

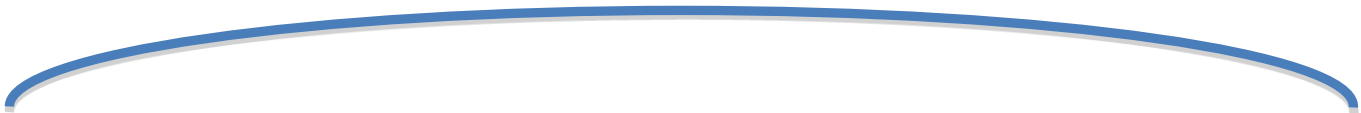
## *The Arch Method: A Strategy for Analyzing Prose Passages*

This method is designed to make sure you understand the writing task at hand, annotate for the given focus, and make enough thoughtful observations about the text so that you can write about it thoughtfully and effectively.

1. Read the **prompt** closely two times. Underline key words. For key words, write out possible synonyms or associated words. This will help you NOT parrot the prompt. Identify the *overarching* issue/s you are asked to address. This will be the “*What*” of the prompt. Then identify the “how” it will be revealed. Some prompts suggest rhetorical devices or strategies\*; but many of the newer prompts will only state “analyze how the writer uses language...” This then makes your job a bit tougher, for you must read the text to discover the rhetorical devices/strategies.

Draw an arch:

write the *overarching* issue,  
the “*what*” you are looking for



Below the arch,

write the rhetorical  
devices/strategies

2. **Read the passage once to get the gist [subject]**. As you notice rhetorical devices/strategies, make notes about them in the margin. Try to hear the voice [attitude/tone] of the **speaker** and get a sense of the personality, the age, the social class, of the individual who wrote this piece and the circumstances [occasion and audience] under which he or she wrote it.

3. **Read the passage a second time**. As you move through the passage, try to CHUNK the text into 2-4 pieces (depending on the essay). What strategy/mode of rhetoric or development is the writer using in each of the chunks? Make notes in the margins about both the specific uses of language and the overarching issue/s as you read. Label rhetorical devices as you see them. If necessary, read the passage a third time.

4. Now, you're ready to plan. **Above** the arch, write your **original** response to the overarching issue. This will answer the prompt. This step will require **critical thinking** on your part. What is the overall point the author is making? How would you describe the tone? How does the author feel toward the subject? **Below** the arch, make a list of the key rhetorical devices/strategies you plan to focus on in your essay.

5. **Now, craft a BOLD 2-3 sentence introduction** in which you respond to the overarching issue in such a way that lets the reader know that your essay is well-focused on the task at hand. Bring at least two words from above the arch into your thesis statement. *Simply parroting the prompt reveals an empty mind to the reader—your mind isn't empty, is it?* Do not feel the need to mention or list the rhetorical devices in your thesis.

\* Device=specific tools/rhetorical devices the writer uses to execute the strategy. Strategy=organizing framework or organizational approach as it pertains to the author's goal to persuade.

Adapted the AP By the Sea conference seminar hosted by Valerie Stevenson, PHHS