

# Writing Assignment 1 – Contextual Analysis

For this assignment you'll pick a text that we haven't analyzed and write two related analyses of the stylistic elements of that text. In picking texts, we will stick to the general theme of the course since our discussions of those texts will give you the most fuel for discussing the contexts and challenges that influence your text's style.

In this paper you will perform two preliminary tasks, one that answers the question "what?" and another than answers "why?":

1. Describe the primary feel of your selection (the what). This "feel" is the relationship between the style and the effects. Keep in mind that:
  1. The "feel" will not be homogenous but is likely to change within any passage and definitely across passages. This change is interesting and has to be noted.
  2. The "feel" is not always immediately apparent and is somewhat contingent on your experience and approach to it. This fact is usually essential to your argument: what does your approach and context do to the effect?
  3. The aim is NOT to convey the same feeling in your own writing. So in describing here we don't meet imitating (we're practicing that elsewhere). Rather, try to come up with an analytic language to describe the feeling and then just give us some of the text of note so that we can feel it too.
2. Explain *why* the effect is important or interesting by considering questions of context, either at the time of writing, now, or both. Note that this is likely to require research, although some texts will contain meta-reflection that can be used as evidence. Possible approaches:
  1. Consider context internal to the text: how does the style and this effect relate to (alter, become essential for) what is being said or described.
  2. Consider the cultural contexts at the time of writing. What was going on that might demand this effect?
  3. Consider elements of authorship: what do we know about that author's approach and aim that would help us understand these effects? (While author intention is not to be taken as authoritative, it can help clarify the stylistic approach as long as you also attend to the text first and foremost).
  4. Consider the rhetorical challenges that your text might be addressing in terms of audience preconceptions, resistances, hopes, experiences, etc.
  5. Consider the current setting for reading this text, particularly in how it might alter, change, or perhaps need the effect described in (1).
  6. **Required:** Use the concepts we will discuss in class (motives, levels of style, conventions, and footings) to connect these contexts with the stylistic feel.