means of revealing the author's intention.

Being able to write a text analysis is **crucial** in English exams as well as in the 'Abitur'. Here you find a step-by-step guide on what to do. So don't be afraid!

Step 1: Getting an overview

- **Read the text carefully** with the task in mind and make sure you understand it properly! If necessary, **use a dictionary**.
- **Read the task carefully.**
When you have to analyse a text in an exam, the task usually refers to specific aspects such as **register** or **stylistic devices**. But sometimes you are asked to analyse **language** in general. In this case you are free to select relevant aspects yourself such as register, choice of words, tone, stylistic devices, etc..

Example: Analyse the means the author uses to engage the reader in his project to reduce plastic pollution and explain their effect on the reader. Consider **language** and **structure**. (Analysis)

Frequently asked for formal elements of language

Non-fictional text:

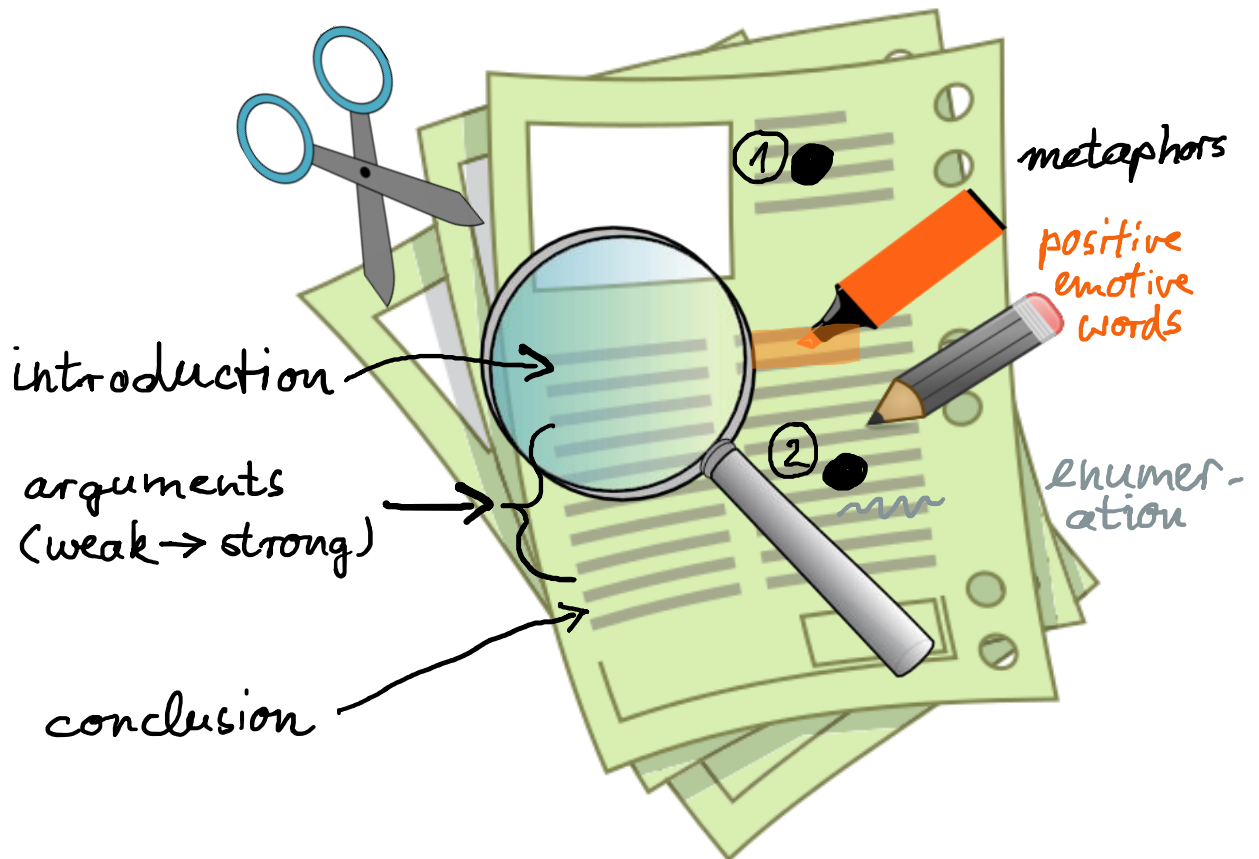
- structure / line of argument (argumentative structure)
- style / tone / register / choice of words
- stylistic / rhetorical / phonetic devices
- communicative strategies

Fictional text:

- narrative techniques / devices
- narrative perspective (point of view)
- characters / characterization
- action / plot
- setting/ mood / atmosphere

Step 2: Preparing the analysis

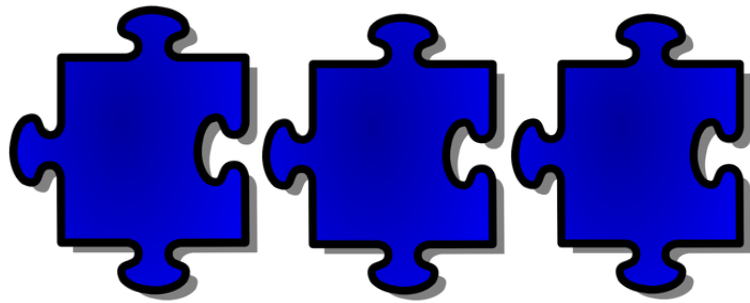
- Work with the text, break it down into **pieces** (> 'ana – lysis') and **annotate** it (keywords, colours, symbols, arrows, highlighted passages, numbers,...).



➤ **Note down references** from the text that support your thesis.

- Always follow these **steps** for each device you analyse:

- 1) **Identify the device in the text**, e.g. metaphor, enumeration.
- 2) **Give evidence from the text (text proof)**: Find a quotation.
- 3) **Explain the meaning of the device and its function / effect on the reader > author's intention**. (How does the author use each device so effectively that it can carry meaning and contribute to the overall message / effect? What relationship is there between language, content and form?)



device

text proof

function/effect

- A table can help you to organize your findings:

Name of device	Evidence from the text (quotes, lines)	Function / Effect on the reader (author's intention)
metaphor	beacon of hope (ll. 4-6)	create a mental image
enumeration	storms, floodings (l. 10)	increase in intensity

Step 3: Making an outline

A **draft outline** helps you to **structure your essay** before you write it.



Outline

- 1) Introduction / thesis
- 2) Main part
 - Register (explanation > quotes > function / effect on reader)
 - Positive emotive words
 - Stylistic devices (explanation > quotes > function / effect on reader)
 - metaphors
 - enumerations
 - ...
 - Argumentative structure (explanation > function / effect on reader)
- 3) Conclusion (main findings, referring back to thesis) / evaluation

Step 4: Writing a thesis

Your text analysis needs to be based on a **thesis**. Usually the task itself gives you a clue on how to write the thesis.

Remember the model task for a non-fictional text from the beginning:

*Analyse the means the author uses to engage the reader in his project to reduce plastic pollution and explain their effect on the reader. Consider **language** and **structure**. (Analysis)*

Since the term **language** used in the task is not specific, you are free to select relevant aspects for the analysis yourself, e.g. **register** and **stylistic devices**.

Possible thesis: *In his non-fictional, persuasive text ('title of the text') (author) employs several means to engage the reader in his project to reduce plastic pollution such as register, stylistic devices and a convincing argumentative structure.*

Step 5: Writing a structured text analysis

- Before you start writing, have a look at the **useful words and phrases** below.
- When you finally write a **coherent text** on the basis of your outline with an **introduction**, a **main part** and a **conclusion / evaluation**, always keep in mind the following aspects:

Structuring your essay:

When you write down your ideas in an essay, do not let your analysis follow the text which you are analyzing chronologically (e.g. lines 4-6: metaphor, line 10: enumeration,...), but structure your ideas according to the outline (e.g. first all of your findings concerning register, then all of your findings concerning stylistic devices – here, e.g. first all of the metaphors, then all of the enumerations, ..., finally all of your findings concerning structure).

Introduction:

- The introduction attracts the reader's attention.
- The introduction clearly states the thesis (see above) and briefly states the main points the paper raises in the main part, i.e. which devices will be analysed
- Text type, title, author, topic are named.

Main part:

- The text proves the thesis from the introduction.
- The different aspects of the thesis are worked on in the order mentioned in the introduction.
- The text is clearly structured (paragraphs).

Structure:

- The text is visually structured into **introduction – main part – conclusion** (paragraphs!).
- Each paragraph is dedicated to one idea and all details support or explain this idea.
- Each paragraph has a topic sentence.
- Each idea is supported by examples / quotes provide evidence from the text.
- The last sentence of a paragraph draws a conclusion from the given examples.

Quotations:

- The conventions of correct quoting are fulfilled (one page or line: p. / l., more pages or lines: pp. / ll., the following page(s): f. / ff.).
- Quotations from the text are carefully marked (inverted commas, exact source), direct or indirect quotes are used.
- The quotations are complete or shortened (omissions are indicated by squared brackets), but still understandable: the meaning and the syntax are not distorted.

Analysis:

- The formal elements of language such as style, tone, register, sentence structure, choice of words, stylistic/phonetic devices,... are identified and named correctly according to the task.
- The function and the effect of all mentioned formal elements is discussed – always with reference to their context.

Conclusion:

- The conclusion refers to the opening thesis.
- The closing passage is well developed and the main findings are summed up.
- No new aspects are added in the conclusion.

Evaluation:

-Has the author been successful in getting across his intention to the reader? Is the author convincing? Is the author's judgement well-founded?

Language:

- The present tense group is used.
- Own words have been used as much as possible (language of text has not been copied).
- The text is coherent, linking words and phrases were used to combine sentences for a smooth, logical flow of ideas.
- There are no unnecessary repetitions.
- All sentences are easily understandable, the sentence structure varies.
- An adequate register is used (formal; no short forms, technical terms > correct names for stylistic devices, ...).



Step 6: Proofreading

- Make sure you have got the time to proofread your essay (**grammar, spelling, vocabulary, formal register / no short forms, technical terms, linking words,...**) > **time management**
- You can use the aspects from step 5 as a **checklist**.
- To avoid always making the same mistakes over and over again, keep a checklist of mistakes that you have made in the past and focus on these specific mistakes.

Useful words and phrases for text analysis

Introduction:

The text deals with... In order to convince the reader of his opinion, the author makes use of certain communicative strategies such as...

Structure:

At the beginning / end of the text... The author begins by saying... After considering ... he comes to the conclusion that... He continues by ...ing... The text is composed of / consists of ... The first part forms the introduction and the second part lists arguments for his thesis that... The second part runs from line ... to ... In this passage the author says that... This passage shows / reveals... Finally / Lastly... In the final part the author comes to a conclusion. In the conclusion the author states that...

Stylistic devices:

By employing a metaphor/comparison /personification in line ... the author creates a vivid impression. The drastic descriptions/appeals in line ... suggest that / illustrate that / express that ... In line ... the author refers to / describes / stresses / emphasizes that... The author employs repetition / anaphora / alliteration / parallelism / hyperbole / exaggeration / superlatives to put emphasis on... The author uses irony to indirectly criticize / make fun of ... The author is concerned to show / wishes / wants to / would like to show that... The author is concerned about... It is clear / evident / obvious that... The text / extract contains a lot of ... The use of / the description of... gives the text an idea of... The author's intention in this passage is to... The author eliminates doubts by referring to experts/referring to statistics/ factual information/ polls frequently. Allusions / references to history are used to back up the credibility of the author's stance by comparison.

Plot / story / action:

The situation is characterized by... The situation seems quite ... / seems to be... The description of... shows that / underlines that... The scene is described as... The plot / action is set in ... As the action takes place in... you know that... In this situation the characters... The action becomes more / less intense when... The action develops in ... stages.

Narrative perspective:

The story is told from the point of view of / perspective of... There are shifting character-focalizers. The narrator is omnipresent, directly characterizes the protagonist and is mainly reliable.

Characters:

The protagonist is described as... Her behaviour shows that... Her behaviour is characterized indirectly by... The main character / protagonist / hero in the story is... As far as her outward appearance is concerned... This character plays a minor role as loyal friend. The narrator directly characterizes the protagonist as... The relationship between ... is characterized by ... and thus the reader feels that...

Setting / Atmosphere:

The setting also contributes to the atmosphere as the action takes place in... The author arouses a feeling of... by... The atmosphere can be described as... which is underlined by... By describing... the author creates a certain atmosphere.

Conclusion:

To conclude... Taking everything into consideration... To put it in a nutshell... No one can deny that... It should not remain unmentioned that... The author's judgements are unfounded / well-founded. Finally... To sum up... All things considered... Above all...

Linking words / connectives: although, as...as, because, not until, in spite of, actually, after all, apparently, basically, obviously, in my opinion/view, to my mind, from my point of view, as far as I am concerned, furthermore, first of all, in addition, moreover, however, firstly, secondly, thirdly, consequently, on the one hand / on the other hand, in contrast to, contrary to this, on the contrary, with regard to, fortunately, unfortunately, certainly