



Sample Activity

from the Pre-AP workshop

Pre-AP[®]: Strategies in English – The Five-S Strategy for Passage Analysis

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Pre-AP: Strategies in English – The Five-S Strategy for Passage Analysis Sample Activity

Goal

The goal of Section 1 is for participants to apply three basic literary terms used in passage analysis to a short poem in order to gain a deeper sense of how the rigorous use of such terminology through close reading can focus and deepen analysis.

Section Overview

The purpose of the introductory activity is to:

- Introduce the members of each table to one another
- Illustrate possibilities for the use of three terms commonly used in passage analysis
- Engage participants in the close reading of a poem
- Share ideas about diction, syntax, and imagery

Three of the most important terms for discussing any passage are **diction**, **syntax**, and **imagery**.

Carefully read the following poem, "Opportunity," by Edward Rowland Sill [in *American Poetry: The Nineteenth Century*, vol. 2 (New York: Library of America, 1993)].

This I beheld, or dreamed it in a dream: --
There spread a cloud of dust along a plain;
And underneath the cloud, or in it, raged
A furious battle, and men yelled, and swords
Shocked upon swords and shields. A prince's banner
Wavered, then staggered backward, hemmed by foes.
A craven hung along the battle's edge,
And thought, "Had I a sword of keener steel --
That blue blade that the king's son bears, -- but this
Blunt thing -- !" he snapt and flung it from his hand,
And lowering crept away and left the field.
Then came the king's son, wounded, sore bestead,
And weaponless, and saw the broken sword,
Hilt-buried in the dry and trodden sand,
And ran and snatched it, and with battle-shout
Lifted afresh he hewed his enemy down,
And saved a great cause that heroic day.

Circle words that you think are significant or important and ask yourself why this use of **diction** is important.

Underline places in the passage that contain significant **syntax** and ask yourself why it is important. What does it *do*?

Put an asterisk (*) over words or phrases that evoke **imagery**. Ask yourself what creates this imagery.

Pick just one example of any of the three terms above that you think is the most important for understanding the passage. Your one element may be a word (or words) with an important tone or connotation (**diction**), some sentence structure or punctuation that creates significant **syntax**, or a cluster of words that creates **imagery**.

Share your ideas with the members of your group. You may gain new ideas and perspectives from your discussions.