

Stylistic Analyses

Throughout the semester, you will write *ten* brief analyses (about 300 words each) of specific stylistic choices in some of the works covered in class. You may choose whichever works you want to analyze, but be sure to have ten analyses by the end of the semester.

For each analysis, you should pick a few lines from one of the assigned texts, then focus on a particular linguistic detail in them (a surprising word choice, an arresting metaphor, a complex allusion, a striking use of rhythm), and offer your insights into what that specific stylistic nuance does for a reader.

Begin by quoting the text you will analyze. Then start your analysis with a clear thesis statement, letting your reader know what element of the passage you will be analyzing. Develop the analysis point by point with frequent reference to the text.

Everything you say in your analysis should relate directly to the actual words of the text. Don't get sidetracked; stick with the words. Think about how the author has shaped and arranged the language. I am looking for fine-grained analysis, not mushy generalizations.

You will find a sample Stylistic Analysis below that you can use as a model for your own analyses.

Your Analyses will not receive letter grades. I will grade them on a Credit/No Credit basis. If you submit all ten analyses, you will make 100% on the assignment.

Post your Stylistic Analyses in the Journal component of Blackboard. *Please DO NOT submit your analyses as attached files.*

To accommodate the flexibility of a distance learning class, I have not set deadlines for individual analyses. I encourage you, however, to submit them at regular intervals throughout the semester rather than waiting till the last minute to write and submit them all. I will not accept any analyses after the final deadline; any not submitted by then receive a zero.

DUE DATE:

- FINAL DEADLINE: **April 27**

Sample Stylistic Analysis

When Mr. Bilbo Baggins of Bag End announced that he would celebrate his eleventy-first birthday with a party of special magnificence, there was much talk and excitement in Hobbiton.

In the opening sentence of *The Lord of the Rings*, J. R. R. Tolkien uses the word “eleventy-first” rather than saying “one hundred and eleventh” to refer to Bilbo’s age. What does this unusual word choice do for a reader?

One thing it doesn’t do is confuse the reader. Although odd, the word “eleventy-first” is not at all hard to understand. Even though we’ve never seen or heard this word before, it’s so clearly parallel to how we express other numbers (like “twenty-first” or “forty-second”) that we easily grasp its meaning.

But “eleventy-first” does take a bit more mental processing than the standard form of the number would. Why make the reader work (even a tiny bit) harder? That’s part of the high fun of poetic language; a metaphor, for instance, is like a little puzzle that our brains get to solve and feel clever for solving (“How exactly is Juliet like the sun?”). The word “eleventy-first” gives the reader a little hit of that literary pleasure.

Finally, in much the same way that slang or professional jargon creates a sense of community and belonging, the word “eleventy-first” draws a reader into the world of the story. We feel like insiders who know the lingo. Tolkien is famous for the rigorously constructed languages and names he invented, but even the more modest coining of a word like “eleventy-first” helps to create the sense of a credible fantasy world.

The word “eleventy-first,” a new but easily grasped word, subtly helps to set the tone for the story. It delights us and helps immerse us in the fantasy world of Middle-earth.