

# **Analysis**

An analysis examines the relationship of a whole to its parts. For instance, an analysis of a novel (the whole) might include discussions of setting, characterization, and plot (the parts).

Analyses are used in all academic and business endeavors. An artistic analysis in the humanities might discuss the composition, perspective, and color used in a painting, while a literary analysis of a short story might discuss symbolism, imagery, and tone. In the physical sciences, a paper for biology could analyze the effects of sunlight and water on plant growth. A business analysis might examine the expense categories, such as express mail and long distance costs, as factors that increased overhead costs for the previous month.

In each of these situations, the analysis involves evaluating a set of pre-selected parts in relation to the whole. Thus, like all good writing, an analysis contains a thesis statement that defines the topic and the elements of that topic that will be discussed.

Use the essay outline found on the carousel to help develop your essay.



## What is Analysis?

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**E**ver dissected a frog? If you did that just to cut it up, you would be guilty of cruelty. One dissects a frog to learn how and why things inside the frog work as they do. Why have two arteries here, not one? Generally, all analysis gets beyond mere description and into examination and explanation.

The same principles apply to essays. Consider these examples, from a hypothetical final exam in the Core class :

**Example 1:** This quotation comes from Freud's *Civilization and its Discontents*. Here, Freud implies that man will only be happy when living according to the pleasure principle. The pleasure principle

leads people to do or desire things that bring them pleasure. Freud presents a good point here, and he uses many examples throughout the text to support it.

**Example 2:** This quotation contains a central concept of Freud's psychology: humans are driven by the pleasure principle and are most happy when fulfilling its demands. As Freud notes elsewhere in the text, the ego and superego play the roles of watchdogs, keeping the demands of the pleasure principle in check through the moderating influences of experience (Freud's reality principle) and morality. For Freud, this battle within the personality gets reflected in a society. The society passes laws that limit our freedom, and therefore our happiness, but encourage order and morality. Freud notes that the exchange of happiness for security is, in the end, worthwhile and necessary to maintaining a civilization.

Analysis does not equal description (but can use description). The second example is clearly stronger, since it "gets beneath the surface," going **beyond** describing ideas to examining the relationship between ideas. The writer is clearly "present" in the second example, showing the reader how Freud makes the leap from individual to society. In the first case, the writer only tells us **what** Freud says, not **how** or **why** Freud drew his conclusions.

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### Using Analysis

There are many sorts of analysis. The ones given "stay within the text." Another possible analysis might involve applying Freud's ideas to another text or a current issue. **Any** analysis will consider the data in enough depth, and with enough clarity, to convince the reader, even one who disagrees with the writer's conclusions, that the analysis has been made well.

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