

Analyzing a Writer's Style with AI

Why?

This lesson encourages students to actively engage with and analyze literary style, helping them develop critical reading and thinking skills. By using generative AI to dissect and discuss an author's style, students gain insights into how language and stylistic choices shape meaning and influence readers. This analytical experience also enhances their writing skills by giving them the chance to model their writing after authors.

Materials Needed

- Excerpts from a specific writer's works
- Computers with internet access
- Projector and screen for class demonstrations
- Notebooks and pens for student notes

Time needed

Approximately 30 - 90 minutes, depending on complexity of passages analyzed

Objectives

Students will be able to

- Identify key stylistic features of a selected author's writing.
- Analyze the impact of these stylistic features on the reader.

Key Concepts & Vocabulary

- **Stylistic Analysis** - The study of how authors use language and literary devices to convey meaning.

Lesson

While this would likely be considered a lesson for Language Arts class, it may be used with text from any subject area. It may be useful to analyze the characteristics of a text related to different subjects. For example, in Science class, students could analyze a scientific report to discern the underlying purpose and intended audience of the research. In History class, students might explore a primary source to understand the author's perspective and the impact of their historical context on their writing.

1. **Introduction:** Based on the subject being studied, introduce the works that will be analyzed in this lesson.
2. **Demonstration:** Show how to use a generative AI chatbot by inputting a text excerpt and asking for an analysis of stylistic elements. Display this process using a projector.
 - a. Model the type of analysis students will be asking for. Here are some examples:
 - b. *"Describe the narrative style and tone of this short story. What do these elements reveal about the characters, setting, and underlying themes?"*
 - c. *"Analyze the style of this excerpt from a scientific report. What does the*

language used suggest about the purpose and target audience of the document?"

- d. *"Evaluate the writing style of this primary source from World War II. What can the language and tone tell us about the author's perspective and the historical context?"*
3. **Activity:** Students will work in pairs to input different excerpts from the author's works into a generative AI chatbot, such as ChatGPT. Each group will note down the stylistic elements identified by the AI.
 - a. Make sure that students have access to the text so they may copy and paste it into the chatbot.
 - b. Consider having students select different texts to analyze. This could be accomplished by having pairs copy different parts of the same text, or different texts by the same author.
 - c. It might also be interesting to have pairs use texts from different authors who wrote in the same style, or on the same topic.
4. **Analysis:** Students use follow-up questions to help them analyze the style of the author in more specific terms.
 - a. Students may ask the generative AI to provide examples of specific text in the excerpt that demonstrates the style mentioned in the first reply.
 - b. They may also ask for more specifics about the author's choice of specific words in the passages.
 - c. See example at the end of this lesson plan for the process of asking about style and then analyzing in more depth.
5. **Presentations:** Each pair presents their findings, explaining the stylistic elements identified by ChatGPT, and discussing how these elements contribute to the author's distinctive style.
6. (Optional) **Writing Task:** Students individually write a short text emulating the author's style, using the stylistic elements discussed.

Discussion Questions

- What stylistic elements are most characteristic of the author's work?
- How do these elements affect the way we understand or interpret the text?
- Can you identify any patterns in how the author uses these stylistic devices?
- How did the AI's analysis help you understand the author's style more deeply?
- Were there any surprises in what the AI identified?
- How might the insights gained from this AI analysis affect the way you read or write texts in the future?

Supplemental Activity Ideas

- **Writing Workshop:** Students refine their creative writing pieces inspired by the author's style and share them in a future class, receiving peer feedback.
- **Comparative Analysis:** Assign students to use generative AI to compare the style of the chosen author with another author, analyzing similarities and differences in their writing techniques.
- **Author Study Presentation:** Students could create a multimedia presentation

about the author's life, works, and influence on literature, highlighting how specific historical or personal experiences shaped their style.

Sources to Learn More

- Suggestions on how to describe style in writing:
<https://www.grammarly.com/blog/writing-styles/>
- Several different comparisons to describe a writer's style:
<https://www.dailywritingtips.com/writing-styles/>

Example Analysis

User: Describe the narrative style and tone of this excerpt from 'Farewell to Manzanar' by Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston. What do these elements reveal about the characters, setting, and underlying themes?

ChatGPT: The narrative style of this excerpt is reflective and descriptive, providing a deep introspection into the psychological impact of internment. The tone is solemn and poignant, marked by an undercurrent of bitterness and resignation. These elements reveal a setting charged with tension and despair, deeply affecting the characters' sense of identity and power. The text highlights themes of injustice, loss of dignity, and the struggle for self-preservation within an oppressive environment.

User: What are some specific phrases that show those characteristics?

ChatGPT:

1. Reflective and Descriptive Style:

"Papa never said more than three or four sentences about his nine months at Fort Lincoln." This phrase sets a tone of reticence and restraint, indicating deep-seated emotions and memories that are difficult to express.

2. Solemn and Poignant Tone:

"For a man raised in Japan, there was no greater disgrace." The gravity of this statement underscores the cultural and personal impact of the accusation of disloyalty, contributing to a solemn tone.

3. Theme of Injustice and Loss of Dignity:

"He had no rights, no home, no control over his own life." This blunt listing of deprivations starkly outlines the injustice faced by the characters, reinforcing themes of powerlessness and loss of dignity.

User: If I were to write a paragraph using a similar style, how could I approach that task?

ChatGPT: To write a paragraph that emulates the reflective, descriptive style with a solemn and poignant tone found in "Farewell to Manzanar," follow these steps:

1. Choose a Theme with Depth: Select a theme that involves emotional complexity or historical weight, such as loss, injustice, or resilience.
2. Set the Emotional Tone: Decide on the emotional undercurrent of the paragraph—this could be a sense of injustice, sorrow, or subdued anger. Reflect these emotions through the choice of words and sentence structures.
3. Use Evocative Descriptions: Incorporate descriptive language that paints vivid pictures and evokes strong emotions. Focus on how the characters internalize their experiences.
4. Incorporate Introspection: Allow the narrator or characters to reflect on their circumstances or past events. This introspection can reveal deeper insights into their thoughts and feelings.