

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Glossary of Academic Terms

**“Academic terms” are words that you will encounter in a school setting. You might find them on tests, in directions, and in discussions you have with your classmates. Here is a handy list of common academic words and what they mean.**

## ► **analyze** (AN-uhl-ahyz):

To analyze something is to carefully study or examine its different parts in order to understand or explain it.

- **Example:** Analyze the character of John Smith to decide whether or not he deserves to be called a coward.
- **What this means:** Think about all the information about John Smith’s character—all the things John says, does, and feels at different times in the story—and use that information to decide whether or not he deserves to be called a coward.

## ► **apply** (uh-PLY):

When directions ask you to apply one thing to another, you need to make a connection between the first thing and the second thing.

If directions ask you HOW one thing applies to another thing, you need to explain the connection or relationship between the two things.

- **Example:** J. K. Rowling once said, “It takes a great deal of bravery to stand up to our enemies, but just as much to stand up to our friends.” Explain how this quote applies to the story you just read.
- **What this means:** Find and describe the connection between the quote and the story. Is there something that happens in the story that shows the same idea that Rowling expresses in the quote?

## ► **cite** (sahyt):

*Cite* means “mention” or “note.” If you are asked to cite three examples of something, you are being asked to mention, or give, three examples.

When you include information from an article or a story in your own writing—whether you are quoting it directly (that is, writing down the exact words the author used) or indirectly (putting the author’s ideas into your own words), you need to cite your source. In other words, you need to tell your reader where the information came from.

- **Example:** Answer the questions below using text evidence from the articles you just read. Be sure to cite your sources.
- **What this means:** For each piece of information from an article that you include in your answers, make it clear from which article and page number it came. For example, if a question asks you about the most popular pizza toppings, you might write, “On page 8 of ‘Pizza Forever,’ Jane Smith states that the three most popular pizza toppings are pepperoni, sausage, and mushrooms.” By noting the article’s name, the author’s name, and the page number, you are citing your source.

► **compare** (cuhm-PAIR):

When you compare two or more things, you study them to find ways in which they are similar and different.

Words like “similarly,” “also,” “too,” and “likewise” will help you when you are explaining how two things are similar.

Words and phrases like “on the other hand,” “but,” “however,” and “unlike” will help you when you are explaining how two things are different.

- **Example:** Compare what it’s like to have a dog as a pet with what it’s like to have a cat.
- **What this means:** Describe what is similar and what is different about having a dog and having a cat. Everything you say should be to help your reader understand what is alike and different in these two situations.

► **complete** (kuhm-PLEET):

To complete something is to finish it.

- **Example:** Complete the chart below.
- **What this means:** Finish the chart by filling in the missing information.

► **conclude** (kuhn-KLOOD):

When directions ask you to conclude, or to “draw a conclusion,” they are asking you to form an opinion or make a decision after thinking about something.

*Conclude* can also mean “finish,” as in, “Conclude your essay with a call to action.”

- **Example:** Use information in both articles to draw a conclusion about the plight of lions today.
- **What this means:** Think about information in both articles and use it to arrive at an idea about the plight of lions today.

► **define** (dih-FAHYN):

To define a word is to explain what that word means.

- **Example:** Define the following words: *ample*, *brazen*, *swelter*.
- **What this means:** Explain what the words *ample*, *brazen*, and *swelter* mean.

► **describe** (dis-SKRAHYB):

To describe something is to tell about it in words.

If you describe how something looks, you tell about its size, shape, color, and texture.

If you describe an experience that you had, you give information such as when and where it occurred, what happened, how it made you feel, and who else was there.

- **Example:** Describe how the invention of the light bulb changed life in America.
- **What this means:** Tell the reader all about how the invention of the light bulb changed life in America.

► **determine** (dih-TUR-min):

To determine something is to figure it out or make a decision about it based on facts or evidence.

- **Example:** Use context clues to determine the meanings of the words in bold.
- **What this means:** Use clues in the text to figure out what the words in bold mean.

► **develop** (dih-VEL-uhp):

To develop is to grow, be created, or become more advanced over time. A seed, for example, develops into a tree.

When directions ask you how a character or an idea develops, they're asking how that character or idea changes, or is created, over time or over the course of the story.

When you see a question asking how an author develops something, your answer should include more than one idea; you should be explaining what the author does first, next, and last to create that character or build that idea.

- **Example:** How does the author develop the idea that foods with lots of sugar are unhealthy?
- **What this means:** What does the author write at different points in the article to build the idea that sugary foods are unhealthy?

► **discuss** (dis-CUHSS):

When directions ask you to discuss something, they are asking you to give information, ideas, or opinions about it.

You can discuss something with other people, by talking with them, or you can discuss something on your own, such as in writing an essay or a speech.

- **Example:** Discuss the role that school sports play in kids' lives.
- **What this means:** Tell about the role that school sports play in kids' lives. There are probably quite a few different answers or ideas about this topic, and you'll want to mention quite a few of them—definitely the most important ones—so that your reader or listener gets a wide understanding of the topic.

► **evaluate** (ee-VAL-yoo-ayt):

When you evaluate something, you make a judgment about it—that is, you say how good or bad, or how weak or strong it is—after giving it careful thought.

- **Example:** Evaluate the author's argument.
- **What this means:** Carefully consider the argument the author is making and how he/she supports it. Then tell how strong or weak the argument is, and why. Make sure you think about whether the author gives enough support for the argument and whether the points made are relevant—that is, if they really have to do with the argument being made.

► **explain** (ek-SPLAYN):

To explain something is to tell about it so that someone else can understand it.

When there are directions that ask you to explain something, be sure to give plenty of details about why or how it happened.

- **Example:** Has reading this article changed the way you think about rats? Explain.
- **What this means:** Tell whether the article has changed the way you think about rats—but don't just say "yes" or "no." Rather, give reasons and talk about particular details in the article that did or did not change your view of rats.

► **identify** (ahy-DEN-tuh-fahy):

*Identify* can mean "recognize what something is or who someone is."

If you can't tell what one of the flavors in the cookie you're eating is, you could say, "There's a flavor in here that I can't identify."

*Identify* can also mean "tell someone else what something is or who someone is." If someone asks you to identify yourself, they want you to say who you are.

Directions that ask you to identify something are usually asking you to tell what something is or point something out.

- **Example:** Identify three causes of the Great Chicago Fire.
- **What this means:** Write down three causes of the Great Chicago Fire so that your reader understands what they are.

► **infer** (in-FUR)

To infer is to draw a conclusion using evidence.

For example, imagine you make a smoothie for your friend. A funny look crosses her face as she takes her first sip and she doesn't drink any more of it. She tells you it's delicious, but you can infer that actually, your friend does not like the smoothie at all—you can use the evidence of the look on her face and the fact that she isn't drinking the smoothie to draw a conclusion about her true feelings.

You can infer, or make inferences, when you read, too, by using hints in the text to draw conclusions about things that the author does not state directly.

- **Example:** What can you infer happened to Maggie at the picnic? Explain.
- **What this means:** Use hints in the text to draw a conclusion about what happened to Maggie at the picnic. Tell what your conclusion is and explain what hints in the text led you to your conclusion.

► **organize** (OR-guh-nahyz):

If you organize your closet, you sort out the mess of stuff in there and arrange it according to some sort of system—all of your shoes matched up into pairs and put in one spot, all of your sports equipment neatly placed in another spot, and all of your art supplies set in another spot. This makes it easy to find what you are looking for.

When directions ask you to write a well-organized paragraph, they are asking you to sort your ideas into some sort of system or order, similar to what you'd do to organize your closet.

- **Example:** Answer in a well-organized paragraph.
- **What this means:** Make sure that the ideas in your paragraph don't jump around. Arrange your ideas so that they flow from one to the next in a way that makes it easy for the reader to follow what you're saying.

► **refer** (rih-FUHR):

When you see the word *refer* in directions, you could be expected to look at something for information, as in "Refer to the glossary for definitions of the words in bold."

Or, the directions might be asking you to explain a reference—a mention of someone or something.

- **Example:** What does the title of the story refer to?
- **What this means:** Imagine that the title of a story is "Finding Home." In the story, a boy named Jake hit a home run during a baseball game as he struggles to feel at home in a new town. You could say, then, that the title of the story refers to Jake's "finding home" during the baseball game and also to his getting used to life in a new town.

► **summarize** (SUHM-uh-rahyz):

When you summarize something (or "write a summary" of it), you give the general idea of it—you tell the most important points and leave out most of the details.

Imagine that you are summarizing a whole novel. A good thing to ask yourself is, "What would I say to a friend who asks me what this novel is about?" You wouldn't tell your friend everything that happens in the novel—you would tell your friend only the big ideas or the main events of the story.

- **Example:** Summarize the reasons some people prefer dogs to cats.
- **What this means:** In a few sentences, tell the big reasons that some people like dogs more than they like cats. Don't give a lot of details or examples—keep your answer short.

► **support** (suh-POHRT):

When you see the word *support* in directions, you're being asked to find details that show that an idea or a statement is true.

If you are told to support your answer with details from the text, you need to find parts of the article that show that what you are saying is true.

If you are asked to explain how an author supports her ideas, you need to look for the details the author uses to show that what she has stated is true.

- **Example:** Choose one word to describe the character of Sarah Wilson. Support your answer with details from the story.
- **What this means:** Let's say you choose "hardworking" to describe Sarah Wilson. To support your answer, you need to find examples in the story where Sarah works hard and describe those examples.

► **synthesize** (SIN-thuh-sahyz):

To synthesize is to combine two or more things to create a whole.

When directions ask you to synthesize information from two or more texts, they are asking you to combine information from multiple texts to answer a single question.

- **Example:** Answer the questions below to synthesize information from "Deadly Snacks" and "The Pretzel Man."
- **What this means:** Answer the questions below to put together information from the two articles.