## **English III - Textual Analysis: *The Four-Step Plan* *Phillips***

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| Step One: Subject & Diction |
| 1. **Read the passage** (twice when possible with nonfiction OR fiction & *always* [aloud when possible] with poetry.) When possible, **underline or highlight** words that appear significant or are confusing to you and underline or highlight expressions that are particularly well-phrased or that communicate an important point in the text. **Consider making marginal notes** as questions or ideas come to you. 2. Next, **list ideas** explaining your **first impression** of the writing, your initial reaction describing the **purpose** & **audience** along with the **subject** (Hint: the title often helps with this step). First impressions indicate your initial response to the writing, which may include whether or not you actually like and/or understand the passage or if you have questions about the text. 3. Examine the **diction** (word choice) by **listing words** that appear to demonstrate a pattern (the pattern could be positively or negatively charged words OR words connected to the poem’s apparent **subject**). Remember that some words have **connotations** (implied meanings) in addition to their **denotation** (literal definition). |
| Step Two: Speaker, Tone, and Mood |
| 1. The **speaker** is the voice or persona assumed by the writer. This voice is often obvious in prose, though some writers may utilize irony or sarcasm in a fashion that isn’t evident at first glance. Sometimes poets will speak directly to us, the readers, or they may assume a posture of performance like an actor in a play. For instance, a young female poet might assume the persona of a very old man, some fictional figure from literature or history, or an abstract ideal or intangible emotion like love, courage, or fear. 2. **Tone** is the attitude or emotion evident in the speaker’s voice relative to subject of the writing. This attitude can be observed in the patterns in diction, how he or she describes the subject of the text, and/or how the speaker chooses to address the reader. 3. The **mood** is the emotional condition resulting from the speaker’s tone or attitude. Mood is the feeling of the text created by the tone, but the mood is not necessarily the emotions felt by the reader while he or she reads the text.   **Patterns in diction** from step one will offer clues about tone and mood, and the mood is generally thought to be conditional upon the poet’s tone. Discovering the speaker, tone, and mood can unlock the meaning of any text. You should **list** ideas about the speaker and **list** descriptive words/patterns that effectively capture the dominant tone and mood, along with any shifts in tone and/or mood as applicable. The writer’s **punctuation** and **syntax** (sentence structure) may also offer some help in this area of analysis. |
| Step Three: Figurative Language and Allusions |
| Identification and analysis of figurative language, along with allusions and other rhetorical strategies, is essential to understanding any piece of writing. Figurative language often holds what students call the *hidden meaning* of a text. Attempting to decode the figurative language or looking for patterns in rhetorical devices will help you understand the overall meaning of the text. Also, remember to read your **footnotes** when they are provided. These are of particular use in decoding allusions. Be mindful of the following devices as you read any text:  **Allusions** are references to historical, literary, or religious writings or familiar people places & places.  **Metaphors** and **similes** make comparisons between very different things. The comparisons are sometimes **extended** over many lines or are **metaphysical conceits** that compare complex spiritual ideas to everyday things.  **Personification** gives human characteristics to inanimate objects, ideas, or feelings.  **Rhetorical & Literary Strategies:** Though it is not practical to present a comprehensive list on this page, here are a few concepts writers call upon and that you should expect to see in effective writing: **rhetorical appeal(s)** [ethos, logos, & pathos] must always be considered with arguments. **Analogy**, **colloquial language**, **hyperbole**, **irony**, **juxtaposition**, & **paradox** are also devices that you will often see. Though this list is by no means exhaustive, learning to recognize and evaluate the effect of these devices is essential for success in English III. Mastery of these reading skills will our goal this semester.  **List the examples of notable literary devices** (focus in on the devices that appear most important), record the **line number or paragraph number** for each device, and offer a **brief explanation** for examples (as applicable). |
| Step Four: Evaluation of the Overall Message – Your ACE Paragraph |
| **What is ACE?** A strategy for composing effective constructed responses for short answer and essay prompts.  **A**rticulate a Thesis: Who is the **audience**? What’s the **overall purpose or message** of the passage or poem? After completing prewriting steps 1 – 3, you have gathered enough evidence to formulate an educated guess (hypothesis) about the purpose of the passage or poem.  **C**ite Evidence: Your paragraph must present or cite evidence from the passage or poem that supports your thesis.  **E**valuate & Explain: Your paragraph should describe and explain the link between your thesis and the evidence you have cited from the passage or poem. You should consult your prewriting notes about **subject**, **diction**, **speaker**, **tone**, **mood**, and the dominant **devices** evident in the passage or poem to cite your evidence and to complete your evaluation.  *We will attempt this note-taking strategy in & out of class, but you should* ***TRY*** *to complete these notes on your own.*  *The passage or poem will ultimately mean more to you when you engage the text independently.*  *Your paragraph response should always be at least four sentences.* |

*Sample Format*- Textual Analysis: The Four-Step Plan

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| **Title:** | **Author:** |

**Step One:**

Subject Diction

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| --- | --- |
| List ideas about audience, subject, and/or purpose of text: | List notable word choice patterns : |

**Step Two:**

Speaker 🡪 Tone 🡪 Mood

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Briefly describe: | List descriptive words: | List descriptive words: |

**Step Three:**

Location:

Paragraph/Line# Device(s) Brief explanation (as applicable)

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Note location of devices: | List devices noted: |  |

**Step Four: ACE Paragraph**

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