

Levels of Thought: What Constitutes AP Level Analysis

(With thanks to AP listserv colleagues who contributed this interpretation of Bloom's Taxonomy)

Bloom's Taxonomy or what constitutes AP level thought:

A common frustration of entering AP students is the seemingly lower grades and not knowing the proverbial “what the teacher wants” issues. You are good at deciphering what high school teachers want, but now you must learn what the college professor is going to want.

Here is a list of levels to be striven for, from highest to lowest. They don't correspond exactly to letter grades, but they do represent behaviors and expectations for Advanced Placement English.

6. **EVALUATION:** The learner forms a judgment based on facts, examples and specific criteria.

When we win a Pulitzer Prize for our thoughtful criticism of literature, then we are fully at this level.

All other levels (see below) have been achieved, and the learner has arrived at this highest level of critical thinking. None of us (instructors included) operates totally on this plane.

5. **SYNTHESIS:** This is where AP students need to be working. This is where the great thesis statement comes from. It demands that we think about the literature in a **NEW** way, far more than pointing to the text. It requires combining ideas from many areas and time periods of your education, putting them all to use to analyze increasingly more sophisticated concepts in literature. Here the student anchors his/her thoughts in the text with evidence, but thinks beyond the scope of the individual piece.

Some helpful verbs to describe what occurs in synthesis: develop, construct, design, hypothesize, compose.

4. **ANALYSIS:** At this level, the learner is able to break down an idea into its principal parts **OR** shows similarities between things (main ideas, themes, characters). This is where topic sentences come from. The student can detect the relationships of the parts and the way they are organized. For example, one looks for similarities and differences in the text (or between texts) and draws perceptive conclusions.

Some helpful verbs to describe what occurs in analysis: examine, investigate, analyze, categorize, compare and contrast

3. **APPLICATION:** The learner has done something with what he/she has learned. The student uses the information in a new situation.

Some helpful verbs to describe application: apply, solve, make use of, practice

2. **UNDERSTANDING:** The learner changes the form of the previously learned information by translating it into his own words. The student is grasping the meaning and intent of material, understanding, reordering ideas, making estimates and predictions, grasping the implication of a concept. This involves pointing to the text for proof (absolutely necessary, but not enough in itself). This level is basic to understanding and must be mastered. We must grasp meaning before we can analyze.

Useful verbs: compare, relate, categorize, classify, reword, outline, summarize, select examples.

1. **KNOWLEDGE:** The learner recalls or recognizes information previously presented. You employ this level when you give direct quotations and references to the text in the body of your essay or presentation.

Useful verbs: list, recite, group, name, locate, copy, label, and define.