

STYLISTICS

Stylistics is the study of style in composition. In order to study the style of a piece of writing, you must begin by analyzing its stylistic components.

Essentially, style can be broken into four units/levels, where it is used:

1. Words or Diction
2. Sentences or Syntax
3. Paragraphs
4. The Document (as a whole).

Each unit/level contains a myriad of techniques which can be employed and which may help to differentiate the writing from another piece of writing.

In order to understand how a piece is significant and thus understand its individual traits, you must analyze the piece by asking questions of each level of writing.

When beginning to analyze a piece of writing based on style, you should consider the following:

WORDS/DICTION

Kinds of Diction

- What is the level of diction? Low (Slang/Regionalisms) - Middle (Everyday Words) - High (Technical Talk or Pretentious Words)
- Are the words formal or informal?
- Are the words mostly based on connotation or denotation?

Parts of Speech

What parts of speech are used (and how often)? You might count the numbers of nouns, pronouns, verbs, adverbs, adjectives, determiners, prepositions, conjunctions, and exclamations.

How many proper nouns are found?

How many common nouns are found?

Length of Words

- Are the words mostly Monosyllabic, Bi-Syllabic, Tri-Syllabic, or Polysyllabic?

SENTENCES/SYNTAX

Kinds of Sentences

How many Simple Sentences?

How many Compound Sentences?

How many Complex Sentences?
How many Complex-Compound Sentences?

Types of Sentences

How many Exclamatory Sentences?
How many Interrogative Sentences?
How many Imperative Sentences?
How many Declarative Sentences?

Length of Sentences

How long are sentences (count the words)?
What is the average length?
Do particular sections contain more words than others?

Sentence Nuances

How do the sentences open?
What is the verb tense?
How many complete sentences?
How many incomplete sentences (fragments)?
How many phrases?

Sentence Patterns

How are the sentences patterned/arranged? Are a majority subject then verb then object? How many active sentences?
How many passive sentences?

Uses of Ornaments (Sentence/Syntax)

Are there Metaphor?
Are there Similes?
Is there Hyperbole?
Are there Oxymorons?
Is there Onomatopoeia?
Are there Rhetorical Questions?
Is there Metonymy?
Is there Personification?
Is there Alliteration?
Is there Antithesis?
Is there Asyndeton?
Is there Polypoton?
Is there Intertext?
Is there Listing?

PARAGRAPHING

Paragraphing Nuances

How many paragraphs are there?
What is the verb tense of each?
Are secondary sources used?
Are there quotations? How many?
Are there paraphrases? How many?

Kind of Paragraphs

Comparison/Contrast
Chronological
Problem-Solution
Climatic
Other structure/arrangement?

Paragraph Length

How many words per sentence? How many sentences per paragraph?

Transitions

Do sentences use ideas from the previous paragraph to transition into the new paragraph?
Are there conjunctive adverbs?
Do the last sentences of a paragraph mention ideas in the next paragraph?

Development

How many points of support does the paragraph contain?
What kind of support is used?

Use of Ornaments (Paragraph)

Is there Allegory?
Is there Anaphora?
Is there Epistrophe?
Is there Parallelism?
Is there Intertext?
Is there Listing?

DOCUMENT

Document Nuances

What is the primary voice?
Does the document change voices? Where and to which voice?
What is the primary tense of the document?
What types of formatting is used?
Are headings used? And, what typographic techniques are used?
Are paragraphs indented?
Are spaces added? Are there Indentations?
Is a source documentation system used?

After asking these questions, you may decide to work in more specific detail. For example, you may ask: How many nouns are in each sentence? How many adjectives are in each sentence?

Additionally, instead of using numbers, you may decide to convert your numbers into percentages (many stylistic analysts use percentages, which may be used to construct tables, charts, or even graphs).

EX:

Consider the paragraph below and its corresponding stylistic analysis:

Howdy, partner! Welcome to Blue Coyote! The best ranch in Wild West! Here we have a bunch of interesting activities in store for you at the Blue Coyote Ranch. Here, we have swimming, horseback riding, and other activities available to city-slickers in need of a decent diversion. However, we also have quite a few relaxing amenities as well: massages and other spa treatments, cooking classes, pottery, painting, and old-time-country storytelling. Here, we have a bunch of things just waitin' for you.

STYLISTIC ANALYSIS

Total number of sentences: 7

Complete: 7

Fragments: 0

Simple: 7

Compound : 0

Complex: 0

Complex-Compound: 0

Exclamatory: 3

Interrogative: 0

Declarative: 4

Imperative: 0

Total number of words: 81

Polysyllabic Words: 27

Monosyllabic Words: 54

Diction Level: Everyday to Lower (Regionalisms)

Total number of Nouns: 26

Proper nouns: 4

Common Nouns: 22

Pronouns: 6

Prepositions: 14

Verbs: 6

Adverbs: 6

Determiners: 5

Adjectives: 10

Exclamations: 4

Conjunctions: 3

Anaphora: 3 Occurrences

Listing: 2 Occurrences