



The Anatomy of a Text Dependent Analysis (TDA) Prompt

The purpose of this resource is to assist educators with deconstructing a TDA prompt and providing students with guided instruction that will allow them to successfully recognize the expectations of a TDA prompt. When responding to a text dependent analysis prompt, whether for classroom instruction, classroom-based assessments, or for the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA), students are expected to address all parts of the task demonstrating sufficient analytic understanding of the text(s). What if the teacher is unclear about the expectations of a TDA prompt? The following examples will help educators recognize these expectations.

Most TDA prompts are comprised of three statements:

1. The reading element(s) students are expected to analyze,
2. The information describing the task, and
3. An expectation to use evidence from the text.

Example 1. Grade 6 Classroom Based TDA Prompt

Authors use characters to develop a theme. Write an essay analyzing how the thoughts, words, and actions of Mrs. Jones and Roger develop the theme of trust. Use evidence from the text to support your analysis.

(Developed using the text, Thank You M'Am, by Langston Hughes, 1958)

The **first statement** focuses students on the reading element(s)¹ they are expected to analyze²:

Authors use **characters** to develop a **theme**.

The two reading elements are clearly identified as characters and theme.

The **second statement** provides students with several pieces of information describing the task:

Write an essay analyzing how the thoughts, words, and actions of Mrs. Jones and Roger develop the theme of trust.



- 1) **Students are expected to write an essay.** It is expected that students develop a written piece that is organized in a structure appropriate to their grade level and includes an introduction, development, and conclusion; a coherent controlling idea; effective use of paragraphing; and the appropriate use of transitions and conventions of English.
- 2) **Students are expected to demonstrate analysis.** Analysis is defined as a *detailed examination of the elements or structure of text, by breaking it into its component parts to uncover interrelationships in order to draw a conclusion.* Therefore, students must recognize and describe the interrelationship between the **characters** and **theme** within this text.
- 3) **Students are expected to focus on the characters, thoughts, words, actions, and theme of trust.** In this prompt, the two elements are clearly stated with added specificity as the thoughts, words, and actions of the characters and the theme of trust.

The prompt's **final statement** is used with all prompts to remind students that their analysis must be supported with text evidence:

Use evidence from the text to support your analysis.

The text evidence should be precise and focused. The students must demonstrate comprehension of the text, understanding of the reading elements, and how or why they are used by the author. Copied paragraphs from the text will not sufficiently support the analysis. In addition, evidence can be in the form of either a direct quote or paraphrasing appropriate details from the text.

Throughout the course of the year, the teacher should begin to develop prompts which provide less scaffolding, allowing students more opportunity to select an appropriate reading element, based on what they have been taught in class and over the course of their instructional program, to support their analysis of the text. Example 2 classroom prompt below provides a less scaffolded prompt in which one reading element is specifically identified:

Example 2. Grade 7 Classroom Based TDA Prompt

Authors often use figurative language to describe objects, characters, and situations in their stories. Write an essay analyzing the role that figurative language plays in this story. Use evidence from the text to support your analysis.

*(Developed using the text, *Uncle Timothy's Ships*, by Summer Woodford, 1993)*

The **first statement** focuses students on one reading element (**figurative language**) which is expected to be analyzed:

*Authors often use **figurative language** to describe objects, characters, and situations in their stories.*

The **second statement** provides students with several pieces of information describing the task:

Write an essay analyzing the role that figurative language plays in this story.





In this example, students are expected to 1) **write an essay**, and 2) **to analyze the role that figurative language plays** in the story. A second specific reading element is not identified, so students must determine the author's purpose for using the figurative language. Which reading element is related to the figurative language in this story? Characterization? Symbolism? Mood? Author's message? The reader is required to understand **figurative language** and to **analyze** its role through the interrelationship with another reading element (e.g., symbolism).

The prompt's **final statement** is used with all prompts to remind students that their analysis must be supported with text evidence – quotes or paraphrases – **from the text** to support the analysis (the interrelationship) between the characters' actions.

Use evidence from the text to support your analysis.

In Example 3 below the reading elements are not clearly identified for students. By the end of the year, teachers have provided direct instruction on reading elements multiple times in their instructional program. Consequently, TDA prompts may be less prescriptive allowing students the opportunity to select from the elements and/or structures presented in the text.

Example 3. Grade 6 PSSA TDA Prompt

The passage “Paranka’s Dumplings” focuses on two cooks with different styles who work in the same kitchen. Write an essay analyzing the significance of Paranka’s and Olya’s different approaches to preparing dumplings. Use evidence from the passage to support your response.

(PSSA Grade 6 English Language Arts Item and Scoring Sampler—September 2017)

The **first statement** guides the students to one reading element, although it is not specifically identified:

*The passage “Paranka’s Dumplings” focuses on **two cooks** with different styles who work in the same kitchen.*

This statement identifies the nature of the **two cooks (characterization)** as the first reading element to be analyzed. To demonstrate analysis there must be two elements.

The **second statement** asks students to: 1) **write an essay**, and 2) **to analyze the significance of the character’s approaches or actions**:

Write an essay analyzing the significance of Paranka’s and Olya’s different approaches to preparing dumplings.

In this statement, a second reading element is **not** clearly identified. Students must select a reading element that will relate to the **significance** of the character's approaches. In this case, the significance could refer to the **author's message, theme, or plot** (e.g., **turning point or conflict**). The student is required to understand the difference between the two characters and to **analyze** how their different actions reveal or support another reading element in the passage.



The Thompson TDA Model

The **final statement** reminds students to **use evidence** – quotes or paraphrases – **from the text** to support the analysis or the interrelationship between the characters' actions and **author's message, theme, or plot** (e.g., **turning point or conflict**)

Thompson, J. (2018). Text Dependent Analysis Series: The Anatomy of a Text Dependent Analysis (TDA) Prompt. www.nciea.org, <http://www.education.pa.gov>, and <http://pdesas.org>.

¹ See TDA Series: Reading Elements

² See TDA Series: Analysis

 This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).