

Culminating Writing Task Directions

In “Politics and the English Language,” George Orwell asserts, “A scrupulous writer, in every sentence that he writes, will ask himself at least four questions, thus: 1. What am I trying to say? 2. What words will express it? 3. What image or idiom will make it clearer? 4. Is this image fresh enough to have an effect?” Orwell believes these four questions focus a writer’s attention on his or her central idea, purpose, word choice, and rhetoric. Consider Orwell’s questions and evaluate his essay: How is Orwell’s purpose in “Politics and the English Language” conveyed through his use of rhetoric, word choice, and structure?

Write a literary analysis to support your claims in answer to the question. Be sure to use appropriate transitions and varied syntax, grade-appropriate language and a formal style, including proper grammar, conventions, and spelling. Provide strong and thorough textual evidence that is integrated while maintaining the flow of ideas and including proper citation.

Activity One: Read the prompt and consider the following elements to analyze the prompt.

Purpose: Why are you writing? What is the goal of the writing? Look for strong verbs.	I am writing to evaluate Orwell’s essay as to whether his own use of language and structure match his purpose.
Audience: Who is your audience? What level of formality will the audience expect?	This essay requires a formal style with proper grammar, conventions, and spelling. This is an academic paper.
Subject: What are you writing about? What is the topic?	The essay should consider Orwell’s questions, evaluate his essay, and explain how his purpose conveyed through his use of rhetoric, word choice, and structure.
Type: What type of writing will you be doing? Is it expository, narrative, argument, or analysis? What kind of structure will best fulfill the requirements of the writing?	Literary analysis.

Activity Two: The writing prompt asks you to evaluate how well Orwell achieves his purpose through his style choices. First, let’s determine Orwell’s purpose for writing “Politics and the English Language”.

What is Orwell’s purpose for writing?	Orwell wants to persuade his audience that language is corrupted, but that it can be remedied by using his rules.
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Activity Three: Analyze the text for evidence of word choice, rhetoric, and structure. Consider Orwell's questions when evaluating evidence.

Textual Evidence	How does this convey Orwell's purpose?	How does this evidence stand up to Orwell's questions: 1. What am I trying to say? 2. What words will express it? 3. What image or idiom will make it clearer? 4. Is this image fresh enough to have an effect?
<p>What words does Orwell use to describe the problems with language?</p> <p>"General collapse" "in a bad way" "Slovenliness" "vague" "debasement" "deteriorated" "decadence" "decay"</p>	<p>Orwell's purpose is to present his argument that the English language is in a "bad way" and this "collapse" of language is causing political consequences. His description of language is highly opinionated, calling it a "decay" and "debasement", which supports his purpose because it calls attention to his claim that language must be clarified.</p>	<p>The use of these words, some would say, may break use rule for fresh images; however, they follow the following six rules in that the descriptions are straightforward and clear enough to establish his purpose.</p>
<p>Rhetoric:</p> <p>Orwell uses parallelism in his essay, such as "so that the fight against bad English is not frivolous and is not the exclusive concern of professional writers."</p> <p>He also uses similes such as "like cavalry horses answering the bugle" and metaphors such as "one need not swallow such absurdities"</p>	<p>Orwell's purpose is to convince the reader that action is necessary, and in his use of parallelism he consistently drives home his point that language is in "a bad way" and must be fought by "everyone."</p> <p>He further punctuates his point with the use of figurative language showing the reader just how deep and wide the problem has spread.</p>	<p>Although Orwell's parallelism does use unnecessary words, it does so with a purpose. He wants to make himself clear and the rhythm of parallelism does just that.</p> <p>While some could argue that some of his figures of speech are as tired as those he deplores, Orwell makes a gallant attempt at providing his reader with fresh images to elicit thought.</p>

<p>Structure:</p> <p>Orwell's uses a problem-solution structure and utilizes numbering and subheadings to outline those problems and proposed solutions.</p>	<p>Orwell's purpose is to explain that bad language is a conquerable problem, and the problem-solution structure is a perfect fit for his purpose.</p>	<p>Orwell's use of structure and text features help make his writing more clear, and, therefore, follows his rules.</p>
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Activity Four: Outlining the Essay

I. Introduction: Explaining Orwell's Questions.

- A. 1. What am I trying to say? 2. What words will express it? 3. What image or idiom will make it clearer? 4. Is this image fresh enough to have an effect?
- B. Thesis sentences that answer the question: Does Orwell's effectively convey his purpose in "Politics and the English Language" conveyed through his use of rhetoric, word choice, and structure?
 1. Orwell's purpose is to describe the problems of modern language and to offer a solution through his points for clear writing.
 2. He fulfills that purpose by convincing readers that not only is there a problem, but there is also a solution. He presents that solution by asking writers to consider four questions in every sentence they write: 1. What am I trying to say? 2. What words will express it? 3. What image or idiom will make it clearer? 4. Is this image fresh enough to have an effect.
 3. In presenting the list, it is incumbent upon the reader to consider these questions in Orwell's own writing. When they apply this list to Orwell's essay, the reader will find that Orwell does fulfill his questions. His use of parallelism makes points clear, and, for the most part, his images are fresh. The word choice that he use aptly describes the problem he lays out and affects the reader aptly. Finally, the structure that he chooses, a problem-solution is a clear choice to lay out his argument.

II. Topic Sentence about word choice: Orwell uses a number of strong, opinionated words to outline the problems he sees with the language.

- A. Evidence: “General collapse” “in a bad way” “Slovenliness” “vague” “debasement” “deteriorated” “decadence” “decay”
- B. Commentary: This strong choice of words convey Orwell’s argument clearly; the English language has a serious problem.

II. Topic Sentence about rhetoric: Orwell uses punchy parallel construction and fresh metaphors to explain the extent of this problem.

- A. Evidence: “so that the fight against bad English is not frivolous and is not the exclusive concern of professional writers.”
- B. Commentary: The repetition of the phrase “is not” emphasizes the point that everyone has a stake in this problem.
- C. Evidence: “cuttlefish squirting ink” and “like cavalry horses answering the bugle” make the reader pause and think about his point.

III. Topic Sentence about structure: The problem-solution structure, emphasized with numbered lists, numerous examples, and subheadings clearly lays out what Orwell is “trying to say.”

- A. Evidence: “Dead metaphors”, “False Limbs”, and “Pretentious Diction” then finally offers a solution once as a list in a paragraph, as the prompt asks the writer to consider, and also in an inset list of six simple rules to follow.
- B. Commentary: There can be no mistaking Orwell’s point. The problem is widespread and the solution is clear.

Conclusion: Orwell’s essay is true today... Politicians continue to gloss over murder and atrocities with euphemisms and double-talk. Academics still use inflated language for the sake of sounding intelligent and at the risk of losing meaning. The solution is still there as simple as boiling an egg, and writers have yet to take Orwell’s advice to heart.

IV.

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In “Politics and the English Language,” George Orwell asserts, “A scrupulous writer, in every sentence that he writes, will ask himself at least four questions, thus: 1. What am I trying to say? 2. What words will express it? 3. What image or idiom will make it clearer? 4. Is this image fresh enough to have an effect?” Orwell believes these four questions focus a writer’s attention on his or her central idea, purpose, word choice, and rhetoric. Consider Orwell’s questions and evaluate his essay: How is Orwell’s purpose in “Politics and the English Language” conveyed through his use of rhetoric, word choice, and structure?

To answer this question:

- Determine Orwell’s purpose in writing “Politics and the English Language.”
- Trace patterns in the key words and phrases and evaluate how Orwell uses them to convey his purpose.
- Examine the rhetorical devices Orwell uses to support his claims.
- Examine Orwell’s structure and evaluate how it supports his purpose.

Write a literary analysis to support your claims in answer to the question. Be sure to use appropriate transitions and varied syntax, grade-appropriate language and a formal style, including proper grammar, conventions, and spelling. Provide strong and thorough textual evidence that is integrated while maintaining the flow of ideas and including proper citation.