

## How can you develop a strong analysis of a selection?

Analysis means to break down into parts. The parts might be characters in a story, specific ideas in an argument, or the words the writer uses. One way to analyze a text is to use the following steps. You will see them in action here one by one.

**Step 1:** Identify the parts of a selection that relate to what you are trying to analyze.

**Step 2:** Explain the significance of each of the parts.

**Step 3:** Draw a conclusion based on your explanation of the parts.

**Step 1:** Identify the parts of a selection that relate to what you are trying to analyze.

There are many possible ideas to analyze within a selection. These include

- how setting shapes the plot
- how events shape the main character
- how ideas influence individuals or events
- how the writer develops the theme

First, you should return to the selection and identify specific ideas that relate to your analysis. For example, if you are analyzing how the events shape the main character's decisions, you would closely search the text to find examples of key events.

## Analyzing Selections

Cluster 1 page 13

**Directions:** The excerpt on the following screens is from the story “Playing God” (pages 15–26). The main character, Josh, has decided to run away from home and his friend Laurel confronts him. Read the excerpt and analyze Laurel and Josh’s relationship.

He was almost to the river, walking fast, when he saw Laurel on her bicycle, racing to catch him. In a space between the gusts of raw March wind she yelled, “Josh, wait up, or I’ll break your legs.”

So he wasn’t going to get away without saying good-bye after all.

Laurel came puffing up, fierce and wind-whipped. He braced himself as she stared at the duffle bag he’d taken from his folks’ closet . . .

*continued*

“You’re doing it,” she said. The pain that came into her eyes hurt him, too. “Why? Without telling me? I thought we were friends! If I hadn’t seen you sneaking through the alley—”

We are friends, he wanted to assure her. Best friends. The best. But he said walking on, “So? One more thing I didn’t do right today.” Suddenly it came pouring out. “At breakfast they jumped down my throat about my grades. Then they got started on why can’t I grow up and shape up and do my part now with him out of work. Boy. I didn’t get him laid off.”

. . . It seemed vital to stay cold and angry. Even with Laurel. Especially with Laurel, because she knew what he really was.

## Analyzing Selections

Cluster 1 page 13

**Directions:** Fill in the chart with details from the passage that explain Laurel and Josh's relationship.

Detail	

## Analyzing Selections

Cluster 1 page 13

**Directions:** Fill in the chart with details from the passage that explain Laurel and Josh's relationship.

Detail	

# Analyzing Selections

Cluster 1 page 13

Your response may look like this.

Detail	
“Josh, wait up, or I’ll break your legs.”	
The pain that came into her eyes hurt him, too. “Why? Without telling me? I thought we were friends! If I hadn’t seen you sneaking through the alley—”	

# Analyzing Selections

Cluster 1 page 13

Your response may look like this.

Detail	
We are friends, he wanted to assure her. Best friends. The best.	
It seemed vital to stay cold and angry. Even with Laurel. Especially with Laurel, because she knew what he really was.	



### **Step 2:** Explain the significance of each of the parts.

Once you've identified specific details, you should determine the significance of the detail as it relates to your analysis.

Suppose you are analyzing how events of a story influence a character's decisions. You have identified that one important event is the death of the character's mother. The next step is to explain the significance of the event. You may conclude that the mother's death is significant because it caused the character to drop out of school.

## Analyzing Selections

Cluster 1 page 13

**Directions:** Explain what each detail reveals about Josh and Laurel’s relationship.

Detail	Explanation
“Josh, wait up, or I’ll break your legs.”	
The pain that came into her eyes hurt him, too. “Why? Without telling me? I thought we were friends! If I hadn’t seen you sneaking through the alley—”	

# Analyzing Selections

Cluster 1 page 13

Detail	Explanation
We are friends, he wanted to assure her. Best friends. The best.	
It seemed vital to stay cold and angry. Even with Laurel. Especially with Laurel, because she knew what he really was.	

# Analyzing Selections

Cluster 1 page 13

Your response may look like this.

Detail	Explanation
“Josh, wait up, or I’ll break your legs.”	Laurel is angry with Josh. They have the kind of open relationship in which they speak honestly with each other.
The pain that came into her eyes hurt him, too. “Why? Without telling me? I thought we were friends! If I hadn’t seen you sneaking through the alley—”	Josh avoided saying good-bye to Laurel. Perhaps because he knew she would be angry or because he knew she would talk him out of running away. Laurel is angry and doubts their friendship.

# Analyzing Selections

Cluster 1 page 13

Your response may look like this.

Detail	Explanation
We are friends, he wanted to assure her. Best friends. The best.	Josh believes that they are best friends.
It seemed vital to stay cold and angry. Even with Laurel. Especially with Laurel, because she knew what he really was.	Laurel and Josh are the kind of friends who really know each other and don't have to pretend. Josh seems afraid that Laurel would see through him to his true feelings. Perhaps he doesn't really want to run away.

### **Step 3:** Draw a conclusion based on your explanation of the parts.

Often when analyzing a selection, you will be asked to communicate your ideas in writing. Your writing might take the form of a summary that draws a conclusion based upon your explanation of the details. Here is a sample of a written conclusion based upon an analysis of how the events in a story shaped the main character.

**Possible Summary:** Several events in the story influenced Shawn's decision to drop out of school, including moving to a new school in the middle of ninth grade and being bullied by the kids at school. However, the final event that pushed him to drop out was his mother's death. Shawn states, "With mom gone, nobody cared if I went to school or slept in until noon."

## Analyzing Selections

Cluster 1 page 13

**Directions:** Analyze Josh and Laurel’s relationship based upon the excerpt from “Playing God.” Explain your analysis in a short paragraph.

Detail	Explanation
“Josh, wait up, or I’ll break your legs.”	Laurel is angry with Josh. They have the kind of open relationship in which they speak honestly with each other.
The pain that came into her eyes hurt him, too. “Why? Without telling me? I thought we were friends! If I hadn’t seen you sneaking through the alley—”	Josh avoided saying good-bye to Laurel. Perhaps because he knew she would be angry or because he knew she would talk him out of running away. Laurel is angry and doubts their friendship.

# Analyzing Selections

Cluster 1 page 13

Detail	Explanation
We are friends, he wanted to assure her. Best friends. The best.	Josh believes that they are best friends.
It seemed vital to stay cold and angry. Even with Laurel. Especially with Laurel, because she knew what he really was.	Laurel and Josh are the kind of friends who really know each other and don't have to pretend. Josh seems afraid that Laurel would see through him to his true feelings. Perhaps he doesn't really want to run away.



## Analyzing Selections

Cluster 1 page 13

Your response may look like this.

Josh and Laurel are best friends. Josh says that Laurel knows who he really is. Usually, they can talk openly with each other, but when Josh decides to run away, he doesn't say good-bye. He tries to stay angry at Laurel so that she can't talk him out of leaving.