

## Say, Do, Mean

*What does the author Say? What does the author do? And, What does it mean?*

The following summary exercise can be used to assist students as they learn how to analyze an author's argument. Say, Do, Mean scaffolds some of the important elements found in a Rhetorical Précis—a summary exercise that asks students to craft a concise analysis of an argument. This activity presents three different ways to think about an argument: (1) what is the author saying?; (2) what is the author doing?; and (3) what is the meaning of the text? Isolating these ideas into three separate sections allows each to be thought and written about separately. The following describes what to include in each of the three parts.

**Part 1:** Explain what the author is saying.

In this section, introduce the source, the author, and provide comments about the author or source. In the same sentence, paraphrase or directly quote the author's main claim.

Example:

*In her essay "Don't Take Valuable Space in My School," Jenny While, a senior at El Cajon Valley High School, **argues that** students who are unmotivated and misbehaved take away from the learning environment and cause teachers to slow down and lower expectations.*

Once you have introduced the author and his or her main claim, include other essential or relevant information like main ideas, evidence, and other support.

**Part 2:** Analyze what the author is doing.

For this section, analyze what the author is doing in individual paragraphs (or in a section of text). Describe the rhetorical choices the author has made (for instance, the author shares an anecdote, reviews current research, or does some other work) and explain why the author has made these choices (usually these explanations begin with, "in order to").

Example:

*Mark Lynas **observes** the rapid decrease in glacial ice and the evaporation of lakes and streams **in order to** illustrate the devastating effects global warming is having on nature and the people who depend on it.*

There is no limit to how many rhetorical choices an author makes in one text. Identify the most significant rhetorical strategies and explain why the author is using them.

**Part 3:** Evaluate the meaning of the text.

In this last section, evaluate the significance of the text. What greater meaning can be assigned to the text? What deeper connections can we make to our own lives? This section allows the reader to move the discussion from one context to another.

## Say, Do, Mean

What does the author **say**? (What is the text about?)

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What does the author **do**? (What rhetorical choices has the author made?)

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What does the text mean? (What is significant about this text?)

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