



READING 6 Analyze the effect of subtlety in literary nonfiction. **8** Analyze the consistency and clarity of the expression of the controlling idea and the ways in which the organizational and rhetorical patterns of text support or confound the author's meaning or purpose.

DID YOU KNOW?

Samuel Johnson ...

- became known as “Dictionary Johnson” and “the Good Doctor.”
- showed little sympathy for the American colonists who, he said, demanded liberty while keeping slaves.
- is second only to Shakespeare as the most frequently quoted English writer.

from A Dictionary of the English Language Nonfiction by Samuel Johnson

VIDEO TRAILER



KEYWORD: HML12-670A

Meet the Author

Samuel Johnson 1709–1784

Samuel Johnson's wit and wisdom so dominated the English literary scene in the second half of the 18th century that historians have called the period the Age of Johnson. A consummate man of letters, Johnson wrote satires (in both poetry and prose), biographies, sermons, literary criticism, book reviews, and a multitude of essays, while also at various times working on Greek and Latin translations, editing magazines, and researching extensively for his ambitious dictionary and other scholarly works. His neoclassical literary style—highly intellectual and rational, with a sprinkling of dry wit and irony—greatly influenced the prose of the time. But as impressive as his literary credentials are, Johnson's reputation among modern readers rests primarily on his famous personality—at once cantankerous and lovable—and his dazzling conversation, which was recorded by his friend James Boswell in *The Life of Samuel Johnson* (page 682).

Years of Poverty and Obscurity Johnson's eminent reputation was a long time in the making. He was born the son of a poor small-town

bookseller in the English Midlands. Several childhood illnesses left his hearing and vision impaired and his face disfigured by scars. Still, he grew into a tough, fiercely independent young man with a love of talk and scholarship. He was able to fulfill his dream of studying at Oxford University, but he had to leave after 13 months because he did not have the money to continue. After failing to make a career of teaching, he moved to London, where he earned a meager living publishing his poetry and prose, much of it in *The Gentleman's Magazine*.

Into the Limelight Until he published his long poem *The Vanity of Human Wishes* (1749), Johnson had never signed his name to his writing. But afterward, people took notice. Over the next decade, Johnson embarked on what he called the “anxious employment of a periodical writer.” He wrote over 200 essays for his periodical, *The Rambler* (1750–1752). It was around this time that he was also working on *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755), the two-volume masterpiece that would make him famous. In 1765, he was awarded an honorary doctorate of civil law, and in 1762 the British prime minister awarded him a pension for life to honor his literary contributions to date. Johnson never again had to worry about money.

Author Online

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● LITERARY ANALYSIS: VOICE

Samuel Johnson was known for being scholarly and witty yet personable, and the voice in his writing clearly reflects this reputation. **Voice** is the unique expression of a writer's personality on the page. To "hear" a writer's voice, examine **diction** (word choice and syntax), tone, and the ideas expressed by the writer. Note how these elements shape Johnson's distinctive voice in the following passage from the preface to *A Dictionary of the English Language*:

It is the fate of those who toil at the lower employments of life to be rather driven by the fear of evil than attracted by the prospect of good. . . .

As you read, note Johnson's diction, tone, and ideas and how these reveal his voice.

● READING SKILL: ANALYZE AUTHOR'S PURPOSE

Authors often have more than one purpose, or reason for writing a particular work. An author may wish to inform, entertain, or persuade readers about a controlling idea, or **main idea**. Johnson wrote his dictionary entries to inform his readers of the meanings and spellings of words, but he hoped to achieve something else with his preface. To determine Johnson's purposes for writing the preface, record examples of the following as you read:

- the main idea of each paragraph
- supporting details the author uses to develop his ideas
- descriptions that convey the author's opinions or feelings

▲ VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

The boldfaced words in these sentences appear in Johnson's preface to the dictionary. Use the sentences to help you understand the words. Then try using the words in your own sentences.

1. Lois received strong **censure** for her bad conduct.
2. A volunteer works without expecting **recompense**.
3. We grow **copious** amounts of wheat—much, much more than we could ever eat.
4. Carla was so angry with Luis that she began **expunging** every mention of his name in her diary.
5. One sister died young, but the other had great **longevity**.
6. When the library is not open, you can drop your books in a **repository** outside the front door.

What's in a WORD?

All languages change over time. Existing words take on new meanings, new words are coined, and others fall out of use. Lexicographers—those who, like Samuel Johnson, write dictionaries—attempt to establish standard definitions of words in hopes of maintaining common usage and understanding. Even so, word meanings are never static for very long.

QUICKWRITE Try your hand at defining a few words. On a piece of paper, write your own definitions for the following words: *artsy, blog, cool, flame, snail mail, text message*. Keep in mind how you and others use the words. Consider whether the words have more than one meaning. Share your definitions with your class.



‡

A Dictionary of the English Language

Samuel Johnson

‡

BACKGROUND By 1700, Italy and France both had national dictionaries that had taken their scholars decades to complete. The few English dictionaries of the time looked puny by comparison. So in 1746, Samuel Johnson—then a penniless, unknown writer—talked several booksellers into paying him to create a dictionary worthy of the English language. It took him nine years of painstaking work to define around 43,000 words, illustrated with some 114,000 quotations.

Analyze Visuals ►

Examine the photograph of an 18th-century printing press. What **inferences** can you make about printing books in Johnson's time?

‡‡ FROM THE PREFACE ‡‡

It is the fate of those who toil at the lower employments of life to be rather driven by the fear of evil than attracted by the prospect of good; to be exposed to **censure** without hope of praise; to be disgraced by miscarriage, or punished for neglect, where success would have been without applause, and diligence without reward.

censure (sĕn'shər) *n.*
criticism

Among these unhappy mortals is the writer of dictionaries, whom mankind have considered not as the pupil, but the slave, of science, the pioneer of literature, doomed only to remove rubbish and clear obstructions from the paths through which learning and genius press forward to conquest and glory, without bestowing a smile on the humble drudge¹ that facilitates their progress. Every other author
10 may aspire to praise: the lexicographer² can only hope to escape reproach—and even this negative **recompense** has been yet granted to very few.

recompense
(rĕk'əm-pĕns') *n.*
payment or repayment;
compensation

I have, notwithstanding this discouragement, attempted a dictionary of the English language, which, while it was employed in the cultivation of every species of literature, has itself been hitherto neglected, suffered to spread, under the direction of chance, into wild exuberance, resigned to the tyranny of time and fashion, and exposed to the corruptions of ignorance and caprices of innovation.

1. **drudge**: someone who labors at difficult, tedious work.

2. **lexicographer** (lĕk'sĭ-kŏg'rə-fər): someone who compiles a dictionary.



When I took the first survey of my undertaking, I found our speech **copious** without order, and energetic without rules: wherever I turned my view, there was perplexity to be disentangled and confusion to be regulated; choice was to be made out of boundless variety, without any established principle of selection; adulterations were to be detected, without a settled test of purity; and modes of expression to be rejected or received, without the suffrages³ of any writers of classical reputation or acknowledged authority. **A**

Having therefore no assistance but from general grammar, I applied myself to the perusal of our writers; and noting whatever might be of use to ascertain or illustrate any word or phrase, accumulated in time the materials of a dictionary, which, by degrees, I reduced to method, establishing to myself, in the progress of the work, such rules as experience and analogy suggested to me—experience, which practice and observation were continually increasing, and analogy, which, though in some words obscure, was evident in others. . . .

When first I collected these authorities I was desirous that every quotation should be useful to some other end than the illustration of a word; I therefore extracted from philosophers principles of science, from historians remarkable facts, from chemists complete processes, from divines⁴ striking exhortations, and from poets beautiful descriptions. Such is design while it is yet at a distance from execution. When the time called upon me to range this accumulation of elegance and wisdom into an alphabetical series, I soon discovered that the bulk of my volumes would fright away the student, and was forced to depart from my scheme of including all that was pleasing or useful in English literature, and reduce my transcripts very often to clusters of words in which scarcely any meaning is retained. Thus to the weariness of copying I was condemned to add the vexation of **expunging**. . . .

In hope of giving **longevity** to that which its own nature forbids to be immortal, I have devoted this book, the labor of years, to the honor of my country, that we may no longer yield the palm of philology,⁵ without a contest, to the nations of the continent. The chief glory of every people arises from its authors. Whether I shall add anything by my own writings to the reputation of English literature must be left to time: much of my life has been lost under the pressures of disease, much has been trifled away, and much has always been spent in provision for the day that was passing over me; but I shall not think my employment useless or ignoble if, by my assistance, foreign nations and distant ages gain access to the propagators of knowledge, and understand the teachers of

copious (kō'pē-əs) *adj.*
plentiful; abundant

A AUTHOR'S PURPOSE

Reread lines 17–23. What is the **controlling idea** of this paragraph? What might have motivated Johnson to make this point in his preface?

B GRAMMAR AND STYLE

Reread lines 31–35. Notice how Johnson uses **parallelism**—listing a series of phrases beginning with *from*—to emphasize his careful research.

expunging (ĭk-spŭn'jĭng)
n. erasing or removing completely **expunge** *v.*

longevity (lŏn-jĕv'ĭ-tĕ) *n.*
endurance over a sizable span of time; long life

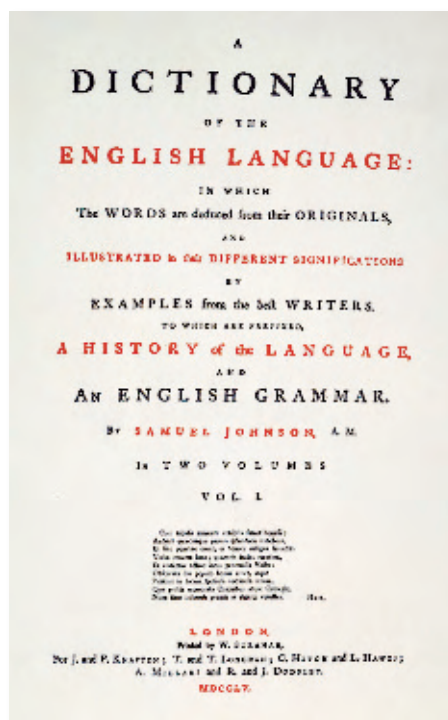
3. **suffrages** (sŭf'rĭ-jĭz): acts of support; assistance.

4. **divines**: religious leaders; members of the clergy.

5. **the palm of philology** (fĭ-lŏl'ə-jĕ): the symbol of triumph in the study of language and literature. Palm leaves were traditionally carried or worn as a symbol of victory.

truth, if my labors afford light to the **repositories** of science and add celebrity to Bacon, to Hooker, to Milton, and to Boyle.⁶ . . . **C**

In this work, when it shall be found that much is omitted, let it not be forgotten that much likewise is performed; and, though no book was ever spared out of tenderness to the author, and the world is little solicitous⁷ to know whence proceeded the faults of that which it condemns, yet it may gratify curiosity to inform it that the *English Dictionary* was written with little assistance of the
 60 learned, and without any patronage of the great, not in the soft obscurities of retirement, or under the shelter of academic bowers,⁸ but amid inconvenience and distraction, in sickness and in sorrow. It may repress the triumph of malignant criticism to observe that, if our language is not here fully displayed, I have only failed in an attempt which no human powers have hitherto completed. If the lexicons of ancient tongues, now immutably fixed,⁹ and comprised in a few volumes, be yet, after the toil of successive ages, inadequate and delusive; if the aggregated knowledge and cooperating diligence of the Italian academicians did not secure them from the censure of
 70 Beni;¹⁰ if the embodied critics of France, when fifty years had been spent upon their work, were obliged to change its economy¹¹ and give their second edition another form, I may surely be contented without the praise of perfection, which, if I could obtain, in this gloom of solitude, what would it avail me? I have protracted my work till most of those whom I wished to please have sunk into the grave,
 80 and success and miscarriage are empty sounds. I therefore dismiss it with frigid tranquility, having little to fear or hope from censure or from praise.



repository (rĭ-pōz'ĭ-tôr'ē)
n. a place where
 information or physical
 items are stored

C VOICE
 Reread lines 43–54.
 Identify the words and
 phrases that give this
 passage a scholarly **tone**.

6. **Bacon . . . Boyle:** English philosopher and essayist Francis Bacon (1561–1626), English clergyman and author Richard Hooker (1554–1600), English poet John Milton (1608–1674), and Irish-born scientist Robert Boyle (1627–1691), four authors whom Johnson quotes throughout his dictionary.
7. **little solicitous** (sə-lĭs'ĭ-təs): not very concerned.
8. **academic bowers** (bou'ərz): places of learning. Bowers are areas sheltered by overhanging trees, vine coverings like ivy, or other plants, as many traditional universities seem to be.
9. **lexicons** (lĕk'sĭ-kōnz') . . . **immutably** (ĭ-myōō'tə-blē) **fixed:** dictionaries of ancient languages, now unchangeable.
10. **Beni:** Paolo Beni was a Renaissance thinker who strongly criticized the pioneering Italian dictionary put out by the Accademia della Crusca of Florence, Italy, in 1612. The dictionary nevertheless was an important milestone and served as a model for dictionaries in other languages.
11. **economy:** organization.

❖❖ SELECTED ENTRIES ❖❖

- ADU'LT.** A person above the age of infancy, or grown to some degree of strength; sometimes full grown: a word used chiefly by medicinal writers. **D**
- TO A'MBLE.** To move easily, without hard shocks, or shaking.
- APE.** A kind of monkey remarkable for imitating what he sees.
- CORN.** The seeds which grow in ears, not in pods; such as are made into bread.
- 90 **DULL.** Not exhilarating; not delightful; as, *to make dictionaries is dull work*.
- FISH.** An animal that inhabits the water.
- TO HISS.** To utter a noise like that of a serpent and some other animals. It is remarkable, that this word cannot be pronounced without making the noise which it signifies. **E**
- LOUSE.** A small animal, of which different species live on the bodies of men, beasts, and perhaps of all living creatures.
- MI'SER.** A wretched person; one overwhelmed with calamity.
- MOULD.** A kind of concretion on the top or outside of things kept, motionless and damp; now discovered by microscopes to be perfect plants.
- 100 **MOUSE.** The smallest of all beasts; a little animal haunting houses and corn fields, destroyed by cats.
- NO'VEL.** A small tale, generally of love.
- POP.** A small smart quick sound. It is formed from the sound.
- RE'CIPE.** A medical prescription.
- RI'VER.** A land current of water bigger than a brook.
- TO SLU'BBER.** To do any thing lazily, imperfectly, or with idle hurry.
- SUN.** The luminary that makes the day.
- TE'MPEST.** The utmost violence of the wind; the names by which the wind is called according to the gradual increase of its force seems to be,
- 110 a breeze; a gale; a gust; a storm; a tempest.
- WA'RREN.** A kind of park for rabbits. 🐰



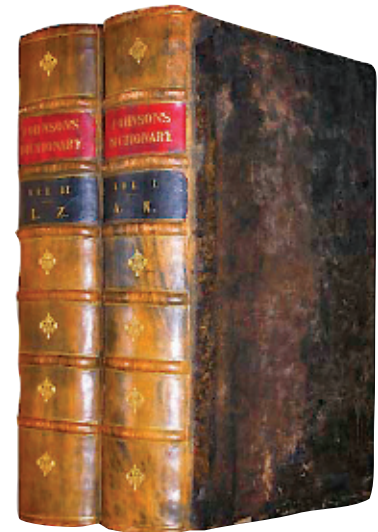
TEKS 6

D SUBTLETY

Subtlety is a fine distinction in meaning based on small nuances of language. Why does Johnson use the subtle phrase “or grown to some degree of strength” here? How does this phrase help define *adult*?

E VOICE

Reread the entry for the verb *hiss*. Which words indicate Johnson's distinctive voice and would not likely be found in a more objective dictionary entry?



First Edition of Samuel Johnson's *A Dictionary of the English Language*, 1755. Courtesy of the Manhattan Rare Book Company.

Comprehension

1. **Recall** According to the preface, what is it like to be a lexicographer?
2. **Summarize** Describe Johnson's method of compiling information for his dictionary.
3. **Paraphrase** In your own words, restate Johnson's definition of the verb *slubber*.



READING 8 Analyze the consistency and clarity of the expression of the controlling idea and the ways in which the organizational and rhetorical patterns of text support or confound the author's meaning or purpose.

Literary Analysis

4. **Identify Author's Purpose** Based on his comments in the preface, what audience did Johnson have in mind when he compiled his dictionary? What was his purpose or purposes in writing the preface?
5. **Analyze Voice** Examine the stylistic elements that create Johnson's voice. Then, in your own words, describe his voice and provide examples from the text to support your response. Do you think Johnson's voice is appropriate and effective for a preface to a dictionary? Explain why or why not.
6. **Draw Conclusions** Find clues in the preface that express Johnson's deepest feelings about his great work. What conclusions about the **author's values** and **beliefs** can you draw from Johnson's remarks on the following topics?
 - the state of the English language (lines 12–23)
 - his explanation of the process for compiling the dictionary (lines 24–42)
 - his personal ambitions (lines 43–54)
7. **Evaluate a Primary Source** Examine the selected entries from Johnson's dictionary. Using a chart like the one shown, choose two or three words that have a substantially different meaning in our language today, and explain how their usage or meanings have changed. Considering these changes, what is the best use of Johnson's dictionary today?

Word	Johnson's Definition	Definition Today

Literary Criticism

8. **Critical Interpretations** Critics have said that Johnson's writing is knowledgeable, honest, humane, and quick to seize the truth. On the basis of the preface and the entries from *A Dictionary of the English Language*, would you say that is an appropriate description of his writing? Cite evidence from the text.

What's in a WORD?

Which words do you know that have just entered the English language during your lifetime? Explain why you think this happened.

Vocabulary in Context

▲ VOCABULARY PRACTICE

Use your knowledge of the boldfaced vocabulary words to indicate whether each statement is true or false.

1. A person who lives to 100 has great **longevity**.
2. Someone with **copious** wealth is very poor.
3. There may be quite a few bottles in a bottle **repository**.
4. For **expunging** names on a list, you might use an eraser.
5. Most people welcome **censure** and desire more of it.
6. People who donate to charity always expect **recompense**.

WORD LIST

censure
copious
expunging
longevity
recompense
repository

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY IN WRITING

• affect • challenge • consent • final • respond

Samuel Johnson met the **challenge** of creating a dictionary of the English language, a task that took him years to complete. Johnson claims that one reason he wrote this dictionary was “to the honor of [his] country” (page 674). What do you think Johnson means by this? Write a paragraph in which you use at least one of the Academic Vocabulary words in your **response**.

VOCABULARY STRATEGY: USING A DICTIONARY

Since Johnson’s day, dictionaries have expanded to include a variety of information on a word. Study this sample dictionary entry for the word *censure*:

ENTRY WORD — **cen•sure** (sĕn’shər) [L. *cen-sura* < *censere*, to tax, value, judge]
PRONUNCIATION ETYMOLOGY
PART OF SPEECH — **n.** 1. a condemnation as wrong; strong disapproval 2. a judgment
DEFINITION condemning a person’s misconduct—**vt.** to express strong disapproval
of. —**syn.** criticize —**cen’sur•er n.**
SYNONYM RELATED FORM



READING 1E Use general dictionaries (printed or electronic) as needed.

PRACTICE Use the information in the sample dictionary entry to help you answer these questions.

1. Where would you hyphenate *censure* if you had to type it on two lines?
2. Is the *s* in *censure* pronounced like the *s* in *sir* or the *s* in *sure*?
3. What is the meaning of the Latin word from which *censure* comes?
4. What synonym for *censure* does the entry provide?
5. The suffix *-er* often means “one who.” What do you think the related form of *censurer* means?

Interactive Vocabulary **THINK** central
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Conventions in Writing

◆ GRAMMAR AND STYLE: Add Emphasis

Review the **Grammar and Style** note on page 674. **Parallelism** is the use of similar grammatical structures to express related ideas. In this example, notice how Johnson repeats the infinitive *to be* to list his many tasks and the preposition *without* to detail the obstacles each task presented to him:

... choice was to be made out of boundless variety, without any established principle of selection; adulterations were to be detected, without a settled test of purity; and modes of expression to be rejected or received, without the suffrages of any writers of classical reputation or acknowledged authority. (lines 19–23)

Such perfectly balanced syntax serves to emphasize the laborious—and lonely—effort of Johnson’s undertaking.

PRACTICE Identify the parallel elements in each of the following sentences. Then write a sentence that contains similar parallel elements.

EXAMPLE

... Much of my life has been lost under the pressures of disease, much has been trifled away, and much has always been spent in provision for the day that was passing over me. ...

Some of the summers are spent traveling to our cabin, some are spent hiking in the canyon, and some are spent at my grandparents’ house on the lake.

1. It is the fate of those who toil at the lower employments of life to be rather driven by the fear of evil than attracted by the prospect of good; to be exposed to censure without hope of praise. ...
2. ... The *English Dictionary* was written with little assistance of the learned, and without any patronage of the great, not in the soft obscurities of retirement, or under the shelter of academic bowers, but amid inconvenience and distraction, in sickness and in sorrow.

READING-WRITING CONNECTION



Expand your understanding of Johnson by responding to this prompt. Then use the **revising tips** to improve your character analysis.

WRITING PROMPT

WRITE A CHARACTER ANALYSIS Johnson states many opinions in his preface to the dictionary. Using what you learned about Johnson in the preface, write a **three-to-five-paragraph character analysis** describing the type of person you believe Johnson was.

REVISING TIPS

- Cite specific examples that you think illustrate Johnson’s character.
- Use parallelism in at least one sentence.



WRITING 15A Write an analytical essay. **17** Understand the function of and use the conventions of academic language when speaking and writing. **17A** Use and understand the function of different types of clauses and phrases.

Interactive Revision

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