

Summary vs. Analysis Examples

Overview:

Some students have difficulty distinguishing between summary and analysis in their own writing. Especially when writing the Textual Analysis Essay, students often provide an overview of an essay (a summary) rather than using brief summary elements as a springboard for analysis. You will need to work hard to be sure that you do not merely describe or summarize the author's ideas. Instead, any time you bring in an example or set of examples from the professional essay, be sure to follow it up with analysis of *how* and *why* these examples impact the audience and the overall argument.

A Comment on the Examples:

The two sets of paragraphs below illustrate the differences between a paragraph focusing on summary and one focusing on analysis. The second paragraph in each set illustrates analysis. As you look at each analysis paragraph, you'll see that summary and textual examples are only brought in as a starting place for analysis, and the paragraphs predominately feature analysis.

Example 1: Notice that in the analysis paragraph, the writer briefly describes an element of the image and then follows that description with analysis of HOW the image would impact readers and WHY it would impact them this way.

Example 2: In the analysis paragraph for Example 2, the author makes several sub-points to support the topic sentence. For each sub-point, the author makes an analysis claim, provides a textual example to illustrate that claim, and then follows the textual example of HOW the textual element would impact the reader and WHY the author would choose that method.

Key

Bold	topic and subtopic sentences.
<i>Italics</i>	<i>summary or description of the text/ Textual examples</i>
<u>Underline</u>	<u>analysis</u>

Example 1: “Baghdad’s New Owners”**A. Description/Summary Paragraph** (of an emotionally-charged image)

The photograph accompanying the *Newsweek* article, “Baghdad’s New Owners,” displays the devastation and destruction which has taken place in Iraq. The photo features a young girl, perhaps seven or eight years old, standing in front of a pile of rubble. The skin on her forehead hardly shows through her stitches which descend down her nose and right cheek, and a gauze bandage hangs somewhat haphazardly over one eye. Behind her lies a mountain of debris: bricks from a collapsed building mingle with the crumbled remainders of the content of that building. The mangled palm trees that stand amidst the rubbish have only a few dried branches remaining. The image contains no text but is situated opposite a page reading “Baghdad’s New Owners” in large, bolded font. The image and the title work together to open the article.

B. Analysis Paragraph (exploring why and how the image impacts the audience emotionally)

The photograph which accompanies the *Newsweek* article, “Baghdad’s New Owners,” seems to be an attempt to appeal to readers’ emotions before and as they read the article. ***Both the image of rubble in the background and of a young girl in the foreground serve to make strong emotional appeals. By choosing to portray the remains of a bombed out building, the photographer not only shows the reader the devastation in Baghdad, but also calls forth countless images of war which readers would have seen flashed across news channels, portrayed in magazines, and featured in newspapers and even movies all their lives. In doing so, he appeals not only to readers’ immediate emotional reaction to this photo; he also appeals to the store of emotions and attitudes which readers have developed over years of seeing such devastation. Perhaps more powerful an emotional appeal than the familiar scene in the background, however, is the portrayal of a war torn child in the foreground. That the photographer chose to feature a mangled and sullen-faced young girl is no accident. Generally, young children, particularly young female children, represent innocence and helplessness. By presenting an innocent and helpless child, torn by war, standing amidst the rubbish of a demolished building, then, the photographer is able to draw on readers’ capacity for human sympathy and on a preconditioned sense of justice and human rights according to which young children must be sheltered and protected. The combination, then, of an appeal to readers’ emotional storehouses and to their sense of sympathy and justice makes an intense appeal to emotions, seemingly working to influence readers’ emotional responses not only to the photograph but also to the article it accompanies.***

Example 2: David Sedaris' "Cyclops"**A. Summary Paragraph** (overviewing examples of stories and humor in "Cyclops")

In "Cyclops," David Sedaris uses a number of exaggerated memories from his childhood to develop pathos through humor. Using a first person narrative style, he describes amusing instances from his boyhood in which his father created frightening tales in order to prevent his children from attempting dangerous feats. For example, he remembers his father warning him that "lightening can be attracted by a wedding ring or even fillings in your teeth" (698) and that "that license is going to be your death warrant" (700). Beyond these warnings, though, Sedaris provides numerous examples of stories which accompanied countless warnings. He provides examples of his father's horror stories in relationship to everything from shooting a BB gun in the back yard to building a napkin holder in shop class. To accompany every warning his father gave and story his father told, Sedaris provides an account of his boyhood reactions and perceptions. He remembers hiding under tables in the basement during thunder storms, being terrified of shooting someone's eye out with a BB gun, and mowing the lawn wearing a football helmet and goggles all because of his perceptions of his father's stories. These stories, then, and Sedaris' retelling of his reactions to them provide an entertaining memoir of his childhood which draw readers in through humor, encouraging readers to remember similar situations in their own childhoods.

B. Analysis Paragraph (analyzing how stories and humor develop pathos in "Cyclops")

In "Cyclops," David Sedaris uses a number of humorous exaggerated memories from his childhood to develop pathos. One reason these memories relate so well to the reader is that they are taken from a wide range of situations. Sedaris relates memories attached to activities including wanting to shoot a BB gun in the back yard, needing to build a napkin holder in school, mowing the lawn, and learning to drive. By choosing such a wide range of activities, most relating to common and shared experiences of childhood and adolescence, Sedaris appeals and relates to readers' own memories, causing them to identify with him. Another reason these memories are so effective is that Sedaris allows the reader to "hear" his father. For example, he remembers his father warning him that "lightening can be attracted by a wedding ring or even fillings in your teeth" (698) and that "that license is going to be your death warrant" (700). Through allowing the reader to hear these entertaining and exaggerated utterances, Sedaris appeals to the generally common experience of readers' parents or guardians being overprotective growing up, perhaps even conjuring up readers' memories of their own guardians' voices and warnings. Finally, these memories relate to the reader in that Sedaris offers his own boyhood reflections and reactions to his father's stories and warnings. He relates the unnecessary paranoia and hesitation he experienced as a child not yet able to disregard the over-exaggerated advice of his father. Such a retelling of his reactions serves to remind readers of their own misperceptions of the world and its dangers as a child, causing them to further relate to the narrative. These memories, then, allow Sedaris to establish a relationship to readers through appeals to assumed common experiences and strengthen his credibility.

Works Cited

Sedaris, David. "Cyclops." *The Presence of Others: Voices and Images that Call for Response*. Ed. Andrea A. Lunsford and John J. Ruskiewicz. 4th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2004. 697-701. Print.

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