

Descriptive Writing vs. Analytical Writing

Descriptive Writing:

- ✓ Expository and informative.
- ✓ Seeks to present the facts or details, or to recount events to the reader, but not interpret their meaning.
- ✓ Observes and reports the characteristics of a person, place, thing, or phenomenon.
- ✓ Identifies the “who”, the “what”, and the “where”.
- ✓ Explains a theory or idea.
- ✓ Does not evaluate the “why”, the “how”, or the “so what?”

Purposes of Descriptive Writing:

- ✓ To provide context or background information.
- ✓ Informative: to provide factual detail.
- ✓ Expository: to explain something.
- ✓ Examples: newspapers, reviews, summaries, synopses, popular journalism.

Analytical Writing:

- ✓ Evaluative and critical.
- ✓ Seeks to go beyond the description of facts or details to the reader, and instead evaluates and investigates their significance.
- ✓ Demonstrates the “why”, the “how”, and the “so what?”.
- ✓ Interprets the significance and meaning of the “who”, the “what”, and the “where” (identified in the description).
- ✓ Engages with and applies theoretical concepts.
- ✓ Evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of ideas.
- ✓ Unpacks the significance of evidence.
- ✓ Synthesizes and engages with sources to support and create an overall argument.

Purposes of Analytical Writing:

- ✓ To uncover the deeper meaning of specific ideas or evidence.
- ✓ To critically illustrate the connections between diverse ideas or evidence.
- ✓ Evaluative: assesses the strengths and weaknesses of a particular issue or approach.
- ✓ Examples: Academic essays, scholarly articles and monographs, literature reviews, the discussion section of reports, some longform and investigative journalism.

Analytic Writing Tips

Ask Yourself:

- What does this evidence mean? What is its significance?
- How does this point relate back to my central argument?
- What is the connection between these different ideas?
- What does this theory or methodology reveal about this particular topic?
- What is the relevance of this evidence or this point?

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Examples

	Descriptive Writing	Analytical Writing
Writing about events.	<p>States what happened.</p> <p>On the 16th of October 1962, a 13-day confrontation called the Cuban Missile Crisis began between the USA and the Soviet Union.</p>	<p>Identifies the significance.</p> <p>The 13-day confrontation called the Cuban Missile Crisis, which began on the 16th of October 1962 between the USA and the Soviet Union, was one of the leading causes of the deterioration of Cuban-Soviet relations.</p>
Writing about theories.	<p>Explains what a theory says.</p> <p>Affect theory is an analytic description of emotional experience, which is different from the phenomena of emotion itself.</p>	<p>Shows why something is relevant or suitable.</p> <p>In literary studies, affect theory is fundamentally concerned with addressing and understanding the charged emotional impulses that exist beneath language proper; in essence, affect theory attempts to bring to the surface that which is largely unarticulated</p>
Writing about details.	<p>Lists details.</p> <p>Painters during the Dutch Golden Age depicted a prolific number of portraits and scenes of everyday life, and they used techniques such as chiaroscuro, as well as props such as personal possessions.</p>	<p>Evaluates the relative significance of details.</p> <p>The proclivity towards techniques like chiaroscuro, as well as the use of props, throughout the Dutch Golden Age, produced paintings that imbued everyday life and subjects with both visual and narrative symbols of sin. These paintings thus reveal the prevalence of the era's deeply Calvinist undertones.</p>