ACT Reading:
Craft and Structure
Craft and Structure
Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you should be able to:

• Identify the author’s voice and point of view in a passage
• Define unfamiliar words based on their context
• Determine the function of a sentence or paragraph
Author’s Voice and Method
Deciphering Attitude and Tone

The author’s **attitude** and **tone** are expressed through the author’s choice of words and punctuation. Ask yourself:

- Is the author expressing disapproval?
- Compassion? Admiration? Criticism?

The answer to the question *must* be supported by **evidence** in the passage, although the evidence may come from outside the cited lines or part of the passage.

- Avoid extreme answers unless they are clearly supported.

The author’s **method** is a combination of the main idea and the purpose of the passage. Ask yourself:

- What strategies or devices does the author use throughout the passage?
- What would happen to the author’s goal if a particular example or detail was omitted from the passage?
Author’s Voice and Method
Deciphering Attitude and Tone

What is the **tone** or **voice** of each example?

While these findings represent significant progress in scientific understanding of trachoma and preventative measures, there is still a substantial gap between the current state and the goal of complete eradication of trachoma by 2020. Education and further study are both needed.

*Persuasive*

In high school I had edited an underground newspaper, bought my first copy of *The Village Voice*, read *The New York Times* regularly. I believed I was a feminist. In India I was unsure of my role. Above all, I was deeply worried I’d be married off, that I’d be forced to become a housewife, horror of horrors, and would lose my freedom.

*Ironic*
Author’s Point of View
Determining the Author’s Perspective

The author’s tone is sometimes referred to as the author’s voice and will provide important clues to the author’s perspective.

Is the passage’s overall atmosphere, or “vibe,” positive or negative? Objective or judgmental? Delighted or upset?

Questions that ask about the author’s point of view or perspective and the intended audience require you to think about the passage as a whole. Before answering these types of questions, be sure to identify the author’s purpose.

If the topic is the “What?” and the main idea/theme is the “What about it?”, then the purpose is the “Why?”

Some possible purposes on the ACT include to prove, to demonstrate, to educate, and to illustrate.

Before determining the purpose of the passage, consider the main idea, the author’s tone, and the author’s point of view.
Author’s Point of View
Determining the Author’s Perspective

What authorial purpose do you sense in each example?

The hope is that the Tardkiss study might help researchers create techniques to protect other organisms, not just micro ones, from extreme conditions found in space—perhaps, eventually, even human beings.

To reveal facts or ideas (informational/expository)

Given these examples and the species-specific nature of frog calls, greater scrutiny and examination of unexpected calls is to be encouraged.

To convince the reader of a point of view (persuasive)
Inferring the Meaning of Unfamiliar Vocabulary

Some ACT questions ask what a specific word or phrase from the passage means based on the context of the passage. Memorizing vocabulary is not necessary to master these questions.

Can I break this word apart into roots, prefixes, and/or suffixes?
Have I seen or heard this word (or something similar) before?
Can I use the modifiers and relationships in the passage to help?
If I pretend the cited word or phrase is missing, what could I substitute instead?

These questions will cite words or phrases from a specific place within the passage. Focus on gaining context by reading the sentences found before and after the cited line or lines.

These questions can be more challenging because they require that you think more broadly about the word or phrase in question. Avoid common definitions!
Words and Phrases in Context
Inferring the Meaning of Unfamiliar Vocabulary

Many Jews believe the dead do not pass to a (1) beatific afterworld but to dust. Jews bury all of their dead in simple wooden coffins containing no metal, including no nails, to ensure that the dead and their wrappings will fully disintegrate into the earth. The traditional Jewish funeral is quite (2) succinct, but the rituals for the bereaved extend for some time. Following a Jewish burial, the family of the dead “sit shiva” for seven days; for 30 days after (3) interment, family members avoid celebratory events, and for the rest of the year, children of the departed say mourning prayers daily or weekly. After this designated year of mourning finishes, mourning is, interestingly, (4) proscribed, with the exception of a few anniversary days each year.

1. beatific:
2. succinct:
3. interment:
4. proscribed:
Function of Sentences and Paragraphs
Determining the Role of Specific Parts of a Passage

Questions that ask about the function of a specific sentence or paragraph require that you consider the role these cited pieces play in the context of the passage as a whole.

What is the purpose of this sentence or paragraph?
How do each of the paragraphs work with each other to convey the author’s message?
Why did the author choose to present the sentences of this paragraph in this particular order?
Why are the paragraphs of this passage in this particular order?

The main idea and purpose of the passage will help you determine the function of a cited piece.

How does this sentence or paragraph support the main idea? The overall tone? The author’s purpose?
Function of Sentences and Paragraphs


“Actually, I do not like this work,” he stormed. “You do not have to do this; we do not need this kind of money.” He waved his arms dismissively at Okaa-chan’s sewing machine. “They come and look at our home with contempt. You kneel at their hems like a servant! *Mo dame desu yo!* It is no good, I tell you!”
5. Based on the last two paragraphs, which of the following statements indicates what the narrator’s mother and father have in common?

A. They both want control of the family finances.
B. They are both fighting for their self-respect.
C. They both want to teach a lesson to their children.
D. They are both angry at Okaa-chan's client.

Okaa-chan was intractable. Eloquent in anger, she blazed over the pronunciation of words that ordinarily would have left pondering pauses in her speech. “I do not care what they think of me, of our home. They cannot affect our value.” My mother stepped in front of her sewing machine, as if to shield it from scorn. “My work gives me happiness.” She squarely faced my father. “I do not care if you speak as Husband,” she said. “I am a Designer!”
NATURAL SCIENCE: This passage is adapted from the Preface to neurologist Oliver Sacks’ collection of essays *An Anthropologist on Mars* (©1995 by Oliver Sacks).

Nature’s imagination, as Freeman Dyson likes to say, is richer than ours, and he speaks, marvellingly, of this richness in the physical and biological worlds, the endless diversity of physical forms and forms of life. For me, as a physician, nature’s richness is to be studied in the phenomena of health and disease, in the endless forms of individual adaptation by which human organisms, people, adapt and reconstruct themselves.
Defects, disorders, diseases, in this sense, can play a paradoxical role, by bringing out latent powers, developments, evolutions, forms of life, that might never be seen, or even be imaginable, in their absence. It is the paradox of disease, in this sense, its “creative” potential, that forms the central theme of this book.

Thus while one may be horrified by the ravages of developmental disorder or disease, one may sometimes see them as creative too—for if they destroy particular paths, particular ways of doing things, they may force the nervous system into making other paths and ways, force on it an unexpected growth and evolution. This other side of development or disease is something I see, potentially, in almost every patient; and it is this which I am especially concerned to describe.
Mixed Practice

Similar considerations were brought up by A.R. Luria, who studied the long-term survival of patients who had cerebral tumors or had suffered brain injuries or strokes—and the ways, the adaptations, they used to survive. He also studied deaf and blind children as a very young man (with his mentor L.S. Vygotsky). Vygotsky stressed the intactness rather than the deficits of such children:
A handicapped child represents a qualitatively different, unique type of development. ... If a blind child or a deaf child achieves the same level of development as a normal child, then the child with a defect achieves this in another way, by another course, by other means; and, for the pedagogue, it is particularly important to know the uniqueness of the course along which he must lead the child. This uniqueness transforms the minus of a handicap into the plus of compensation.
That such radical adaptations could occur demanded, Luria thought, a new view of the brain, a sense of it not as programmed and static, but rather as dynamic and active, a supremely efficient adaptive system geared for evolution and change, ceaselessly adapting to the needs of the organism—its need, above all, to construct a coherent self and world, whatever defects or disorders of brain function befell it. That the brain is minutely differentiated is clear: there are hundreds of tiny areas crucial for every aspect of perception and behavior. The miracle is how they all cooperate, are integrated together, in the creation of a self.
Mixed Practice

This sense of the brain’s remarkable capacity for the most striking adaptations, not least in the special (and often desperate) circumstances of neural or sensory mishap, has come to dominate my perception of my patients and their lives. So much so, indeed, that I am sometimes moved to wonder whether it may not be necessary to redefine the very concepts of “health” and “disease,” to see these in terms of the ability of the organism to create a new organization and order, one that fits its special, altered disposition and needs, rather than in the terms of a rigidly defined “norm.”
Mixed Practice

Sickness implies a contraction of life, but such contractions do not have to occur. Nearly all of my patients, so it seems to me, whatever their problems, reach out to life—and not only despite their conditions, but often because of them, and even with their aid.

The study of disease, for the physician, demands the study of identity, the inner worlds that patients, under the spur of illness, create. But the realities of patients, the ways in which they and their brains construct their own worlds, cannot be comprehended wholly from the observation of behavior, from the outside.
With this in mind, I have taken off my white coat, deserted, by and large, the hospitals where I have spent the last twenty-five years, to explore my subjects’ lives as they live in the real world, feeling in part like a naturalist, examining rare forms of life; in part like an anthropologist, a neuroanthropologist, in the field—but most of all like a physician, called here and there to make house calls, house calls at the far borders of human experience.
Mixed Practice

6. The quotation by L.S. Vygotsky in lines 34 – 43 is used in this passage to support the idea that:

F. children with handicaps should be studied in the same way as children defined by physicians as “normal.”

G. deficits need to demonstrate intactness in order to be judged acceptable.

H. neural or sensory mishap occurs in children as well as in adults.

J. development of children with handicaps may proceed in positive yet quite distinctive ways.
Mixed Practice

7. As it is used in line 43, the word *compensation* most nearly means:

A. payment.
B. differentiation.
C. disposition.
D. adaptation.
Mixed Practice

8. The author’s main purpose in lines 56 – 71 is to show:

   F. how he has come to think differently about the brain.
   G. why sickness often causes a contraction of life.
   H. when he made new discoveries about the brain.
   J. which of his subjects helped him redefine the term “norm.”
Mixed Practice

9. As it is used in line 16, the word *ravages* most nearly means:

   A. paradoxical features.
   B. creative adaptations.
   C. fatal nature.
   D. destructive actions.
Mixed Practice

10. The word *miracle* in line 54 refers most specifically to the ways in which:

   F. brain function disorders are cured.
   G. unique handicaps are compensated for.
   H. different areas of the brain work together.
   J. the creative potential of disease is revealed.
Craft and Structure
Learning Objectives

Now that you have completed this lesson, you should be able to:

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Craft and Structure
Homework

Effort and practice are the keys to Test Day Success.

Now that you have completed this lesson, do the following for homework:
• Click on the Practice Tab from your Online Prep Live homepage
• Choose Craft and Structure under Reading
• Read and roadmap THREE Passages
• Answer all accompanying questions (approximately 30)
• Don’t forget to review the explanations!