

**ACTIVITY****A Quick Look at Audience**

Having read Abraham Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address, discuss these two questions with a classmate or in a group: Whom does Lincoln's text seem to be addressing? How do you know?

## Starting Rhetorical Analysis: Answering the Big Central Question and Four Related Questions

Writers always write to initiate the making of meaning. They create words that they know readers will encounter, interpret, and comprehend—in other words, readers will complete the making of meaning that the writers jump-start. The first step in writing analytically, therefore, requires you to be a “meaning-completing” reader, to take a leap of faith and *hypothesize* the big central question and a possible answer to it:

- **What is the central point, the major idea, that the author wants readers to understand about the subject?** In rhetorical terms, this idea would be the text's **central claim or thesis**. In this chapter, let's call it the “take-home idea.”

In addition, you need to hypothesize about four other questions related to the take-home idea:

- **What is the author's primary purpose?** What does the author want to do *for* the readers: Inform them about something they need to know? Convince them to accept a proposition? Persuade them to think or act in a different way? Clarify an unclear concept? Amuse?
- **What attitude toward the subject matter does the author want readers to believe the author holds?** Serious about the subject at hand? Whimsical? Reverential? Ironic? Angry? This component of analysis is the **tone** of the piece.
- **How does the author convince the readers that the author is credible, trustworthy, worth listening to?** In rhetorical terms, how does the author establish his or her **ethos**?
- **What emotional effect does the author want to have on readers?** Does the author want to make readers happy? Angry? Satisfied or dissatisfied? Comfortable or uncomfortable? In rhetorical terms, how does the piece appeal to the readers' **pathos**?

Some people would argue that you can never know for certain what main point the author wants you to get in a text, what primary purpose the author wants to try to accomplish, what tone the author hopes to convey, how the author creates credibility, or what emotional effect the author wants to have on readers. You can't get

 Watch the Video on Analyzing Texts at Your Pearson MyLab

inside an author's head, these people argue, and, besides, even if an author did tell you about any of these things, he or she might not tell you the truth.

Fair enough. But the analyst must play the "what if" game: "What if I propose that X is the main idea of this text? What if I propose the author was trying to accomplish this purpose? What if I propose this is the tone the author was trying to convey? What if I argue that the author's credibility is established in ways that I specify? What if I maintain that the author was trying to have this emotional effect on the readers?" Once you make *hypotheses*, thoughtful speculations about what's being studied, rather than attempting to guess at what the author intended, you can generate good interpretations of big ideas and the elements that make them up. Notice that the word *I* is important. Other readers might find other big questions, and alternate elements that they regard as important. Analysis, like writing itself, is no exact science. It's an act of communication and thus an act of negotiation, what we think, what we read, how we put our thinking and our reading together.

### ACTIVITY A First Pass at Analysis

Read the introductory chapter from Walter Isaacson's 2003 biography of Benjamin Franklin. Assume that Isaacson's primary audience consists of mostly well-educated adults who have a strong interest in contemporary political and social issues. Then, with a classmate, answer as specifically as you can the following questions:

1. **What do you think is the big central question Isaacson is addressing in this piece? What is your hypothesized answer to that question?**
2. **What is the primary purpose Isaacson is trying to accomplish for his readers? What are some secondary purposes?**
3. **What tone is Isaacson trying to convey about his subject?**
4. **Why do you find Isaacson credible and trustworthy on the subject?**
5. **What emotional effect do you think Isaacson hopes his chapter will have on readers?**

### Hypothesizing about the Take-Home Idea

One big misperception that beginning analysts have is that the take-home idea is someplace on the page, in the text, and all you have to do is find it and underline it. That's generally not the case. There are often hints or clues about the main point in the text, but the actual construction of the take-home idea requires that you, the reader, participate in making meaning from the text as you read.

Let's assume that you and your classmates are interested in the political and social issues that Isaacson raises. Here's how you assist the text in *creating* the main idea:

1. **You ask yourself the big central question.** Why should we care about Benjamin Franklin now?

 **Watch** the Video on Writing Rhetorical Analyses at Your Pearson MyLab

2. You offer, as a

that is full enc

simply quoting twenty-first ce

thought. A bet

appealing to tw

of his emphasis

inventiveness, l

divine translati

3. You find, in th

support your a

for instance, th

eventual wife a

discoveries and

library—as exa

virtues fostered

4. You identify an

assumptions ar

you connect yo

evidence, exam

words, you ask,

like the one at h

for example, you

into play: (a) So

higher-level, spe

achieving a prac

assumption. (b)

them that he is t

"human" as they

Notice that, in this

these unspoken assu

One way to char

Big central  
question

FIGURE 4.1

2. You offer, as a hypothesis, your own answer to the big central question(s) that is full enough, robust enough to do justice to the text. For example, simply quoting Isaacson and saying “Franklin has a particular resonance in twenty-first century America” doesn’t represent the richness of Isaacson’s thought. A better version would be this: “Franklin’s character is particularly appealing to twenty-first-century thinkers, like my classmates and me, because of his emphasis on his own humble beginnings, his practical wisdom and inventiveness, his faith in ‘the middling people,’ and his belief that faith in the divine translates into doing good for his fellow humans.”
3. You find, in the text, specific pieces of evidence, examples, and reasons that support your answer to the big, central issue question. You could mention, for instance, the anecdote he tells about his awkward first appearance to his eventual wife as demonstrating his humility. You could discuss his many discoveries and inventions—electricity in lightning, bifocal glasses, the lending library—as examples of his practical wisdom. You could examine how his list of virtues fostered religious and civic tolerance among his fellow citizens.
4. You identify and explain (and this is the tricky part) the *unspoken assumptions and ideas that come into play for the readers of the article when you connect your answer to the big, central issue question with the actual evidence, examples, and reasons you find in the text to support it*. In other words, you ask, “What do people like us think about when they consider subjects like the one at hand, and how does this text interact with that thinking?” So, for example, you might explain two sets of assumptions and ideas that come into play: (a) Some of us might think that true wisdom can only come from higher-level, specialized studies, rather than from interacting with humans and achieving a practical wisdom of human psychology. Franklin gives the lie to this assumption. (b) Most people genuinely trust a political figure who can convince them that he is truly altruistic, has their best interests in mind, and is just as “human” as they are. Franklin, of course, confirms that assumption.

Notice that, in this step, *you* participate in the making of meaning by drawing on these unspoken assumptions.

One way to characterize this four-part activity is shown in Figure 4.1:

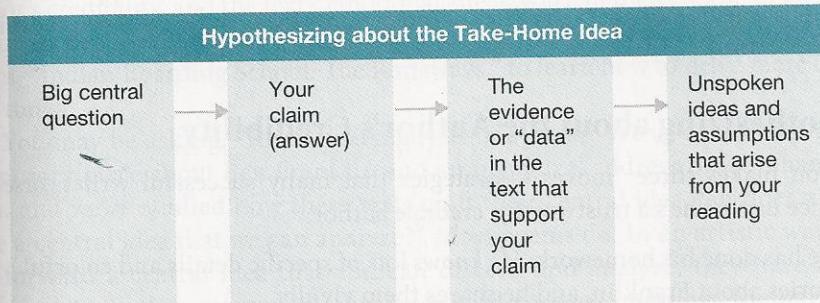


FIGURE 4.1

In short, to provide a basis for your analysis, you pose the big central question that you think the text is raising. Then you offer a *claim*, what you believe is a well-rounded answer to the big central question. You cite material that's actually in the text or on the page—called “data” in scare quotes, because it’s not always “hard,” empirical data such as scientists generate, but it is tangible evidence, examples, or reasons—that you believe supports your answer. Then you explain those sets of ideas, attitudes, and assumptions that are usually not on the page but that people generally believe about the topic at hand.

## Hypothesizing about the Purpose

At first glance, offering a hypothesis about the author’s purpose is considerably more straightforward than constructing the take-home idea. You ask yourself, “What do I think the author—Walter Isaacson in this instance—is trying to accomplish for us, his readers?” Hypothesizing about purpose is not as simple as it might sound, though. A good analyst looks at all the *possible* purposes the text might accomplish for its readers and then asks which one is, arguably, the *primary* purpose and which are *secondary*.

Look again at “Benjamin Franklin and the Invention of America.” Certainly Isaacson knows some facts about Franklin and is trying to convey them to us, but is his primary purpose to inform us? Maybe Isaacson would like us—well-informed readers in the twenty-first century—to act more like Franklin, but it’s not apparent from the text that he’d like us to change our behaviors. So is his primary purpose to persuade us to rethink what we might believe? A good hypothesis about the book’s purpose might be something like this: “Primarily, Isaacson wants to convey an idea to us—that Franklin’s attractiveness to twenty-first-century thinkers makes sense—and to convince us to accept that idea. So, the primary purpose of this excerpt would be to convince; its secondary purposes would be to inform and to rethink.”

## Hypothesizing about the Tone

This hypothesis is pretty simple. Isaacson clearly admires the daylights out of Franklin and wants us to share in his admiration. Notice the depth of detail Isaacson offers as he touts Franklin’s many accomplishments and his outgoing, amiable, altruistic personality. Clearly, Isaacson assumes that we, his readers, appreciate those accomplishments and characteristics as much as he does. Thus, his tone is admiring and respectful.

## Hypothesizing about the Author’s Credibility

Isaacson makes three “moves”—strategies that many successful writers use—to convince us that he’s a trustworthy, credible author.

1. He has done his homework: He *knows* lots of specific details and colorful stories about Franklin, and he shares them vividly.

2. He strikes us as States regularly and he apparent
3. He seems to share good person: har

In short, Isaacson se  
acter, and his good  
the fourth century B  
his native Greek he  
character; and *eunoia*

## Hypothesizing

Texts do more than establish credibility. think is the central e  
its main idea, purpo  
fect is clearly related ter. As we hinted ab  
buoyant about abou  
life. Do you think Isa

### ACTIVITY

Return to Abraham  
Then, with a class  
their answers, ab  
ility, and the em

## “Going Deep”

Once you have learned  
author’s credibility, a  
sis to “go deep” on a  
poem, “Indian Board  
into tone.

You may be ask  
temporary piece ab  
coln, and we’ve stud  
have a central idea t  
put forward a centr  
pose and tone; they

2. He strikes us as having a good agenda: He seems to believe that the United States regularly needs to assess its political leaders' character traits and goals, and he apparently sees Franklin as a good role model for our leaders today.
3. He seems to share with us common sentiments about what makes a person a *good person*: hard work, humility, a sense of humor.

In short, Isaacson seems credible because he shows his intelligence, his good character, and his good will. Coincidentally, in his classic *Art of Rhetoric*, Aristotle in the fourth century B.C.E. noted these same three sources of an appeal to *ethos*: In his native Greek he called them *phronesis*, or practical intelligence; *arête*, or good character; and *eunoia*, or good will.

## Hypothesizing about the Emotional Effect of the Text

Texts do more than convey a take-home idea, achieve purposes, convey tone, and establish credibility. They make readers *feel*, and having a hypothesis about what we think is the central emotion appeal of a text is as vital as having a hypothesis about its main idea, purpose, tone, and credibility. A text's establishment of emotional effect is clearly related to the author's tone, his or her attitude toward the subject matter. As we hinted above, Isaacson's tone might be characterized as *amused by* and *buoyant about* about Franklin's profile and its relevance for twenty-first-century life. Do you think Isaacson wants us to feel *uplifted* and *optimistic*? We do!

### ACTIVITY

#### Trying Your Hand at the Big Central Question and the Four Related Ones

Return to Abraham Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address. Reread it, if necessary. Then, with a classmate or in a group, discuss your hypothetical questions, and their answers, about Lincoln's take-home idea, his purpose, his tone, his credibility, and the emotional effect of his address.

## “Going Deep” with One of the Elements: Analyzing Tone

Once you have learned to hypothesize about a text's take-home idea, purpose, tone, author's credibility, and the text's emotional effect, you can then choose in an analysis to “go deep” on any one of these features. Let's take a look at Louise Erdrich's poem, “Indian Boarding School: The Runaways,” to learn how to delve more deeply into tone.

You may be asking, “Rhetorical analysis of a *poem*? We've considered a contemporary piece about Ben Franklin and an inaugural address by Abraham Lincoln, and we've studied how these texts craft their central idea, but does a poem have a central idea that we can analyze?” Most poems do: In an artistic way, they put forward a central idea that you can discern and analyze; they have a purpose and tone; they ask you to construct (and perhaps question) the narrator's

credibility; they have an emotional effect on readers. In other words, we could do a full-fledged rhetorical analysis of many poems. In this case, however, let's just focus on tone.

In the first two chapters, we talk about how as a reader you make predictions and speculations about the tone of what you're reading. Understanding tone helps you *hear* the voice speaking and that helps you make decisions about the argument the writer might be making and about how the writer might want you to respond.

After you read Erdrich's poem, look back to see where you speculated about the tone—the narrator's attitude toward the subject matter—and write down three or four adjectives that you think describe that tone. Then take those adjectives and find places in the poem that directly illustrate the adjective you've chosen.

Here's an example: We might choose the adjective *tense* to describe the tone in the first nine lines of the poem. Then we might argue that the images in that section—boxcars that don't wait for the runaways, young children running to get into the boxcars in order to escape from the boarding school, a guard striking a match that pierces the darkness—have been deliberately crafted by Erdrich to convey her tone. Now, how would you follow this model with the adjective *pained* or the adjective *bitter*?

In completing this activity, you see how the general idea (what are adjectives that describe the tone of Erdrich's poem?) derives from particular moments in the text (what lines show how that adjective fits?). There might be tone shifts—a change in language that signals a change in attitude—or it might be that the tone you hypothesize at the beginning might get amplified as the writer moves through the lines of the poem. In any case, analyzing how tone works to establish aim and make connections to readers is a primary strategy for you to use when you are interpreting and analyzing what you read.

## Taking the Next Step: Moving from the Starting Points to the Component Parts

Hypothesizing about what you think is the take-home idea, as well as the purpose, tone, credibility, and the emotional effect of a text, gives you a menu of possible *starting points* for reading and writing analytically. As the activities above suggest, you need to examine the moments or components of the text, see what its components are, and determine *how* those component parts work together to grasp the take-home idea, the purpose, and the emotional impact of the piece. Think about it this way: Every analysis *begins* with an argument: You, the analyst, *argue* that A is the take-home idea, B is the purpose, C is the tone, D is the credibility, and E is the emotional effect. You might discuss all or some of these factors. But whichever ones you include, you will look at the component parts of a text for evidence to support your arguments.

Purpose

Arrangement  
(organization)

FIGURE 4

Working with writing categories: arrangement (see Figure 4.2).

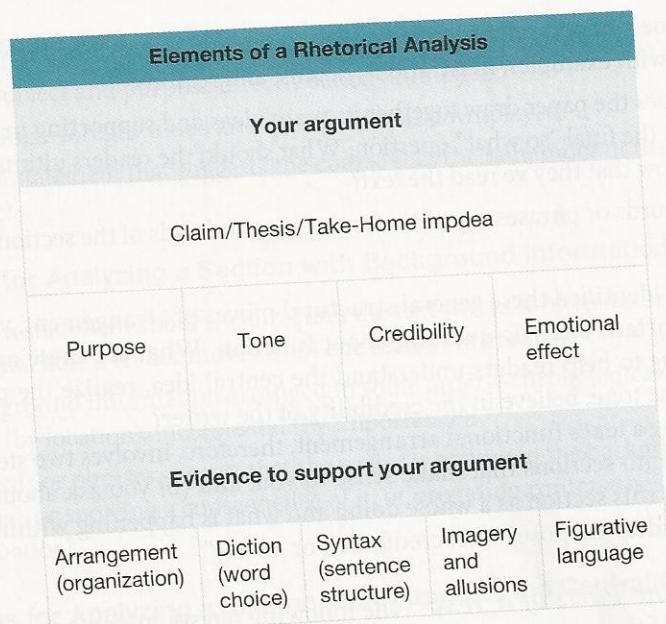
The key to a successful analysis is to point out interesting features of language. The key to a good position, *how* these features affect. In the remainder

### Arrangement: The Big Picture

When you examine the big picture of a text—its parts, its transitions, its writer's purpose and context—it can be described as having features that signal shifts between parts. Ask specific questions such as:

#### Questions for Analysis

- Does the text start with a statement of purpose, address, or argument? If so, what will proceed?

**FIGURE 4.2**

Working with written texts, you can divide these component parts into five categories: arrangement, diction, syntax, imagery and allusion, and figurative language (see Figure 4.2).

The key to a successful analysis, and a successful analytic paper, is not simply to point out interesting features of arrangement, diction, syntax, imagery, and figurative language. The key to a successful analysis is to understand, and show in your composition, how these features *bring to life* the main idea, purpose, tone, credibility, and effect. In the remainder of this chapter, let's examine how this connection happens.

## Arrangement: The Shape of the Text

When you examine the arrangement of a text, you analyze how the shape of the text—its parts, its transitions, its beginning, middle, and end, help convey the writer's purpose and control the effect on readers. Pretty much every text you encounter can be described as having a beginning, a middle, and an end and points within it that signal shifts between these sections. Analyzing a text's *arrangement*, you can ask specific questions.

### Questions for Analyzing a Text's Overall Arrangement

- Does the text state directly the central question it will answer, issue it will address, or argument it will develop? Where does the text suggest how its plan will proceed?

- How does the text offer support for its argument? Where does it develop these points with examples, illustrations, details, and reasons?
  - How does the paper draw together its main ideas and supporting material to address the final “so what” question: What should the readers ultimately think or do now that they’ve read the text?
  - What words or phrases signal the beginnings and ends of the sections of the text?

Once you've identified these general structural moves of arrangement, you begin to ask the important analytic question about function. What are these arrangement features *doing* to help readers understand the central idea, realize the purpose, be affected by the tone, believe in the credibility of the writer?

Analyzing a text's functional arrangement, therefore, involves two steps: (a) You divide a text into sections that make sense to you, and (b) you ask about each section, "What is this section as a whole doing and what is happening within it to convey the main idea, purpose, tone, credibility, or effect?"

**Identifying the Parts of a Text** The following questions can help you accomplish the first of these two steps. As you analyze a text, ask these questions, remembering that *not every text you examine is going to have all these parts*.

## Questions for Identifying the Parts of a Text

- Is there a section that introduces the subject and writer's purpose in discussing it? Where does the section begin and end? Does the section indicate the text's central argument?
  - Is there a part that gives readers background information? If so, where does this section begin and end?
  - Is there some sentence or paragraph that focuses the readers' attention on some particular issue, aspect, or theme of the subject?
  - Is there some section that purposefully supports the central question or argument? If so, where does this section begin and end?
  - Is there a part that examines possible objections to the claims? If so, where does this section begin and end?
  - Is there a section where the writer suggests what readers might or should think and do with what they've read?

Answering these questions, you get a sense of the parts of a text and how they work.

**Analyzing the Arrangement of Each Part of a Text** Now you can turn your attention to the second of the two steps and analyze how the arrangement of the text works *within* the parts. Keep in mind that with every question, you consider the response in terms of its effect on you as a reader.

## Questions for Analyzing

- Are the subject and p
  - Is some angle foregr
  - Is there a statement t  
will take?

## Questions for Analyzing

- Is there a statement about signal how a reader
  - Is background information spatial (by location),
  - Do words or phrases material, or showing information?

## Questions for Analyzing

- Are there words or sentences that will take?
  - Does support include describing and evoking sensory details, categorizing the parts, or using effect reasoning?

#### **Questions for Analyzing**

- Is there language that
  - Does some language objections?

#### **Questions for Analyzing**

## Think or Do

- Is there a direct charge to the piece, or does the writer do this through the degree to which he or she tries to persuade you?
  - What does the writer give the text a sound impression to the reader?

If you can generate good text, you will have done a

### Questions for Analyzing a Section about Subject and Purpose

- Are the subject and purpose directly stated or implied?
- Is some angle foregrounded and other material downplayed?
- Is there a statement that suggests the course that the remainder of the paper will take?

### Questions for Analyzing a Section with Background Information

- Is there a statement about the direction the text will take or terms or phrases that signal how a reader moves from one section to another?
- Is background information arranged in some order—chronological (by time), spatial (by location), incremental (by importance)?
- Do words or phrases suggest that the writer is adding to the background material, or showing a consequence of it, or providing contrasting information?

### Questions for Analyzing a Section That Supports the Central Claim

- Are there words or sentences that map out the direction this part of the paper will take?
- Does support include any of the following: telling stories, describing scenes and evoking sensory details, defining terms, dividing the whole into parts, categorizing the parts according to some principle, or providing cause-and-effect reasoning?

### Questions for Analyzing a Section That Presents Objections to the Claim

- Is there language that suggests the writer wants to counter objections?
- Does some language suggest that the writer wants to concede the objections?

### Questions for Analyzing a Section That Indicates What Readers Might Think or Do

- Is there a direct charge to readers to think or act in a new way after reading the piece, or does the writer imply new ways of thinking and acting? How does the degree to which these elements are revealed (or perhaps concealed) persuade you?
- What does the writer do with the words, phrases, and sentences in this work to give the text a sound of finality? What effect does this language have on you as a reader?

If you can generate good answers to these questions by referring to places in the text, you will have done a thorough analysis of arrangement.

**ACTIVITY****Analyzing the Parts of Lincoln's Inaugural**

Take another careful look at Lincoln's Second Inaugural. Divide it into parts—as many as you think are sensible. Then, with a classmate or in a group, describe what each part does to contribute to the construction of the main idea, the achievement of a purpose, and the creation of an emotional effect.

## Diction: Words That Make Meaning, Purpose Come to Life

Just as you can analyze how the arrangement of a text helps to develop its central meaning, purpose, tone, credibility, or effect, so you can investigate how specific words in a text make these features come to life for readers. Experienced analysts often use the term **diction**, from the classical Greek *dictio*, or “choice of words.”

Analyzing diction offers you the opportunity to look carefully at several distinguishing features of words. But a word of caution: When you recognize something distinctive in a text’s diction, you *always* need to ask yourself a “so what” question, such as “So what does this word choice *do* for the meaning or the effect?” It’s not just “does the text use jargon?” or “are there formal and long words?” but *why* are those words used and *what* effect does it have on your reading?

**General versus Specific Words** Twentieth-century language expert S. I. Hayakawa describes a phenomenon he calls “the ladder of abstraction.” At the top of the ladder he places abstract terms like *transportation* and *justice*; near the middle rungs slightly more specific terms like *automobiles* and *juvenile court*; and at the bottom of the ladder are specific, concrete terms like *my 2008 green Cobalt* and *the offender’s five-year probation sentence for shoplifting*.

**Ladder of Abstraction**

Abstract term	Transportation	Justice
More specific term	Automobiles	Juvenile court
Very specific, concrete term	My 2008 green Cobalt	Five-year probation for shoplifting

**FIGURE 4.3**

Not all texts need to employ specific diction—sometimes writers need to talk about abstract terms and concepts—but generally, the more concrete and specific a text’s diction is, the more vivid the main idea, purpose, tone, credibility, and emotional effect are.

**Denotation versus Connotation** Intuitively, we all know that words can be loaded, carry attitudes and emotions as well as definitions. Careful readers are

aware of how texts often suggest meanings as well

Benjamini  
Benjamini

Even during his time, the first sentence above suggests responsibility plies something less in meaning in these two denotation and conno-

- Denotation refers
- Connotation refers

Both sentences above elected official—but ca-

**Formal versus Informal** the way somebody dresses for a club, you dress down for a prom, you dress up for a text’s word choice able casual “conversation,” with the writer in a number of ways in

**Contractions and Pronouns** and pronoun use. Contrary to what “have not” refers to himself (*I, me*) words or phrases like “I’m usin

A perso

The first would be better would be right at change to accommodate a casual way to say “I’m participating in sports.”

**Latinate versus Anglo-Saxon** language, a mix of many Old English, a Ger

aware of how texts often capitalize on the multiple meanings of words—subtle, suggested meanings as well as obvious ones. Consider these two simple sentences:

- Benjamin Franklin was a perfect example of a statesman.  
Benjamin Franklin was a perfect example of a politician.

Even during his time, Franklin probably would have been pleased if someone said the first sentence about him, but likely not so happy with the second. *Statesman* suggests responsibility, intelligence, and high-mindedness; *politician* these days implies something less noble, more self-serving or even unprincipled. The differences in meaning in these two sentences illustrate what scholars of language refer to as denotation and connotation:

- **Denotation** refers to a literal meaning of a word.
- **Connotation** refers to an association, an effect, that the word provokes.

Both sentences above use words that might have the same *denotative* meaning—an elected official—but carry quite different *connotations*.

**Formal versus Informal Words** The diction of a text might be compared to the way somebody dresses to go to a dance. If you’re going to an informal party at a club, you dress down—jeans, comfortable shirt, flats. But for a formal dance like a prom, you dress up for the occasion—long skirt, high heels, tuxedo. The formality of a text’s word choice is like dress; it gives some sense of the occasion—a comfortable casual “conversation” between the writer and readers, or a more formal presentation, with the writer “speaking” to the readers. Writers vary the formality of texts in a number of ways in their choice of words, sentences, and punctuation.

**Contractions and Pronouns** Two visible signals of formality are contractions and pronoun use. Contractions like “haven’t” and “isn’t” generally sound less formal than “have not” and “is not.” First-person pronouns, with which the writer refers to himself (*I, me, my, mine, we, us, our, and ours*), sound less formal than words or phrases like “one” or “a person” or “he or she,” which allow the writer to talk about a topic without personalizing it. Consider the following two sentences:

- I’m using my brain by playing on a team.  
A person develops multiple intelligences by participating in sports.

The first would be perfectly appropriate in a relatively informal essay, while the latter would be right at home in a more formal paper. Notice the other words that change to accommodate a more or less formal diction. “Brain” is a looser, more casual way to say “multiple intelligences.” “Team” is a shorthand way to say “participating in sports.”

**Latinate versus Anglo-Saxon Words** Historically, English is a mongrel language, a mix of many others. The ancestor of the English we speak and write today is Old English, a Germanic language. The variety of that language spoken in the

British Isles from around the fourth century to the eleventh century C.E. has been labeled Anglo-Saxon English because the two tribes who spoke it were the Angles and the Saxons. Around 1100 C.E., the language began to change. In 1066, England was invaded, and the English king was overthrown by a French king, William of Normandy. The Norman invasion opened Anglo-Saxon English to influence from the romance languages of French, Spanish, and Italian, called *romance* after the Latin language of Rome. Throughout the succeeding centuries, English acquired more and more words and phrases that had their origins in Latin. Because the people who brought this Latinate influence into the language tended to be the powerful nobility, the use of what is called **Latinate diction** has come to be associated with more formal writing, while the use of what is called **Anglo-Saxon diction** has come to be linked with more informal writing.

Here are some pairs of Latinate and Anglo-Saxon synonyms that show the difference in formality:

Formal versus Informal Diction		
Formal Latinate term	Informal Anglo-Saxon term	Meaning
facilitate	help	to make easier
manufacture	make	to make
interrogate	ask	to question
maximize	grow	to make larger
minimize	shrink	to make smaller

**FIGURE 4.4**

**Slang and Jargon** Slang and jargon generally get a bad rap. Just look at how the Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary defines the two terms. Slang is either “language peculiar to a particular group” or “an informal, nonstandard vocabulary composed of coinages, arbitrarily changed words, and extravagant, forced, or facetious figures of speech.” Jargon is “confused, unintelligible language”; “a hybrid language or dialect simplified in vocabulary and grammar and used for communication between people of different speech”; “the technical terminology or characteristic idiom of a special activity or group”; or “obscure and often pretentious language marked by circumlocutions and long words.”

Yikes! Given these definitions, who would ever use slang or jargon in a composition? The answer: lots of writers, depending on how informally they want to interact with their readers and how well they know their audience’s background and interests. In a paper for a government class about how political figures try to reassure voters in a time of economic stress, a writer might use a sentence like this:

The senator’s speech was designed to calm voters’ apprehensions about rising interest rates.

In an informal essay—newspaper—the writer

The sen

The same formal/analyses of the use of users of a new computer consisted of people familia

All beta then col

On the other hand, for following sentence wou

All peop  
are exp  
puter an

Both slang and jar  
use language that mig  
plify it. Savvy writers  
words they could use.  
about whether to use s  
is writing. As always, t  
this audience, and this  
answer is yes. The use  
member of their group  
or her homework abo  
community.

## Syntax

A third place to look  
pose, tone, credibility,  
sentences in the text.  
length, type, structure

### Sentence Length

long (or short) the sen  
sentence length, and  
tences give the writer  
readers can get lost in  
short sentences can b  
of long sentences. A v  
say, in essence, “Here  
lengths is usually mor  
the same length.

In an informal essay—or a personal piece, such as a commentary for a local newspaper—the writer might cast the same idea like this:

The senator basically put it to the voters in these terms: Chill!

The same formal/informal depending-on-your-audience continuum prevails in analyses of the use of jargon. Suppose a writer was producing an account of how users of a new computer program were expected to operate. If the audience consisted of people familiar with computer terminology, the author might write:

All beta testers know that they should clean up their orphans and then cold boot the machine.

On the other hand, for an audience not familiar with the world of computers, the following sentence would be more appropriate:

All people who have agreed to test the new program know that they are expected to delete their unused file before they turn off the computer and turn it on again immediately.

Both slang and jargon seem like dangerous territory for a writer because both use language that might obscure a writer's message rather than clarify and simplify it. Savvy writers ought to be aware of the simpler, more direct, more common words they could use. But, as with all questions involving style, a writer's decision about whether to use slang or jargon depends on the situation in which he or she is writing. As always, the question is this: "Given this subject matter, this purpose, this audience, and this type of writing, is slang or jargon effective?" Sometimes the answer is yes. The use of slang or jargon can signal to readers that the writer is a member of their group, in solidarity with them, and that the author has done his or her homework about a particularly complicated topic that is important to the community.

## Syntax

A third place to look for evidence to support claims about the main idea, purpose, tone, credibility, and effect of a text is **syntax**: the formation and structure of sentences in the text. Four specific features of syntax help you analyze sentences: length, type, structure, and voice and mode of verbs.

**Sentence Length** At the most basic level, an analyst can simply look at how long (or short) the sentences in a text are, how the writer varies (or doesn't vary) sentence length, and how sentence length affects reading. In general, long sentences give the writer a chance to develop a complicated thought for readers, but readers can get lost in the middle of them and lose the train of thought. In general, short sentences can be quite effective at the end of, or in the midst of, a series of long sentences. A well-placed short sentence can pull the reader up short and say, in essence, "Here's the point. Pay attention." A text with a variety of sentence lengths is usually more engaging than a text in which all the sentences are roughly the same length.

Look at the varied sentence length in this group of sentences in the first paragraph of Isaacson's chapter:

But wait a minute. There's something more going on here. Peel back a layer and we can see him as a 65-year-old wry observer, sitting in an English country house, writing this scene, pretending it's part of a letter to his son, an illegitimate son who has become a Royal Governor with aristocratic pretensions and needs to be reminded of his humble roots.

**Types of Sentences** A slightly more challenging (and even more interesting) feature of syntax is sentence type. Traditional grammar describes four types. Notice how each of these four sentence types has a primary function.

- A **simple sentence** has one independent clause. Essentially, it expresses one idea:  
*Abraham Lincoln struggled to save the nation.*
- A **compound sentence** has two independent clauses, each of which can stand as a separate sentence. A compound sentence presents at least two ideas and suggests they are equal in importance:  
*Abraham Lincoln struggled to save the nation, and Andrew Johnson assisted him.*
- A **complex sentence** has one independent clause and at least one subordinate clause—a group of words with a subject and a verb that cannot stand by itself as a sentence. A complex sentence suggests that the idea in its independent (main) clause is more important than the idea in its subordinate clause (or clauses) and that the subordinate clause qualifies the main clause. In the following example, the independent clause is in boldface type:  
*When the leaders of the Confederacy insisted that the rights of the states were more important than the maintenance of the union,  
Abraham Lincoln struggled to save the nation.*
- A **compound-complex sentence** has two independent clauses and at least one subordinate clause. A compound-complex sentence combines the functions of the compound and the complex. In the following example, the two independent (main) clauses are in boldface type:  
*When the leaders of the Confederacy insisted that the rights of the states were more important than the maintenance of the union,  
Abraham Lincoln struggled to save the nation, and Andrew Johnson assisted him.*

Sentences are also characterized by type as "loose" or "periodic": A **loose sentence** is one that puts all its basic elements—subject, verb, and any complement—right at the beginning, and then adds any modifying elements:

*Abraham Lincoln wept, fearing the Union would not survive if the Southern states seceded.*

A periodic sentence is modifying details in or in the middle of the

Alone in  
try, deje

Abraha  
his belo

Loose and periodic ar  
periodic, but still have

Abraha  
nally ins

Similarly, a sentence c  
feel to it:

Abraha  
before  
almost

When analysts look at  
a writer either "fronts"  
information until as la

Would you say th  
odic" end of the spect

Instinctively more  
founders, and deve  
shopkeeping value  
that a new nation  
people?

**Verbs: Voice and I**  
for verbs are active ar  
the action is the subje

SUBJECT (doer)

Lincoln direc

In a sentence that use  
verb contains some fo  
tion is the object of a

SUBJE  
(RECEIVE  
ACTIO

The effort to sa

A **periodic sentence** is one that delays completing its idea by putting its additional, modifying details in one of two positions, either before the basic sentence elements or in the middle of them:

Alone in his study, lost in somber thoughts about his beloved country, dejected but not broken in spirit, **Abraham Lincoln wept.**

**Abraham Lincoln**, alone in his study, lost in somber thoughts about his beloved country, dejected but not broken in spirit, **wept.**

Loose and periodic are not exclusive categories. A sentence can be more loose than periodic, but still have some periodic “feel” to it:

Abraham Lincoln considered the Union an inviolable, almost eternally inspired, concept.

Similarly, a sentence can be more periodic than loose, but still have some “loose” feel to it:

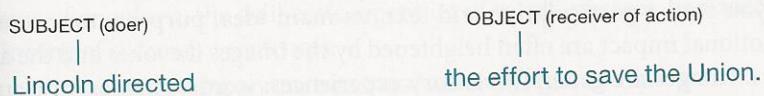
Abraham Lincoln, a self-taught philosopher, a political scientist even before there was such a field, considered the Union an inviolable, almost eternally inspired, concept.

When analysts look at sentences on the loose–periodic continuum, they notice how a writer either “fronts” essential information and then elaborates or delays essential information until as late as possible in the sentence.

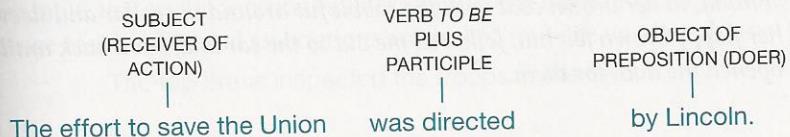
Would you say this sentence in Isaacson’s chapter is on the “loose” or the “periodic” end of the spectrum?

Instinctively more comfortable with democracy than some of his fellow founders, and devoid of the snobbery that later critics would feel toward his shopkeeping values, he had faith in the wisdom of the common man and felt that a new nation would draw its strength from what he called ‘the middling people.’

**Verbs: Voice and Mode** In English, the two most common categories of *voice* for verbs are active and passive. In a sentence that uses the **active voice**, the doer of the action is the subject, and the receiver of the action is the direct object:



In a sentence that uses the **passive voice**, the receiver of the action is the subject, the verb contains some form of *to be* as a helper and a participle, and the doer of the action is the object of a preposition in the prepositional phrase after the verb:



Guidebooks about effective writing often tell writers to “write in the active voice” and “avoid the passive voice.” There are some good reasons to follow this advice. The passive voice requires more words than the active, and excessive use of the passive can cause a reader to feel the text is wordy. Also, the passive voice is potentially irresponsible because the writer can avoid mentioning the *doer*. *The effort to save the Union was directed* is a complete sentence, but it leaves out the actor, and that may be important if the actor might be culpable. The caution about passive voice however, is limited. A writer sometimes uses the passive voice purposefully to emphasize the action done, rather than the doer of the action. Consider this brilliant first paragraph of Lincoln’s second inaugural address:

At this second appearing to take the oath of the Presidential office there is less occasion for an extended address than there was at the first. Then a statement somewhat in detail of a course to be pursued seemed fitting and proper. Now, at the expiration of four years, during which public declarations have been constantly called forth on every point and phase of the great contest which still absorbs the attention and engrosses the energies of the nation, little that is new could be presented. The progress of our arms, upon which all else chiefly depends, is as well known to the public as to myself, and it is, I trust, reasonably satisfactory and encouraging to all. With high hope for the future, no prediction in regard to it is ventured.

Throughout the address, Lincoln keeps himself, as well as the armies of the North and the South, out of the “doer” position in sentence: *little that is new could be presented; no prediction in regard to it is ventured*. Let’s concentrate on the action at hand, ending the long war, he seems to be saying. Let’s not concentrate on who might be at fault.

A second good reason a writer uses the passive is to shift the doer of the action to the end of the sentence, where it will usually be most remembered. The sentence, *The effort to save the Union was directed by Lincoln*, emphasizes, rather than down-plays, who is responsible.

## Imagery and Allusions

When you read a particularly vivid text, its main idea, purpose, tone, credibility, and emotional impact are often heightened by the images it evokes and the allusions it makes. **Images** are generally sensory experiences: words, phrases, or clauses that lead you to visualize a scene, hear a sound, experience a feeling of touch, taste, or smell. Each of the five senses work to create images:

- **Visual (sight) image:** *Tante Lou, in her black overcoat and black rimless hat, and Miss Emma, in her brown coat with the rabbit fur around the collar and sleeves and her floppy brown felt hat, followed me out to the car and stood back until I had opened the door for them.*

- **Auditory (sound)** *the hiss of the engine made me*
- **Tactile (touch)** *she comforted the mouse*
- **Gustatory (taste)** *the taste of the cake*
- **Olfactory (smell)** *the sweet smell of the flowers*

**Allusions** are specific readers’ associations a are clichés:

Everybody  
No matter what religion  
sentence as an allusion  
tells you something ab  
writer might make an

“Ay, the

The phrase is from Ham  
play, and you recogniz  
dilemma in using the p

## Figures of Rhetoric

To convey purpose and always use **figures of r**  
analyze texts well rec  
communicating and p

People have been  
and Rome, where rh  
figures into two broad

- A **scheme** is any arrangement of words and sentences. Churchill’s famous scheme of *anaphora* begins with the beginning of success:

We shall land in the stre

- A **trope** is any art example, this sentence has a range of meanings:

The top

- **Auditory (sound) image:** *The clackety-clack of the wheels on the track and steamy hiss of the engine made the sound of the Lincoln funeral train even more poignant.*
- **Tactile (touch) image:** *The weight of her father's strong arm around her shoulder comforted the mourning child.*
- **Gustatory (taste) image:** *The tang of the grapefruit slice made her mouth pucker.*
- **Olfactory (smell) image:** *The baking bread in the oven welcomed with its yeasty sweetness that filled the kitchen.*

**Allusions** are specific references to other texts or scenes outside the text that build readers' associations and deepen their understanding of the text. Sometimes these are clichés:

**Everybody has a cross to bear.**

No matter what religious background you come from, you probably recognize that sentence as an allusion to the Biblical story of Jesus on his way to crucifixion. It tells you something about what the writer thinks about the burdens people carry. A writer might make an allusion to another text:

**"Ay, there's the rub."**

The phrase is from Hamlet's famous "To be, or not to be" soliloquy in Shakespeare's play, and you recognize that the writer wants to suggest some kind of quandary or dilemma in using the phrase.

## Figures of Rhetoric: Schemes and Tropes

To convey purpose and affect readers through the features of a text, writers almost always use **figures of rhetoric**, whether they do so consciously or not. Readers who analyze texts well recognize these figures and explain how the writer uses them in communicating and persuading.

People have been teaching and learning about the figures since ancient Greece and Rome, where rhetoric was first studied. Classical rhetoricians divided the figures into two broad categories: *schemes* and *tropes*. The definitions are simple:

- A **scheme** is any artful, that is, deliberate, variation from typical arrangements of words and sentences. For example, the following passage from Winston Churchill's famous Dunkirk speech during World War II is an example of the scheme of *anaphora*, the deliberate repetition of words, phrases, or clauses as the beginning of successive sentences:

We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the  
landing-grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in  
the streets, we shall fight in the hills.

- A **trope** is any artful variation from the typical expressions of ideas or words. For example, this sentence contains an example of the trope of *metonymy*, in which a range of meanings and associations are packed into one word or phrase:

The top brass inspected the troops in the field.

In ancient Rome, and later in the European Middle Ages and Renaissance, scholars developed substantial lists of figures, categorizing them under these two general labels, and school children had to learn the definitions and find examples of the figures in literary works and public discourse. It would not have been unusual for a grammar school student in Renaissance England to be given a list of three hundred or so names of schemes and tropes and to be required to memorize the definitions and produce an example of any one of them on demand! Students undertook this task not simply to memorize or even to learn how to vary their own expression. Their lessons in schemes and tropes taught them something crucial about language, that a different way of *saying* something about the world was also a different way of *seeing* something about the world. In other words, classical instruction taught that using figurative language to express ideas helped to clarify and sharpen a person's thinking—not a bad lesson for students even today.

You don't have to memorize three hundred definitions to recognize and analyze the figures. (There are many excellent handbooks and Internet sites that list figures of rhetoric. One particularly helpful resource is Professor Gideon Burton's web site at Brigham Young University called *Silva Rhetoricae*, literally "the forest of rhetoric.") But you can learn to recognize schemes and tropes when you read them by how they work and their effect on readers. What follows are a few schemes and tropes in common use.

**Schemes Involving Balance** When a passage, a paragraph, or even a sentence has two or more similar ideas, a good writer will often express those ideas in the same grammatical form: words balance words, phrases balance phrases, clauses balance clauses. The writer is using parallel constructions to affect and balance readers' responses.

Abraham Lincoln was a master at creating parallel structure. His most famous work, the brief but eloquent Gettysburg Address, is a tour de force of parallelism. Here is its final paragraph. Notice how Lincoln both begins and ends this paragraph with a parallel structure:

But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate—we cannot consecrate—we cannot hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

Three parallel, balanced clauses

Three parallel, balanced verbs

Three famous parallel phrases

What, in general, is  
cept is balance: A solid  
anced character of the  
credible, the readers adh

One particular vari  
content of the clauses, p  
offer a striking contras  
structure can be found i

Ask not what your  
country.

Another well-known  
late 1970s:

Up with h  
The parallelism in both  
And, of course, on  
literature comes from L

Both parties dep  
than let the nati  
let it perish, and t

Parallelism uses th  
helps readers understa  
elements:

- **Parallelism of words**: sessions benefit a person's cartilage.
- **Parallelism of phrases**: sessions help a person avoid injury.
- **Parallelism of clauses**: the most efficient exercise in stamina than pumping aerobics is leading or take classes.

Each of these three par  
which more than one it  
You see that the verb fo

What, in general, is the effect of parallel structure on the reader? The key concept is balance: A solid parallelism emphasizes the thoroughly trustworthy, balanced character of the speaker or writer. Because he or she is perceived as more credible, the readers adhere to the take-home idea more willingly.

One particular variety of parallelism is an **antithesis**, which emerges when the content of the clauses, phrases, or words being balanced in the parallel structure offer a striking contrast to the readers. A famous example of antithetical parallel structure can be found in President John F. Kennedy's inaugural address:

Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.

Another well-known example is the slogan from an anti-drug campaign in the late 1970s:

**Up with hope, down with dope.**

The parallelism in both cases emphasizes the writer's clever contrast.

And, of course, one of the most famous examples of antithesis in American literature comes from Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address:

Both parties deprecated war, but one of them would *make* war rather than let the nation survive, and the other would *accept* war rather than let it perish, and the war came.

Parallelism uses the same grammatical structure for similar elements, and it helps readers understand the logical equivalence the writer gives to the parallel elements:

- **Parallelism of words:** Exercise physiologists argue that body-pump aerobics sessions benefit a person's heart and lungs, muscles and nerves, and joints and cartilage.
- **Parallelism of phrases:** Exercise physiologists argue that body-pump aerobics sessions help a person breathe more effectively, move with less discomfort, and avoid injury.
- **Parallelism of clauses:** Exercise physiologists argue that body-pump aerobics is the most efficient exercise class, that body-pump participants show greater gains in stamina than participants in comparable exercise programs, and that body-pump aerobics is less expensive in terms of equipment and training needed to lead or take classes.

Each of these three parallel schemes, by the way, is also called a **zeugma**, a figure in which more than one item in a sentence is governed by a single word, usually a verb. You see that the verb for these sentences is *argue*.

Antithesis points out to the reader differences between two juxtaposed ideas rather than similarities. Here are three antitheses (that's the plural spelling):

- **Antithesis of words:** When distance runners reach the state they call the zone, they find themselves mentally *engaged yet detached*.
- **Antithesis of phrases:** When distance runners reach the state they call the zone, they find themselves mentally engaged *with their physical surroundings yet detached from moment-to-moment concerns about their conditioning*.
- **Antithesis of clauses:** When distance runners reach the state they call the zone, they find that they are empirically engaged *with their physical surroundings, yet they are also completely detached from moment-to-moment concerns about their conditioning*.

A famous example of antithesis in clauses is "To err is human; to forgive, divine."

Another scheme like antithesis is an **antimetabole** (anti-muh-TI-boh-lee), in which words are repeated in different grammatical forms. Well-known examples of antimetabole are:

When the going gets tough, the tough get going (adjective becomes noun; noun becomes verb)

You can take the kid out of the country, but you can't take the country out of the kid.

**Schemes Involving Interruption** Sometimes a writer wants to interrupt the flow of a passage in order to provide information, give an insight, or make a comment to readers. Two schemes are especially useful for this purpose—parenthesis and appositive.

**Parenthesis** Parenthesis (the same word as the singular of parentheses, the punctuation marks) allows for this kind of interruption. Suppose you're writing a letter to a friend about your growing interest in sports. Here is a parenthesis embedded in a sentence from this letter:

Sports night at the school always brings out the would-be jocks—who would expect any different?—ready to show that they're potentially as good as the varsity players.

Notice that this parenthesis is set off by dashes, the punctuation marks commonly used to set off an interruptive word, phrase, or clause. When you use dashes to set off an interruption, be sure to include them at the beginning and the end of the interruption. A parenthesis, however, can also be set off from the remainder of the sentences with parentheses:

Sports night at the school always brings out the would-be jocks (who would expect any different?) ready to show that they're potentially as good as the varsity players.

Notice that a parenthesis in the form of a question, as in the example above, needs to be punctuated with a question mark. The same would hold true for an exclamatory word, phrase, or clause:

When sp  
jocks ge

but not for a simple de

Sports r  
dunk—t  
would-b

**Appositive** A second positive. An appositive side by side, and the se

David E  
"our Fo

**Schemes Involving**  
from a sentence so tha  
ers will pay close atten  
this purpose are ellip

**Ellipsis** An ellipsis  
the overall context of

In time  
a way a

The phrase and he to  
the verb.

**Asyndeton** An asy  
From Lincoln's Getty  
people, for the peop

**Schemes Involvin**  
because saying some  
tion is not being rep  
to pay closer atten  
spond to the writer's  
schemes involving th

• **Alliteration** is t  
middle of two or

Fours  
this c

• **Assonance** is t  
more adjacent w

Ye sh  
That

When sports night is canceled—oh, sorrowful day!—all the would-be jocks get a case of show-off withdrawal.

but not for a simple declaratory sentence:

Sports night supervisors have to stop people from trying to slam dunk—this is the ultimate showboat move—for fear that one of the would-be jocks might hurt himself.

**Appositive** A second scheme useful for setting off additional material is an appositive. An **appositive** is a construction in which two coordinating elements are set side by side, and the second explains or modifies the first.

David Brooks calls Franklin, inventor, entrepreneur, and statesman, “our Founding Yuppie.”

**Schemes Involving Omission** A writer occasionally needs to omit material from a sentence so that its rhythm is heightened or accelerated and so that the readers will pay close attention to the potentially dramatic effect. Two schemes useful for this purpose are ellipsis and asyndeton.

**Ellipsis** An **ellipsis** is any omission of words, the meaning of which is provided by the overall context of the passage:

In times of conflict, if you talk to your friend, and he to you, you'll find a way around the fight.

The phrase *and he to you* omits “talk,” and it highlights the connection by omitting the verb.

**Asyndeton** An **asyndeton** is an omission of conjunctions between related clauses. From Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address: “... and that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth.”

**Schemes Involving Repetition** Writers are often warned not to be repetitive because saying something several times doesn’t seem to advance a point. But repetition is not being repetitive. Repeating sounds or words can actually lead the reader to pay closer attention to the prose and to recognize the writer’s purpose and respond to the writer’s voice more clearly. You’ll likely be familiar with some of the schemes involving the artful use of repetition.

- **Alliteration** is the repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning or in the middle of two or more adjacent words:  
Fourscore and twenty years ago our forefathers brought forth upon this continent a new nation . . .
- **Assonance** is the repetition of vowel sounds in the stressed syllables of two or more adjacent words:  
Ye shall say they all have passed away  
That noble race and brave

- **Anaphora** (uh-NA-fuh-ruh) is the repetition of the same group of words at the beginning of successive clauses:

We cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow . . .

- **Epistrophe** (e-PIS-truh-fee) is the repetition of the same group of words at the end of successive clauses:

Yes I am, I am Indian, Indian, I am.

- **Anadiplosis** (a-nuh-duh-PLOH-suhs) is the repetition of the last word of one clause at the beginning of the following clause:

Watch your thoughts, they become words; watch your words, they become actions; watch your actions, they become habits.

- **Climax** is the repetition of words, phrases, or clauses in order of increasing number or importance:

Excellent athletes need to be respectful of themselves, their teammates, their schools, and their communities.

Anadiplosis and climax are closely enough related that some teachers of the figures refer to the two schemes together as *climbing the ladder*.

**Tropes Involving Comparisons** The most important trope in this category, the one upon which all the others in this group are based, is **metaphor**, an implied comparison between two things that, on the surface, seem dissimilar but that, upon further examination, share common characteristics:

My life it stood, a loaded gun.

Clearly, a life and a gun are dissimilar. Yet the metaphor here suggests that life is awaiting and that it's potentially violent or tempestuous. A **simile** makes the comparison visible.

My life seemed like a loaded gun, waiting to be fired in some field.

Notice that this sentence, which begins with a simile, ends with an **implied metaphor**—it continues the metaphor by implying the consequences.

Other tropes involving comparison include the following:

- **Synecdoche** (suh-NEK-duh-kee): A part of something is used to refer to the whole.

I would not keep in a cage

A wing that would be free

- **Metonymy** (muh-TAH-nuh-mee): An entity is referred to by one of its attributes.

I hear America singing.

- **Personification**: Inanimate objects are given human characteristics.

You are loosed from your moorings, and are free.

- **Periphrasis** (puh-RI-frah-suhs): A descriptive word or phrase is used to refer to a proper name.

Hog butcher to the world

**Tropes Involving Word Play** Some writers like to entertain (and even enlighten) their readers simply by playing with the sounds and meanings of words. The most common trope for doing so is the **pun**, a word that suggests two of its

meanings or the well deserved. Bu

The a fo

Two additional w

- **Anthimeria** substitutes fo

Wh to l

- **Onomatopoe** to their mean

Oh

**Tropes Involvi** can help readers trope of overstate

He while the trope fo

Sh for

**Tropes Involvi** techniques that s ideas in strategic

- **Irony**: Word

Th the

When irony has a

- **Oxymoron**: near each othe

Wh fe

- **Rhetorical q** move the dev

Are

## ACTIVITY

You've seen literature you're trope or schem Franklin and the effect on your

meanings or the meaning of a homonym. Puns have a bad reputation—and it's often well deserved. But sometimes a good pun can really attract a reader's attention:

The tipped-but-caught third strike, ending a bases-loaded rally, was a foul most foul.

Two additional word-play tropes are:

- **Anthimeria** (an-thuh-MEER-ee-uh): One part of speech, usually a verb, substitutes for another, usually a noun.  
When the Little Leaguers lost the championship, they needed just to have a good cry before they could feel okay about their season.
- **Onomatopoeia** (ahn-u-mah-tuh-PEE-uh): Sounds of the words used are related to their meaning.  
Oh, the tintinnabulation of the bells

**Tropes Involving Overstatement or Understatement** A writer, ironically, can help readers see an idea or point clearly by overstating it or understating it. The trope of overstatement is called **hyperbole** (hye-PUHR-boh-lee):

He couldn't make that shot again if he tried a million times.

while the trope for understatement is called **litotes** (LYE-tuh-tees):

Shutting out the opponents for three straight games is no small feat for a goaltender.

**Tropes Involving the Management of Meaning** Some tropes can be seen as techniques that simply allow a writer to play with the meaning and development of ideas in strategic ways.

- **Irony:** Words are meant to convey the opposite of their literal meaning.  
Their center is over seven feet tall—where do they come up with these little pipsqueaks?
- When irony has a particularly biting or bitter tone, it is called **sarcasm**.
- **Oxymoron:** Words that have apparently contradictory meanings are placed near each other.  
When you have to face your best friend in competition, whoever wins feels an aching pleasure.
- **Rhetorical question:** A question is designed not to secure an answer but to move the development of an idea forward and suggest a point.  
Aren't I a woman?

### ACTIVITY

### Analyzing Figures of Rhetoric

You've seen lots of examples of figures above, many of them coming from the literature you're reading in this book. See if you can find another example of a trope or scheme in either Lincoln's Second Inaugural or Isaacson's "Benjamin Franklin and the Invention of America" and explain how that figure produces an effect on your reading.