

A VOCABULARY FOR DESCRIBING LANGUAGE 2012-2013

TONE

TONE (POSITIVE)

Happiness

amiable*	cheery	contented*	ecstatic	elevated*
elevated*	enthusiastic	exuberant*	joyful	jubilant*
sprightly*				

Pleasure

cheerful	enraptured*	peaceful	playful	pleasant
satisfied	amused	appreciative	whimsical*	

Friendliness, Courtesy

accommodating*	approving	caressing	comforting	compassionate
confiding	cordial*	courteous	forgiving	gracious*
helpful	indulgent*	kindly	obliging*	pitying
polite	sociable	solicitous*	soothing	sympathetic
tender	tolerant	trusting		

Animation

ardent*	breathless	brisk	crisp	eager
excited	earnest*	ecstatic	energetic	exalted*
feverish*	hasty	hearty	hopeful	inspired
lively	passionate	rapturous*	vigorous*	impassioned*

Romance

affectionate	amorous*	erotic*	fanciful*	ideal*
lustful	sensual*	tender		

Tranquility

calm	hopeful	meditative*	optimistic	serene
relaxed	soothing	spiritual	dreamy	

TONE (NEUTRAL)

General

authoritative*	baffled*	ceremonial	clinical*	detached*
disbelieving	factual	formal	informative	learned
matter-of-fact	nostalgic*	objective*	questioning	reminiscent*
restrained*	sentimental*	shocked	urgent	

Rational/Logical

admonitory*	argumentative	candid*	coaxing	critical
curious	deliberate	didactic*	doubting	explanatory
frank*	incredulous*	indignant*	innocent	insinuating*
instructive	oracular*	pensive*	persuasive	pleading
preoccupied*	puzzled	sincere	studied*	thoughtful
uncertain	unequivocal*	probing*		

Self-Control

solemn*	serious	serene	simple	mild
gentle	temperate*	imperturbable*	nonchalant*	cool
wary*	cautious	prudent*		

Apathy

blasé*	bored	colorless	defeated	dispassionate*
dry*	dull	feeble*	helpless	hopeless
indifferent*	inert*	languid*	monotonous*	resigned*
sluggish*	stoical*	sophisticated*	vacant*	

TONE (HUMOR/IRONY/SARCASM)

amused	bantering*	bitter	caustic*	comical
condescending*	contemptuous*	cynical*	disdainful*	droll*
facetious*	flippant*	giddy*	humorous	insolent*
ironic*	irreverent*	joking	malicious*	mock-heroic*
mocking	mock-serious*	patronizing*	pompous*	quizzical*
ribald*	ridiculing	sarcastic	sardonic*	satiric*
scornful*	sharp	silly	taunting	teasing
whimsical*	wry*	belittling	haughty*	insulting

playful

hilarious

uproarious

TONE(NEGATIVE)

General

accusing
artificial
childish
condescending
disgruntled*
harsh
insulting
shameful
threatening

aggravated*
audacious*
choleric*
contradictory
disgusted
hateful
irritated
superficial
uninterested

agitated*
belligerent*
coarse*
critical
disinterested
hurtful
manipulative*
surly*

angry
bitter
cold
desperate
passive
indignant*
obnoxious*
testy*

arrogant
brash*
condemnatory
disappointed
furious
inflammatory*
quarrelsome

Sadness

despairing
melancholy*

despondent*
maudlin*

foreboding*
regretful

gloomy
tragic

bleak

Pain

annoyed
disgusted
mournful
sorrowful
uneasy*

biter
dismal*
pathetic
sour
vexed*

bored
fretful*
plaintive*
sulky
worried

crushed
irritable
querulous*
sullen"

disappointed
miserable
sore
troubled

Unfriendliness

accusing
disparaging*
severe

belittling
impudent*
spiteful

boorish*
pitiless
suspicious

cutting
reproving*
unsociable

derisive*
scolding
reproachful*

Anger

belligerent*
indignant*

furious
enraged

livid*

wrathful*

savage

Passion

fierce
insane
reckless

frantic*
impetuous*
wild

greedy
impulsive*

voracious*
jealous

hysterical
nervous

Arrogance/Self-Importance

boastful
pompous*
self-righteous*
domineering
knowing
resolute*

bold
supercilious*
assured
egotistical
lofty
sententious*

condescending
pedantic*
confident
imperious*
peremptory*
stiff

contemptuous
didactic*
defiant
impressive
profound*
saucy*

pretentious*
bombastic*
dignified
smug*
proud

Sorrow/Fear/Worry

aggravated
confused
grave*
ominous*
serious

anxious
depressed
hollow*
paranoid*
staid*

apologetic*
disturbed
morose*
pessimistic
enigmatic*

apprehensive*
embarrassing
nervous
poignant*

concerned
fearful
numb
remorseful*

Submission/Timidity

aghast*
awed
groveling*
obsequious*
shy
timid

alarmed
contrite*
ingratiating*
resigned
submissive*
tremulous*

ashamed
self-deprecatory*
meek*
respectful
surprised
unpretentious*

astonished
docile*
modest*
reverent*
sycophantic*
willing

astounded
fawning*
obedient]
servile*
terrified

VERBS

These verbs will be especially effective *when the subject is the author or a character*. They are excellent replacements for “be” verbs and instrumental in the formulation of *thesis* and *theme* statements. Careful use of these verbs can result in precise identification of an author’s *purpose*. Follow your teacher’s directions to categorize the verbs as *transitive*, *intransitive*, positive, negative, or neutral.

VERBS FOR LITERARY ANALYSIS

accentuates	accepts	achieves	adopts	advocates*
affects	alleviates	allows	alludes*	alters*
analyzes	approaches	argues	ascertains*	assesses*
assumes	attacks	attempts	attributes*	avoids
bases	believes	challenges	changes	characterizes
chooses	chronicles	claims	comments	compares
compels*	completes	concerns	concludes	condescends
conducts	conforms	confronts*	considers	contends*
contests*	contrasts	contributes	conveys	convinces
defines	defies	demonstrates	depicts*	describes
delineates*	despises	details	determines	develops
deviates*	differentiates*	differs	directs	disappoints
discovers	discusses	displays	disputes	disrupts*
distinguishes	distorts*	downplays	dramatizes	elevates
elicits*	emphasizes	encounters	enhances	enriches
enumerates*	envisions	evokes	excludes	expands
experiences	explains	expresses	extends	extrapolates*
fantasizes	focuses	forces	foreshadows	functions
generalizes*	guides	heightens	highlights	hints
holds	honors	identifies	illustrates	illuminates
imagines	impels*	implies*	includes	indicates
infers*	inspires	intends	interprets	interrupts
inundates*	justifies	juxtaposes*	lambasts**	laments*
lampoons*	lists	maintains	makes	manages
manipulates	minimizes	moralizes*	muses*	notes
observes	opposes	organizes	overstates	outlines
patronizes*	performs	permits	personifies*	persuades
ponders*	portrays	postulates*	prepares	presents
presumes	produces	projects	promotes	proposes
provides	qualifies*	questions	rationalizes	reasons
recalls	recites	recollects	records	recounts
reflects	refers	regards	regrets	rejects
represents	results	reveals	ridicules	satirizes*
seems	sees	selects	specifies	speculates*
states	strives*	suggests	summarizes	supplies
supports	suppresses*	symbolizes	sympathizes	traces
understands	vacillates*	values	verifies*	

VERBS TO USE INSTEAD OF EXEMPLIFIES

appears	asserts	attests to	certifies	confirms
connotes*	corroborates*	defines	demonstrates	denotes*
depicts	discloses*	elucidates*	endorses*	establishes
evinces*	exhibits	expounds*	exposes	intimates*
manifests*	points to	proves	ratifies*	relates
shows	substantiates*	suggests	typifies*	upholds
validates*				

ADJECTIVES FOR USE IN LITERARY/RHETORICAL DISCUSSION**DESCRIBING THE AUTHOR**

cultured	intellectual	erudite*	well-read	sagacious*
sensible	rational	philosophic*	analytical	imaginative
perceptive	visionary*	prophetic*	optimistic	broad-minded*
idealistic*	spiritual	orthodox*	unorthodox*	sympathetic
sophisticated*	original	whimsical*	humorous	conservative*
liberal*	progressive*	radical*	reactionary*	unprejudiced
realistic*	romantic*	shallow	superficial	bigoted
opinionated*	intolerant	hypocritical*	fanatical*	provincial*
narrow-minded*	sentimental	skeptical*	cynical*	

DESCRIBING STYLE/CONTENT

lucid*	graphic*	intelligible*	explicit*	precise
exact	concise*	succinct*	condensed*	pithy*
piquant*	aphoristic*	syllogistic*	allusive*	metaphorical
poetic	prosaic*	plain	simple	homespun*
pure	vigorous*	forceful	eloquent*	sonorous*
fluent	glib*	natural	restrained*	smooth
polished*	classical	artistic	bombastic*	extravagant
rhetorical*	turgid*	pompous*	grandiose*	obscure*
vague	diffuse*	verbose*	pedantic*	ponderous*
ungraceful	harsh	abrupt*	labored*	awkward
unpolished	crude*	vulgar*	formal	artificial
utilitarian*	humanistic*	pragmatic*	naturalistic*	impressionistic*
subjective*	melodramatic*	fanciful*	authentic*	plausible*
credible*	recondite*	controversial	mystical*	improbable*
absurd	trivial	commonplace	heretical*	

DESCRIBING DICTION

high or formal	low or informal	neutral	precise	exact
concrete	abstract*	plain	simple	homespun
esoteric*	learned	cultured	literal*	figurative*
connotative*	symbolic	picturesque*	sensuous*	literary
provincial*	colloquial*	slang*	idiomatic*	neologistic*
inexact	euphemistic*	trite*	obscure*	pedantic*
bombastic*	grotesque	vulgar*	jargon*	emotional
obtuse*	moralistic*	ordinary	scholarly	insipid*
proper	pretentious*	old-fashioned		

DESCRIBING SYNTAX

loose sentence	periodic*	balanced*	interrupted	simple*
compound*	complex*	compound-complex*	declarative*	interrogative*
imperative*	exclamatory*	telegraphic*	antithetic*	inverted*
euphonic*	rhythmical	epigrammatic*	emphatic	incoherent
rambling	tortuous	jerky	cacophonous*	monotonous

spare	austere*	unadorned*	jumbled	chaotic
obfuscating*	journalistic*	terse*	laconic*	mellifluous*
musical	lilting*	lyrical*	elegant	solid

DESCRIBING ORGANIZATION/STRUCTURE/POINT OF VIEW

spatial*	chronological	flashback	flash forward*	in media res*
step-by-step	objective*	subjective*	nostalgic*	reminiscent
contemplative*	reflective*	clinical*	impersonal*	dramatic*
omniscient*	limited*			

DESCRIBING IMAGERY (Substitute these precise adjectives for less precise ones such as *vivid*, *colorful*, and *powerful*.)

bucolic*	pastoral*	gustatory*	olfactory*	tactile*
kinetic*	kinesthetic*	sensual*	sacred	sexual
auditory*	religious	animal	war/military	chaotic

DESCRIBING CHARACTERS (Great substitutions for *pretty* and *ugly*!)

Physical Qualities

manly	virile*	robust*	hardy*	sturdy
strapping*	stalwart*	muscular	brawny*	lovely
fair	comely*	handsome	dainty	delicate
graceful	elegant	shapely	attractive	winsome*
ravishing*	dapper*	immaculate	adroit*	dexterous*
adept*	skillful	agile*	nimble*	active
lively	spirited*	vivacious*	weak	feeble*
sickly	frail	decrepit*	emaciated*	cadaverous*
effeminate*	unwomanly	hideous	homely*	course*
unkempt*	slovenly*	awkward	clumsy	ungainly*
graceless	bizarre*	grotesque	incongruous*	ghastly
repellent*	repugnant*	repulsive	odious*	invidious*
loathsome*				

Mental Qualities (Great substitutions for *smart* and *stupid*! Which comments would you like to see on your papers?)

educated	erudite*	scholarly	wise	astute*
intellectual	precocious*	capable	competent	gifted
apt*	rational	reasonable	sensible	shrewd*
prudent*	observant	clever	ingenious*	inventive
subtle*	cunning*	crafty*	wily*	unintelligent
unschooled*	unlettered*	ignorant	illiterate*	inane*
irrational	puerile*	foolish	fatuous*	vacuous*
simple	thick-skulled*	idiotic	imbecilic*	witless*
deranged*	demented*	articulate*	eloquent*	

Moral Qualities (Great substitutions for *good* and *bad*!)

idealistic*	innocent	virtuous*	faultless	righteous*
guileless*	upright*	exemplary	chaste*	pure
undefiled*	temperate*	abstentious*	austere*	ascetic*
puritanical*	truthful	honorable	trustworthy	straightforward*
decent	respectable	wicked	corrupt*	degenerate*
notorious*	vicious	incorrigible*	dissembling*	infamous*
immoral*	unprincipled*	reprobate*	depraved*	indecent*
ribald*	vulgar*	intemperate*	sensual*	dissolute*
deceitful	dishonest	unscrupulous*	dishonorable*	base*
vile*	foul*	recalcitrant*	philandering*	opportunistic*

Spiritual Qualities (More great substitutions for *good* and *bad*!)

religious	reverent	pious*	devout*	faithful
regenerate*	holy	saintly	angelic	skeptical*
agnostic*	atheistic*	irreligious*	impious*	irreverent*
profane*	sacrilegious*	materialistic	carnal*	godless
diabolic*	fiendlike*	blasphemous*	unregenerate*	altruistic*
charitable				

Social Qualities (Terrific substitutions for *nice* and *mean*!)

civil*	amicable*	contentious*	unpolished*	sullen*
tactful*	courteous	cooperative	genial*	affable*
hospitable*	gracious*	amiable*	cordial*	congenial*
convivial*	jovial*	jolly	urbane*	suave*
anti-social*	acrimonious*	quarrelsome	antagonistic*	misanthropic*
discourteous	impudent*	impolite	insolent*	ill-bred
ill-mannered	unrefined	rustic*	provincial*	boorish*
brusque*	churlish*	fawning*	obsequious*	sniveling*
grumpy	fractious*	crusty*	peevish*	petulant*
waspish*	taciturn*	reticent*	gregarious*	garrulous*

NOUNS FOR USE IN LITERARY/RHETORICAL DISCUSSION**ANALYZING CHARACTERS**

foil*	nemesis*	adversary*	protagonist*	antagonist*
confidante*	doppelganger*	narrator (unknown, reliable, naïve)		

ANALYZING STRUCTURE/ORGANIZATION/POINT OF VIEW

foreshadowing	epiphany*	analogy*	extended metaphor*	shifts
parallel structure	comparison/contrast	transition	sequence	definition
juxtaposition*	anecdote*	frame story*	arrangement	classification
categorization	placement	person (first, second, third)*		
perspective (chronological, geographic, emotional, political)*				

ANALYZING SYNTAX

repetition	parallelism	anaphora*	asyndeton*	polysyndeton*
subject*	predicate*	object*	direct object*	indirect
object*				
phrase*	clause*	infinitive*	participle*	gerund*
modifier*	dependent clause*	independent clause*	subordinate clause*	preposition*
conjunction*	interjection*	deliberate fragment*	appositive*	emphatic
appositive*	semicolon*	colon*	rhetorical question*	noun*
comma	pronoun*	proper noun*	common noun*	collective noun*
abstract noun*	concrete noun*	dialogue*	apostrophe*	chiasmus*
parenthetical expression	footnote	capitalization for effect	inversion*	antecedent*
hyphen*	dash*	active voice*	passive voice*	tense
catalogue*	compound nouns/adjectives			

IDENTIFYING GENRE/PURPOSE

novel	novella*	autobiography*	memoir*	biography
letter	sermon	speech	treatise*	abstract*
précis*	synopsis	critique*	personal narrative	journey
travelogue	essay*	diatribe*	polemic*	commentary*
farce*	conceit*	editorial*	tirade*	review
assessment	eulogy*	elegy*	parody*	allegory*
apology	soliloquy*	monologue*	portrayal	archetype*

fable*

argument

verse

IDENTIFYING SOUND DEVICES

alliteration*

assonance*

consonance*

repetition*

rhyme*

end rhyme*

feminine rhyme*

masculine rhyme*

meter*

slant

rhyme* incremental rhyme*

THE LANGUAGE OF ARGUMENT

VERBS

attack

charge

claim

propose

defend

challenge

qualify

counter

repudiate*

allege*

validate

confirm

affirm*

argue

assume

answer

agree/disagree

verify

resolve

concede*

grant*

generalize

specify

debate

dispute

assert

NOUNS

warrant

validity

plausibility*

practicality

proposal

solution

resolution

bias

credibility

accountability

vested interest

conflict of interests

enthymeme*

pathos*

ethos*

logos*

counterargument

premise*

sylogism*

deduction*

induction*

fallacy*

ad hominem

exigence*

speaker

audience

purpose

message

precedent*

testimonial*

rebuttal*

antithesis*

non sequitur*

circular reasoning*

bandwagon*

refutation

slippery slope*

anecdote*

advocacy*

rhetoric*

invective*

proponent*

assertion

adherent*

red herring*

qualifier*

begging the question*

justification

cause/effect

TRANSITION WORDS

Time	Place	Idea	Extending elaboration by <i>comparing</i>	Extending elaboration by <i>contrasting</i>	Extending elaboration by <i>emphasizing/clarifying</i>	Extending elaboration by <i>adding another example</i>
after, afterward, at first, as before, finally, immediately, later, next, now, previously, soon, then	above, ahead, among, beyond, down, elsewhere, farther, here, in front of, in the background, near, nearby, next to, there	first, second, third, similarly, as, in the same way, for instance, likewise, however	as, at the same time, by comparison, equally, in the same manner, likewise, similarly	although, and yet, as, as though, at the same time, but, in contrast, conversely, even so, unlike, even though, however, in spite of, instead of, neither, nevertheless, on the one hand, on the other hand, provided that, though, unfortunately, whereas, yet	especially, for instance, in fact, indeed, that is, in other words	moreover, most important, now, so, additionally, again, also, especially, in addition, in fact, last, again, also, besides, equally important, furthermore, similarly, in contrast

Transition list from *Crafting Expository Argument* by Michael Degen

THEME VOCABULARY

Brendan Kenny's List of Abstract Ideas for Forming Theme Statements:

- | | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| alienation | duty | identity | persistence/perseverance |
| ambition | | illusion/innocence | poverty |
| appearance v. reality | education | | prejudice |
| betrayal | | initiation | |
| bureaucracy | escape | instinct | prophecy |
| chance/fate/luck | | | repentance |
| children | exile | journey (literal or | revenge/retribution |

courage/cowardice		psychological)	ritual/ceremony
cruelty/violence	faith/loss of faith		scapegoat/victim
custom/tradition		law/justice	social status (class)
defeat/failure	falsity/pretence		
despair/discontent/disillusionment	family/parenthood	loneliness/solitude	the supernatural
domination/suppression	free will/willpower	loyalty/disloyalty	time/eternity
dreams/fantasies	game/contests/sports		
	greed	materialism	war
	guilt	memory/the past	women/feminism
	heart v. reason		
	heaven/paradise/Utopia	mob psychology	
	home	music/dance	
		patriotism	