

Says/Does/Because

Argument Line of Reasoning Analysis
AP Capstone Seminar

One of the fundamental skills you will need to complete successful analyses of texts is the ability to recognize how the parts of a piece of writing come together to make meaning. This means that, when reading a text closely, you must consider what is *does* as well as what is *says*. When you do this, you are thinking about how language *functions*, a dimension that's distinct from what language *says*. And, ultimately, by doing so, you can get more easily uncover the author's purpose, or the so *what* or *because* aspect of an author's argument.

Says statements summarize the text, articulating the content—what a text says.

Does statements describe the construction, organization, and form, with as little reference to content as possible—what a text does.

Because statements discuss the writer's purpose in employing those techniques— why he/she does it (to what effect).

A *says/does* analysis results in a paragraph-by-paragraph descriptive outline.

Here are some words and phrases that describe what the language of a particular text or portion of it might do:

describes	exemplifies	traces
narrates	offers a hypothesis	provides an example
lists	supports	synthesizes
itemizes	introduces	elaborates
explains	claims	develops
compares	states a proposition	deepens
illustrates	provides history	contrasts
evaluates	categorizes	emphasizes
cites	predicts	contradicts
	reasons	

Basically, Says/does/because analysis involves observing and commenting on the differences between the content (*says*), the form and function (*does*), and the purpose (*because*). It is a way to de-construct a text in order to see how the parts fit together.

It's often harder to write *does* statements than *says* statements. Most of you have been asked many times to write content summaries, so *says* statements probably won't seem too odd or strange.

Does statements are a bit more elusive. A reference to content in a *does* statement should be generalized or referred to as a type. So the key to writing *does* sentences is to keep them different from the *says* sentences—keep them from even mentioning the content of the paragraph. Thus, you shouldn't be able to tell from a *does* sentence whether the paragraph is talking about cars or ice cream.

Here is an example of a does sentence that slides into being a says sentence: “This paragraph gives an example of how women’s liberation has affected men more than it has women.” To make it a real does sentence, remove any mention of the ideas or content and talk only about function: “This paragraph gives an example” would do. Or perhaps better, “This paragraph gives an example designed to surprise the reader.”

How to begin

- Divide the essay or story into workable chunks. A “chunk” is about a paragraph, but it could be two. It should be about 4-10 sentences in length.
- SAYS: For each “chunk” summarize the main points in either bullet form or sentence style. Try to reduce a 10-sentence “chunk” to about 3 sentences.
- DOES: Next, write about 1-2 sentences using accurate and well-chosen verbs and rhetorical terms to describe what the paragraph does for the reader...for example...introduces the topic...introduces a new point, expands the point of the previous paragraph, etc.
- BECAUSE: Try to write 2-3 sentences assessing and evaluating why the author has chosen to do what he/she has done....consider purpose and the author’s ultimate goal.
- When possible, comment on the intended and/or actual effect that this section has or will probably have on the reader.