Strong vs. Weak Verbs

To help you move away from summary and toward ANALYSIS, you need to begin to incorporate strong verbs into your writing when discussing the writer's rhetorical choices. Below is a list of verbs that are considered weak because they imply summary and a list of verbs that are considered strong because they imply analysis. Strive to use the stronger verbs in your essays to help push yourself away from summary and toward analysis: "The writer flatters..." NOT "The writer says..."

WEAK VERBS (Summary)

explains
relates
states

goes on to say
shows

tells
this quote shows

STRONG VERBS (Analysis)

implies
denigrates
detracts
praises
admires
explains

qualifies
enumerates
contrasts
defines

processes
demonizes
examines

describes
establishes

suggests
narrates

Powerful and meaningful verbs to use in your analyses: Alternatives to "show"

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Developing A Tone Vocabulary

admirer--complimentary, favorable
alarming--alarmed, bewildered
allusive--suggestive, hinting
aloof--haughty, distant
ambivalent--indecisive, having mixed emotions
angry--irate
anxious--uneasy, brooding
apathetic--uninvolved, unmoved
apologetic--regretful
audacious--bold, insolent
belligerent--contentious
beneficent--kindly
bitter--hating, malicious, resentful, rancorous
condescend--condescending, coolly disdainful
cold--unemotional
complacent--self-satisfied, smug
condescending--showing superiority, patronizing
confident--certain, full of conviction
condensed--perplexed, disconcerted
comprehensive--comprehensive, discomfiting, disrespectful, irrelevant
critical--judging harshly

cynical--contemptuously distrustful of human nature and motives, misanthropic
delirious--suggesting frenzied excitement
depressed--dejected
desperate--showing a loss of hope
detached--uncaring, aloof, distant, uninterested
didactic--instructive
dissipate--unaffected by strong feelings; showing coldness of judgment
dogmatic--authoritative, assertive, arrogant
dreamy--vague, in a state of reverie, appearing tranquil
effusive--excessively demonstrative, gushing
elegant--expressing sorrow
felicity--whimsical

flippant--lukewarm, uninterested, uninvolved
flinty--stark, unemotional, cold
fond--affectionate, warm, affectionate
forsake--abandon, desert, renounce
fortitude--strenuous, firm, steadfast
frail--weak, delicate, delicate
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