

SOAPSTONE—An Acronym for Analyzing Texts for Point of View

Adapted from an AP ListServe adaptation of a College Board Resource

Rhetorical Elements

Subject: The general topic, content, and ideas contained in the text. This can be stated in a few words or a phrase.

Occasion: Where and when did the story take place? In what context. What is the rhetorical occasion of the text? Is it a memory, a description, an observation, a valedictory, an argument, a diatribe, an elegy, a declaration, a critique, etc.? Note the larger occasion, that is, the *broad* issue which is the center of ideas and emotions. Also note the immediate occasion, that is, the issue that catches the writer's attention and triggers a response.

Audience: Toward whom is the text directed? Does the author identify an audience? Is it one individual, a group, many groups? What assumptions can you make about the intended audience?

Purpose: What is the speaker's reason for writing the text? Considering the purpose is important so that the reader can examine the writer's argument and the logic of it. In what ways does the author convey the message of the purpose? What is the message? How does the speaker try to spark a reaction in the audience? How is the text supposed to make the audience feel? What is its intended effect?

Speaker: (The voice telling the story). Is someone identified as the speaker? What assumptions can you make about the speaker? (e.g., age, gender, class, emotional state, etc.)

The author and the speaker are not necessarily the same. The author may tell the story from many different points of view. So who is telling the story? How do you know this? How does the writer present his/her narration? Assess the character of the speaker. These are crucial considerations. Are the author and speaker a different gender. Do not be confused by the gender of the author and assume the speaker must be the same. Let the facts lead you to the speaker. What does the speaker believe? Do not assume that the author believes what the speaker believes.

If the text is non-fiction, do not simply identify the speaker/author by name. Include important facts about the speaker that will help the reader (the audience) make judgments about the speaker's position (the speaker's point of view).

Stylistic and Linguistic Elements: syntax, language, literary devices, imagery, diction, detail.

Tone: What is the author's attitude toward the subject? What emotional sense do you take from the piece? The *spoken word* can convey the speaker's attitude and help impart meaning through tone of voice. However, with the *written word*, tone extends meaning

past the literal. How does the diction (choice of words), point to tone? How does syntax (sentence construction) point to tone? Finally, how does imagery (vivid descriptions that appeal to the senses) point to tone?

Organization: How is the text organized? How does the writer arrange his/her content?

Narrative Style: How does the writer tell the “story” ? What does the writer reveal? What does he/she conceal? What does (s)he invert/subvert? Is the writing “dramatic,” almost play-like in its use of dialogue or theatrical conventions ? How does the writer treat time?

Evidence: What kind of diction dominates the text? What is the source of the images (e.g, nature, weapons, law, science, theology, love, architecture, etc.). What do sound devices contribute to the work?