AP Analysis Tips[[1]](#footnote-1)

**Read the prompt carefully.** What—exactly—is it asking for?

It’s all about THE EFFECTS of the strategies you find. i.e.:

The direct quotes ASSURE his audience that… .

The repetition ENFORCES his claim that… IN ORDER TO … .

**CMs** (commentary sentences) should answer the following questions:  
1. What is the effect of this strategy?  
2. Why is it important?  
3. How does it reflect the author’s (or speaker’s) thesis/theme/purpose/attitude?

Make sure that you use **specific words** to describe the **author's tone / attitude.**

Your **introduction** can be a version of the rhetorical précis that also answers the prompt.  
  
Sentence #1: Name of author, [optional: a phrase describing the author], the genre and title of the work, a rhetorically accurate verb (such as "assert," "argue," "suggest," "imply," "claim,"), and a THAT clause containing the major assertion (thesis statement) of the work  
Sentence #2: An explanation of how the author develops and/or supports the thesis usually in chronological order.   
Sentence #3: A statement of the author’s apparent purpose, followed by an "in order" phrase  
Sentence #4: A description of the intended audience and/or the relationship the author establishes with the audience

Your **body paragraphs** should contain the elements of any analytical paragraph:   
  
Sentences that analyze strategies (use rhetorical devices or appeals)

i.e.: The repetitive syntax creates a persuasive tone.  
CDs (concrete details from the passage) CMs (commentary sentences that describe HOW and/or WHY these CDs and strategies are relevant to the author's purpose.  
i.e.: This repetition underscores Smith's point that the [insert theme or purpose here].

Go through the passage chronologically.

Weave together your CDs and CMs.

Discuss WHY the strategies and devices are used and HOW they are used = CMs.

Bad:   
Smith uses antithetical ideas. [Nothing is analyzed—merely stated. So what?]  
Smith uses imagery to paint a picture. [Defining a term?! For English Teachers?! Really?!]  
  
Better:  
Smith uses antithetical ideas. This allows him to reiterate his point that … .  
Smith uses imagery. This shows his idea that … .

Best:  
The antithetical ideas illustrate the uncertainty that... .

The repetitive imagery highlights the antithetical idea that … .

SYNTAX:

**When you see very long sentences, consider:**

Is the author trying to replicate the physical movement of the character (as when McCarthy describes how the hunter in "The Crossing" carefully lowers the animal after cradling it in his arms, unwraps the body, and washes the blood off the sheet)? Is the author trying to suggest confusion or simulate the rapid flow of ideas or emotions, as when Rachel silently and furiously denies that the sweater is hers? Is the author piling on detail after detail to illustrate the enormity, weight, or extensiveness of something, like the enormous English breakfast and the extensiveness of English domination?

**When you see very short sentences, consider:**

Is the author trying to stress a key idea? Is the author trying to sound objective and/or factual? Is the author trying to convey anxiety or quicken the pace in contrast to longer, more complex ideas?

**When you see parallelism ("on the sea, in the air, over the land...") consider:**

Is the author trying to stress the sheer number of things? Is the author trying to create rhythm, force, power? Is the author trying to stir emotion? ("I have a dream ")

**When you see repetition of key words or phrases ("Made in England"), consider:**

Is the author trying to stress a key. idea? Is the author using repetition to convey emotion, such as anger, bitterness, joy?

Conclusion should EXTEND into the philosophical or EXPAND on your thesis.

The most sophisticated essays will discuss/explore how the STRUCTURE of the piece relates to the CONTENT.

Take the time to PROOFREAD.

1. Adapted from Aboukhadijeh, Feross. "Essay Tips: Syntax - What to Say About It" StudyNotes.org. StudyNotes, Inc., 17 Nov. 2012. Web. 16 Apr. 2013. <http://www.apstudynotes.org/english/sample-essays/syntax-what-to-say-about-it/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)