

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 the 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.

Analyzing Selections

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Step 1: Identify the parts of the 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 that influence change in the character.

Analyzing Selections

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Directions: The excerpt on the following screens is from the story “The Green Killer” (pages 53–57). When his cousin Blaze dies, Alan inherits clothes and other items. Read the passage and analyze how Alan changes as he wears Blaze’s clothes.

I thought I might feel weird wearing his clothes, and even my mother wondered if I’d be comfortable in them. . . . Not only did I not feel weird in Blaze’s clothes, I began to take on a new confidence. I think I even walked with a new, sure step. I know I became more outgoing, you might even say more popular. Not dazzling, no, not able to hold a room spellbound while I tossed out some information about the habits of insects, but in my own little high-school world out on Long

continued

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Island I wasn't the old average Alan Dunn, plodding along snaillike any more. That spring I got elected to the prom committee, which decides the theme for the big end-of-the-year dance, and I even found the courage to ask Courtney Sweet out.

The only magic denied me by my inheritance seemed to be whatever it would take to propel me from being an average student with grades slipping down too often into the Cs and Ds, up to Blaze's A and A-plus status. My newfound confidence had swept me into a social whirl that was affecting my studies. I was almost flunking science.

Analyzing Selections

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Directions: Fill in the first column on the chart with details that explain the changes in Alan.

Detail	

continued

Analyzing Selections

Cluster 2 page 47

Directions: Fill in the first column on the chart with details that explain the changes in Alan.

Detail	

Analyzing Selections

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Your response may look like this.

Detail	
I began to take on a new confidence. I think I even walked with a new, sure step. I know I became more outgoing	
I wasn't the old average Alan Dunn, plodding along snaillike any more. . . . I even found the courage to ask Courtney Sweet out.	<i>continued</i>

Analyzing Selections

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Your response may look like this.

Detail	
My newfound confidence had swept me into a social whirl that was affecting my studies. I was almost flunking science.	

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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. For example, 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

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Directions: Explain what each detail reveals about Alan's character and how he is changing.

Detail	Explanation
I began to take on a new confidence. I think I even walked with a new, sure step. I know I became more outgoing,	
I wasn't the old average Alan Dunn, plodding along snaillike any more. . . . I even found the courage to ask Courtney Sweet out.	

Analyzing Selections

Cluster 2 page 47

Directions: Explain what each detail reveals about Alan's character and how he is changing.

Detail	Explanation
My newfound confidence had swept me into a social whirl that was affecting my studies. I was almost flunking science.	

Analyzing Selections

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Your responses may look like this.

Detail	Explanation
I began to take on a new confidence. I think I even walked with a new, sure step. I know I became more outgoing	Alan became more confident and outgoing when he wore Blaze's clothes.
I wasn't the old average Alan Dunn, plodding along snaillike any more. . . . I even found the courage to ask Courtney Sweet out.	I didn't feel like a snail. He had more courage.

Analyzing Selections

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Your responses may look like this.

Detail	Explanation
My newfound confidence had swept me into a social whirl that was affecting my studies. I was almost flunking science.	He had less time to study, and his grade in science was dropping.

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

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Directions: Explain the conclusion of your analysis of Alan's changes in a short paragraph.

Detail	Explanation
I began to take on a new confidence. I think I even walked with a new, sure step. I know I became more outgoing	Alan became more confident and outgoing when he wore Blaze's clothes.
I wasn't the old average Alan Dunn, plodding along snaillike any more. . . . I even found the courage to ask Courtney Sweet out.	Alan didn't feel like a snail. He had more courage.

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Detail	Explanation
My newfound confidence had swept me into a social whirl that was affecting my studies. I was almost flunking science.	He had less time to study, and his grade in science was dropping.

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Your response may look like this.

When Alan starts wearing Blaze's clothes, he becomes more like Blaze. He becomes outgoing and gains the confidence to ask out a girl. He feels less like his old "snaillike" self. However, his grades also suffer because he doesn't have Blaze's intellectual abilities. Although at first the changes appear to be good, the reader wonders if Blaze is the best person to imitate. The changes appear to be more superficial than internal.