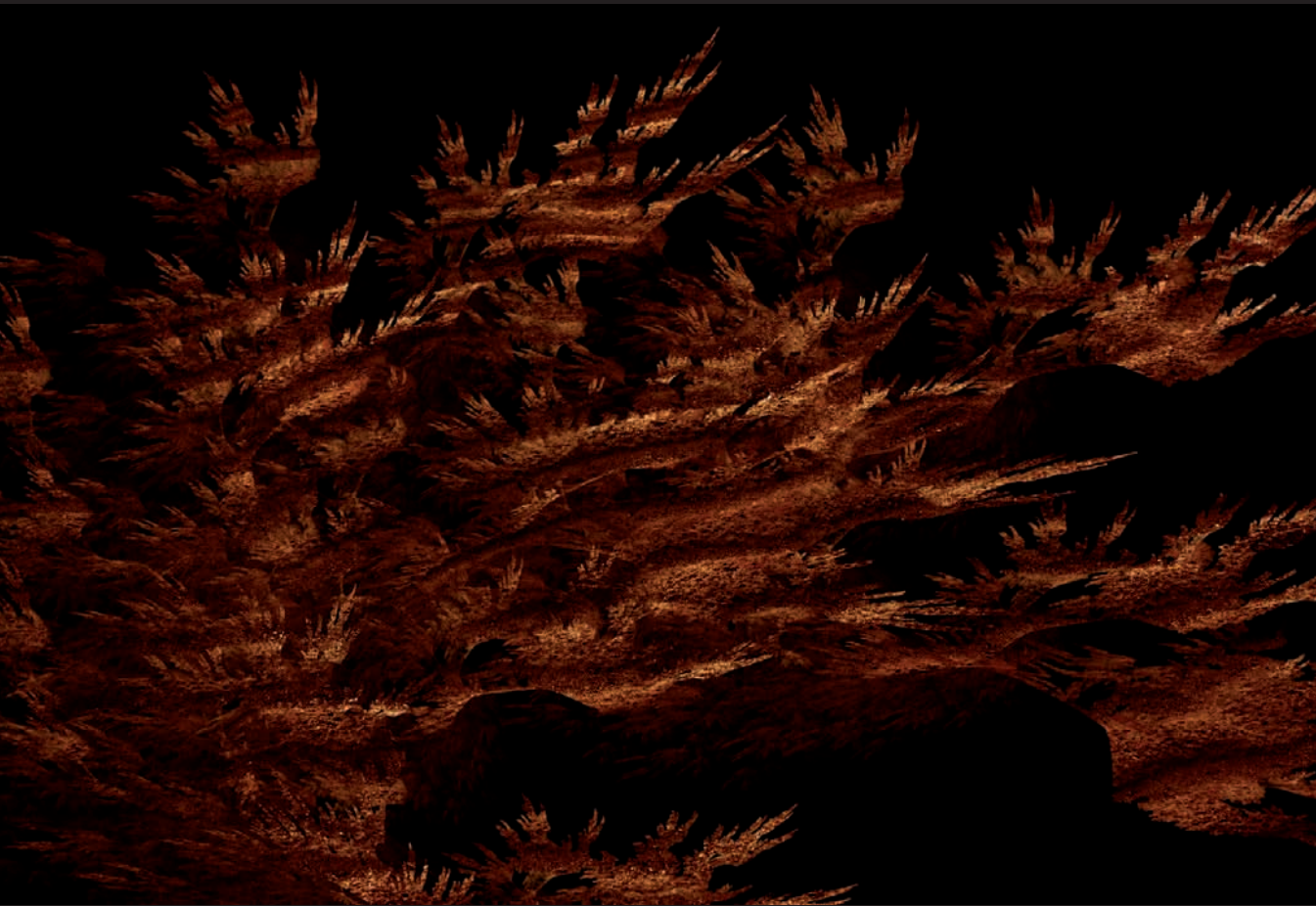


REASON TO WRITE



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Etymological Define all term by an origin.

Stipulative *Stipulate* your terms by defining what you mean by them, as clearly as possible, within the context of your question.

STEP 6

Rewrite your critical question, in which you stipulate each of your terms/phrases. The result will be lengthy, but will situate your question both within a context, and to help you, as writer, to have a solid sense of what, exactly, you are asking.

EXAMPLE COMPLETED WAYS TO DEFINE GUIDE

STEP 1

Write your question, as it is now.

Why is the main plot of Disney films about a romance between young adults, when children are its main audience?

STEP 2

Delimitation of Question

Can I, or do I want to, answer for all time? No

I want to keep my samples to a reasonable amount of films, for analysis.

Rephrase "Animated full-length Disney feature films from 1930-2000"

Can I, or do I want to, answer in all places No

Rephrase "In the United States"

Can I, or do I want to, answer for all people? No

Rephrase "In the United States"

Can I, or do I want to, answer in all instances? No.

Some Disney films are not about romance, but most are.

Rephrase "Most, but not all, Disney films"

STEP 3

Rewrite your question with the rephrased delimitation.

Why is the main plot of most, but not all, full-length Disney animated films, made between 1930 and 2000, in the United States, about romance between young adults, when the main audience is children?

STEP 4

List any term whose definition is up for question, especially those that are abstract. Always keep your question in mind. Treat all *phrases* as *terms*. For example, "fashion sense" would be treated as a whole term, instead of defining "fashion" and "sense" separately.

- Romance
- Plot
- Children
- Main Audience
- Young Adults

STEP 5

Define each term as a type of definition, except for *Dictionary*.

Exemplar: Define by example

Term: Romance: "Romeo and Juliet" is a romance

Term: Main audience: Young males age 18-24 are the main anticipated audience of a horror film.

Term: Plot: In "Cinderella" stories, a young and beautiful young woman in negative circumstances escapes those circumstances by meeting and marrying a prince.

Term: Young Adults: College students are often young adults.

Term: Children: Children are students in elementary school.

NOTE

See how exemplar definition tends to put the term into a particular context, because you must find examples of the thing you are defining, in the world?

This makes this kind of definition very useful to you, as a writer.

For example, the definition for "main audience" provides valuable information, because it clarifies that there is always an intention behind making stories. That intention is to have an effect—not on all people, but on a certain kind of audience. That's important to remember in answering your question.

However, exemplar definition should not be the only way you define a term, because it's often only one particular example. Your analysis may require a range of examples, or examples of a specific type.

For example, "Romeo and Juliet" is not the only romantic story out there, and doesn't fit Disney plots, because Romeo and Juliet always die in the end—every time. No Disney film has ever had one of the lovers die—only parents and villains.

Analogical: Define in relationship to something else

Term: Romance: _____ *Romance is the yearning heart united with its desire*

Term: Main Audience: _____ *The main audience is the dupe of the story*

Term: Plot: _____ *A plot is the satisfaction of uncertainty*

Term: Young Adults: _____ *Young adults are old enough to step on the tracks, and young enough not to see the train coming.*

Term: Children: _____ *A child is an empty page*

NOTE

See how analogical definition tends to encourage muddy thinking? That's because analogy is related to metaphor, and metaphor is an associational (illogical) comparison of things that are unlike one another.

For example, in the definition for “romance,” one gets wine-bottle language. Remember that in academic discourse, a “heart” would be a biological organ—it does not yearn. It pumps blood.

The third definition for “plot” gives a writer some insight into what plots do: they resolve uncertainty. That's good to know. However, for the most part, analogical definitions tend to be traps that encourage imprecision in definition, instead of clarification. Use this kind of definition with extreme caution.

Synonymous: Define a term by related words

Term: Romance: _____ *Romance is love*

Term: Main Audience: _____ *A main audience is the viewers*

Term: Plot: _____ *A plot is a story*

Term: Young Adults: _____ *Young adults are older teens.*

Term: Children: _____ *A child is a baby*

NOTE

See how synonymous definition actually moves the writer away from precision? No word is equal to another, or we would just have kept the original. Romance is *not* just love: it's a specific kind of idealized love between two persons who are of an age appropriate to establish such a bond, and who are not related to one another.

In other words, synonyms just mean more words to define. Synonyms are so rarely useful that it's better to abandon them altogether when defining terms.

Negative: Define a term by what it is not

Term: Romance: Romance is not friendship

Term: Main Audience: A main audience is the not the unintended audience

Term: Plot: A plot is not a true history

Term: Young Adults: Young adults are not children

Term: Children: A child is not an adult

NOTE

See how negative definition can give you valuable information? For example, keeping your question in mind, if children are the main audience of these Disney films, wouldn't it make sense that they might value friendship over romantic love? Or that children might want to watch a story that tells of the adventures of characters their own age? Or that children might value adventure stories more than romantic stories?

It's also good to know that not all people who view a film are the ones for whom it is intended. Parents may not go out on a date and choose to watch a Disney film, but they're certainly around when their kids watch Disney films. That makes parents an audience that the speaker (Disney) did not necessarily intend, which is called a *secondary audience*.

Etymological: Define a term by its origin

Term: Romance: Original definition: "verse narrative."

Term: Main Audience: Audience: A hearing, related to a judicial hearing

Term: Plot: Plot: Story structure, related to: a secret plan, scheme, outline, conspiracy

Term: Young Adults: Adult: Grown up, related to adult-: debauch, corrupt, falsify, debase (e.g.: adultery, adulterate)

Term: Children: Child: a young human, related to womb, pregnant, and child (servant)

NOTE

Obviously, a foray into etymological definition can often be limited in its immediate uses. However, it is sometimes a source of important information.

For example, the reason that the original meaning of “romance” was “verse narrative” is because marriage was not thought of as an exclusive heterosexual union based upon a primary emotional/sexual bonding before early Medieval times (11th Century France), where it begins as a topic of poetry for the upper class. These tales of courtly love were still not what we would think of as “romance,” however, and referred to stories having to do more with honor than mutual attraction, for its own sake.

Chivalry love did establish a hetero-normative emotional connection, although no word meaning “homosexuality” existed until the 1860’s.

The concept of an exclusive and unique emotional bond does not even begin to form until the 17th century, and coincides roughly with the rise of the novel as a form of literature.

Romanticism introduces both: 1) the idea of a man or woman, by himself or herself, as incomplete, without a romantic partner of the opposite gender, and; 2) the idea of men and women, in relationship, as inherently antagonistic to one another.

It would certainly be important to note that the modern notion of heterosexual “romantic love,” as we understand it—that is, as an emotional bond central to an individual’s life experience—is believed to have originated in the late 19th/early 20th century.

Stipulative: Define a term in a way that stipulates a clear definition within the context of your writing, and in relationship to your question.

Term: Romance: The idealization and expressions of the emotions that attend a specific pairing between unrelated adults, and that is often depicted as resulting in marriage.

Term: Main Audience: The specific type of person to whom a message is targeted.

Term: Plot: The introduction and resolution of the main conflict in the story.

Term: Young Adults: A human roughly between the age of 16 and 21.

Term: Children: A human roughly between the age of newborn and 12 years of age.

NOTE

The opportunity to have control over what one means by a given word in a stipulative definition can be a relief once you realize how many different ways there are to define a word. The nice thing about stipulating your definition is that, as long as it is a reasonable definition, it allows you to tailor the definition both to what you mean, and to what your question needs, in order to answer it.

STEP 6

Rewrite your critical question, in which you stipulate each of your terms/phrases. The result will be lengthy, but will help you to situate your question both within a context, and to help you, as writer, to have a solid sense of what, exactly, you are asking. Condense, when you can, without losing the specifics.

Original:

Why is the main plot of Disney films about a romance between young adults, when children are its main audience?

Delimitation of Question:

Why is the main plot of most, but not all, full-length Disney animated films, made between 1930 and 2000, in the United States, about romance between young adults, when the main audience is children?

With Stipulative Definition:

Why is the main issue to be resolved, in most, but not all, full-length Disney animated films, made between 1930 and 2000, in the United States, about the emotions that attend an exclusive pairing between unrelated young adults between the ages of 16-21, often depicted as resulting in marriage, when the specific type of person to whom the message is targeted is between the age of newborn to 12 years old?

7 THE SHORTCUT

Once one understands the general ideas behind these exercises, one can skip a portion of the long process of going through every step each time one writes a paper. Here is a basic outline of how to learn to think about a question, using the skills in those exercises.

Original question: “How has technology changed human social interaction?”

DELIMITATION

Since I can't answer that question for all time, I'll make it: "modern" technology.

Since I can't answer that question for all people/places, I'll make it "in the United States."

STIPULATE TERMS

modern

I will define my timeframe as beginning with the routine use of the personal computer.

technology

I will define it as both:

1. an object designed or re-purposed in order to allow the performance of a specific action
2. the use of such an object to aid the flow of people, goods, and information

changed

I will define this as altered from a previous state—neither good nor bad, just different

human social interaction

I will define this as purposeful verbal and non-verbal communication between two or more speakers, even if the speaker is not present at the time of transmission

3. REFINE QUESTION

The following illustrates what happens when one begins to ask: Who? What? Where? How? When? Why? I would begin to map specifics within the question that lead to more refined areas of inquiry. I may not follow every link—just one's that I find of interest.

With this map, I haven't even scratched the surface of my original question. However, I don't have dig that deep before more specific questions start to arise, across various disciplines and areas of inquiry:

Public Policy	What factors impact upon the possibility of public transportation as viable transportation for the majority of workers in the United States?
Science	How has paternity testing changed the definition of parenthood?
Sociology	What is the purpose of technology in relationship to making the life of individuals easier, and to what degree does it achieve that goal?
Psychology	What tensions are caused in virtual reality between private and public selves?
Business	What strategies are used to control consumer experience within retail space?
Education	In what ways does standardized testing serve as both a definition of, and also a measure of, learning?
Visual Studies	How does advertising sell mass-produced objects based upon an image of individuality?

SECTION II

ANALYSIS
ORGANIZING PRINCIPLE
ARRANGEMENT