3.1. HOW TO ANALYSE A NON-FICTIONAL TEXT

Non-fictional texts provide information, facts and often opinions. They are usually well-structured and written in clear, direct prose.

Important types: newspaper articles, informative text, review, biography, letter, instruction, newspaper, comment, advertisement, travel writing.
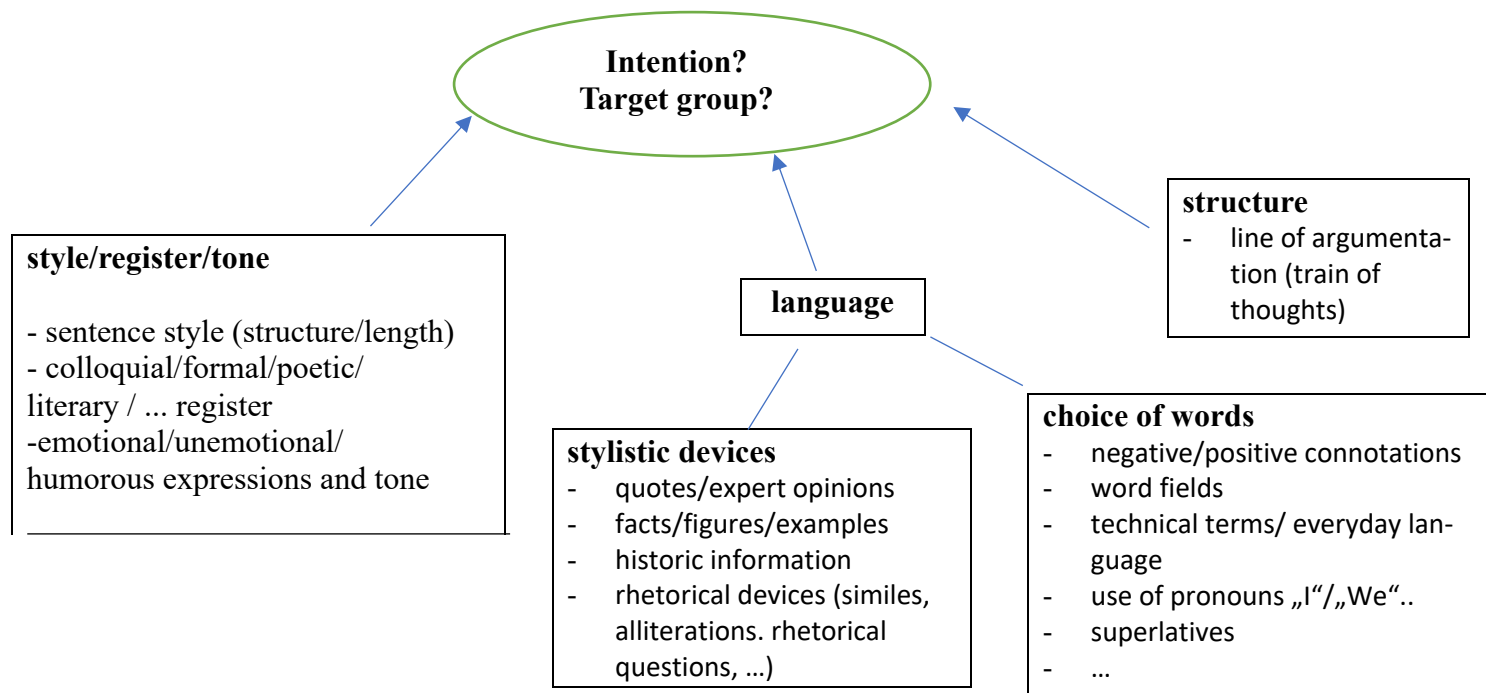
Mögliche Aufgabenstellung: *Analyse the stylistic means the author uses.*

Analysing a text is more than just saying what it is about. It means looking at how the content, structure and language are used to achieve a certain aim.

STEP 1: Determine the **purpose/intention** of the text (*to inform, to entertain, to provide insight into, to convince, to complain, to draw attention to, to ridicule, to provoke, to warn…*).
The heading can give you the first clue. What does the author want to achieve with the article? Who is the text aimed at (target group)?

STEP 2: Identify the **means the author uses** in order to convince the readers/audience. Look at each section of the text and describe effects created by the **structure**, its **language** and **style**. It is not sufficient to just identify these devices. You have to explain why these devices are used and what the effect on the reader is!

**Intention?
Target group?**

style/register/tone

- sentence style (structure/length)
- colloquial/formal/poetic/ literary / ... register
- emotional/unemotional/ humorous expressions and tone

language

structure
- line of argumenta-tion (train of thoughts)

stylistic devices
- quotes/expert opinions
- facts/figures/examples
- historic information
- rhetorical devices (similes, alliterations. rhetorical questions, …)

choice of words
- negative/positive connotations
- word fields
- technical terms/ everyday lan-guage
- use of pronouns „I"/„We"..
- superlatives
- …

STEP 3: Plan and **write** your analysis.
1. **Introduction:** Briefly sum up the main points and the author's intention.
2. **Main part:** Examine the relationship between style and content. How does the author achieve his intention? Analysis of structure/language/style and register: *name it, quote it, explain it!* Use a paragraph for every central idea.
3. **Conclusion**: Reference to your introduction and the author's intention, sum up your findings.

Use of language in fictional texts

- **Narrative perspective**: first-person vs third-person narrator (limited or omniscient point of view). Does the perspective shift?

- **mood and tone** (humorous, entertaining, serious, dark, light, spooky, violent…)
- **Diction**/ c**hoice of words** (simple, poetic, factual, emotive…)
- **Lexical or semantic fields:** What kinds of words cluster together? (e.g. war, nature, religion, love)
- **Imagery and figurative language: Metaphor, simile, personification, symbolism:** What images are created? What do they *suggest* beyond the literal?
- **Sensory detail:** How does the language appeal to sight, sound, touch, taste, or smell?
- **Syntax**: short vs complex sentence structure / one-word or incomplete sentences raise suspense.
- **Flashback or foreshadowing:** A flashback describes past events related to the present. Foreshadowing gives hints of future events - but the reader may only realise this later when the future event has happened.
- **Narrative structure:** hook/opening, rising action, climax, turning point, unexpected twists, open ending vs. resolution
- Using **dialogue** or **internal monologue (direct or indirect speech?)**
- **Symbolism**: one object, person or animal representing another aspect with a deeper meaning (e.g. the dove representing peace)
- **Metaphor**: compares two unlike things by stating that one **is** the other, without using "like" or "as".

Repetition and Patterning
- **Repetition of words or phrases:** Emphasis, rhythm, obsession, or emotional resonance.
- **Motifs:** Recurring images or phrases that reinforce themes.

Contrast and Juxtaposition
- Contradictory or opposing language can highlight conflict or irony.
- Pay attention to **binary oppositions** like light/dark, life/death, silence/ sound.

Style and Register
- Does the writer use formal or colloquial language?
- Are there regional dialects, slang, or jargon?
- How does this shape realism, setting, or character relationships?

🔍 10. Rhetorical Devices
- **Irony, hyperbole, understatement, repetition, rhetorical questions, parallelism.**
- How do these manipulate reader perception or highlight tension?

Poetry & Speeches

Stylistic Means

MEANS	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE	GENERAL FUNCTION
alliteration	repetition of the same consonant at the beginning of a word	***Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers***. (Tongue Twister)	to emphasize words, creating a certain atmosphere or feelings; to give the text a musical character
climax	words, phrases or clauses are arranged in order of rising importance	*He walked, he ran, he almost flew to get here in time.*	to stress the urgency/importance of something; to dramatize the presentation
contrast	a juxtaposition of two unlike things	*"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times"* (Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*)	to highlight differences
direct address	use of personal pronoun (you) or imperative	*"Ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country."* (John F. Kennedy, "Inaugural Address")	to create a bond between the author/speaker and the reader/audience, to involve the reader/audience
enumeration	listing up things	*[W]hen we allow freedom to ring, when we let it ring **from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city** …* (Martin Luther King, "I Have a Dream")	to show the weight/the importance of an aspect
exaggeration / hyperbole	making sth. greater, better or worse than it really is	*I haven't seen you for ages!*	to illustrate the effect of sth.; sometimes to make fun of sth./sb.
exclamation	!	*I don't believe it!*	to express joy, anger, determination, loudness etc.
inclusive language	use of pronouns "we"/"us"/"our"	*All of us are black first, and everything else second.* (Malcolm X., "God's Angry Men")	to create a sense of unity or a common identity
inversion	changing the conventional word order	*"There's a lady wants to see you. Miss Peters her name is."* (P.G. Wodehouse, *Something Fresh*)	to emphasize certain words or phrases

metaphor	an implicit comparison between two things without using "like" or "as" (stronger than a simile)	*The world is an oyster, but you don't crack it open on a mattress!* (Arthur Miller, *Death of a Salesman*)	to create a vivid image of something; to illustrate certain character traits
oxymoron	a combination of seemingly contradictory words	*burning ice, freezing fire*	to point out the outstanding/unusual nature of an aspect
personification	objects or animals are given the traits of a human being	*Sometime too hot **the eye of heaven** shines* (William Shakespeare, "Sonnet Number 19")	to create a vivid description of the appearance and perception of inanimate objects
repetition (of words)	using a word more than once	***Tyger Tyger** burning bright* (William Blake, "The Tyger")	to stress the importance of certain words
rhetorical question	a question to which the answer is obvious	*What have I done to deserve this?*	to involve the reader, assuming that he / she agrees
simile	a direct comparison between two things using the words "like" or "as"	*My love is **like** a red, red rose* (Robert Burns, "My love is like a red, red rose")	to create a vivid image/impression of sth. or sb.
symbol (of something)	something concrete stands for something abstract	a dove (= peace), a heart (= love)	an expressive way of presenting a (complex) idea

MEANS	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE	GENERAL FUNCTION
allusion	an implicit reference to another work of art / a person / an event etc.	*This looks like the Garden of Eden* (allusion to the Biblical Garden of Eden)	to put complex ideas/stories in a nutshell; to show that author and audience share the same knowledge
anaphora	successive clauses starting with the same words	*He never did, he never wanted to*	to emphasize certain words and what they express
assonance	the repetition of similar vowel sounds	*Go sl**o**w **o**ver the r**oa**d!*	to create a musical effect
euphemism	a mild and pleasant expression is used instead of a harsh and negative one	*The goods fell off the back of a truck.* (rather than saying that the goods were stolen)	to make something unpleasant sound better/less negative
onomatopoeia	the use of words to imitate sound	The **buzzing** bees are flying away.	to give a musical quality to a text/evoke the sound of something in the listener's mind
parallelism	the use of the same or similar structures in two or more clauses	*Easy come, easy go.*	to emphasize and underline a statement

MEANS	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE	GENERAL FUNCTION
antithesis	the opposing of ideas by means of grammatically parallel arrangement of words, clauses or sentences, a statement which consist of two opposing aspects	*Many are called, but few are chosen* (Matthew 22:14)	to stress the contrast between two ideas/aspects
apostrophe	speaker addresses either an absent person or a non-human object, idea, or being and is commonly found in plays and poems.	*"Oh! Stars and clouds and winds, ye are all about to mock me …"* (Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*)	to add a dramatic effect to what is being said
ellipsis	leaving out words in a sentence (sometimes replacing them by dots)	*Could he ever …*	to express astonishment, fear, breathlessness etc.
irony	saying the opposite of what you mean	*What a wonderful day!* (when it is in fact not)	to create a humorous tone, to make fun of
synecdoche	a part of something or someone is taken to represent the whole or vice versa	*They counted 500 heads* (for 500 people) *"Germany thrashed France today"* (the German national football team defeated the French national football team).	to create variation within a text; to focus on a specific aspect of something
pun	a play upon words with a similar sound but different meanings	*The Importance of Being Earnest* (a play by Oscar Wilde, playing on 'earnest' being an adjective and a first name for men)	to create a comic effect