

# Assignment Overview: Rhetorical Analysis

## Note:

not Exercise prompt!

just useful strategies/approach

## Critical:

Identify the elements of the **rhetorical situation** and use of **rhetorical appeals**.

For example, you might look at the following, among others:

- **Author:** (Who is the author?)
- **Purpose:** (What is the author trying to **accomplish**? – Why did the author feel the need to write the text?)
- **Audience/Relationship to the Reader:** (To whom is the text addressed?)
- **Context:** (What are **influencing factors** surrounding the event of the text?)
- **Where/When** was the text written?)
- **Voice:** (What is the overall **tone** of the text?)
- **Genre:** (What type of writing is the text?)
- **Strategies:** (How did the author write the text? Does the author follow prescribed methodologies? Does the author deviate from the norm?)
- **Effectiveness?** (Is the author rhetorically effective? Does the text ‘move’ you? Does the text convincingly get you to think critically/differently about the topic/subject matter?)

Your rhetorical analysis should demonstrate how the author utilizes one or more of the three elements of the **rhetorical appeals**:

- **Ethos:** Appeals to the character and expertise of the writer or speaker
- **Logos:** Appeals based on logic, reasoning, and evidence concerning the subject
- **Pathos:** Appeals to the beliefs and values of the audience

You will want to consider the ways in which the author uses visual elements to enhance the document’s effectiveness. In considering the overall design of the document, you may want to address how the author uses the **basic principles of design**.

The five basic principles of design are:

- **Balance:** The distribution of elements from top to bottom or left to right
- **Alignment:** Patterns of visual elements within the document in relation to the borders or center
- **Grouping:** The arrangement of like or complimentary items within the text
- **Consistency:** The extent to which patterns are established or repeated throughout a document
- **Contrast:** Distinguishing items visually by juxtaposing them against different items

In addition to elements of design, you may also wish to analyze some basic visual elements utilized in your artifact. Some common visual elements you may wish to analyze are the author’s use of:

- Text or Typeface • Color • Size • Visual Effects • Images • Placement

## Purpose:

The purpose of this assignment is to:

- Analyze the **rhetorical situation** and the *author's* use of **rhetorical appeals**.
- Analyze the use of **visual elements** to enhance the effectiveness of a given artifact.
- Articulate and develop a critical and analytical perspective in writing
- Develop strategies for critically engaging information and develop it in writing as evidence for arguments
- Study the writing in relation to articulating human values, cultural perspectives, or interdisciplinary understanding

## Process:

1. **Ej qqug' [ qwt 'Ukg:** Select textual ( visual artifact (what you select will depend on many various factors - note: it is not always "easiest" to choose the obvious). You will select an artifact that is in some way relevant to your intended field of study. Keep in mind, however, that a rhetorical/visual analysis is asking you to **do** something very different that what you would be asked to do when reading for content or conducting a Hqto cnAnalysis. [ qw'ctg'dgkpi "cungf "vq'cpcn{ | g'y g'tj gqtkccn'pcwtg"qh'y g'ukg0
2. **Consider The Rhetorical Situation:** Read/view the artifact several times over the course of different times/days, paying special attention to not only what the author is saying, but rather how he/she presents his/her ideas. A good way to begin is to write out on a separate piece of paper what you think the text's purpose is, including: the thesis, the audience, the context in which the text was written, the tone, and the genre of the text. Think about the **rhetorical situation** (issues of purpose, audience, context, voice, strategies, genre, etc.) in terms of the author's choices. [**Hint:** you will want to at least touch on **all** of the element mentioned above (in the Rhetorical Situation and Rhetorical Appeals sections, respectively), as *each* of these elements (inter)act upon the others]. A word of caution; however, don't try to write *in-depth* about **all** of the elements of appeal and rhetorical situations, or your paper may quickly become unmanageable. Likewise, beware of *not* going into enough detail or not covering the relevant elements. There is a delicate balance you have to find between these two strategies – one for which there is, unfortunately, no hard fast set of rules for how to accomplish this. While you will need to address *all* elements, you may wish to focus on those elements most relevant to the text you choose (going into greater depth for those), and go into less depth for those which are not as relevant.
3. **Consider The Rhetorical Appeals:** Focus on the three elements of **rhetorical appeals** (Ethos, Logos, and Pathos). How does (or does not) the site utilize one (or all) of these three approaches? Note: texts rarely utilize only one of the appeals, but rather typically utilize elements of all three.

4. **Consider The Visual Elements:** While some artifacts are more obviously visual than others, **all texts utilize some elements of visual design.** A common method for analyzing a text's visual design is to step back and simply **look at the artifact.** How does the artifact present itself to you? Are there features of the artifact that seem to “jump out” at you? Are there features that seem to recede into the background? Look at the use of color (if applicable). Does the author use images or other visual elements to enhance the artifact's effectiveness? Take note of how/why the author uses these elements to make the document more effective.
5. **Develop A Clear Thesis Statement:** This is perhaps the most critical step in the writing process. You must ask yourself, “What is **my** purpose for writing this essay?” Based upon your answer, you should be able to come up with a strong (unique) thesis statement. A thesis statement should reflect **your opinion** on some *controversial* issue (i.e. a thesis statement is a statement of your opinion, and ought to be *arguable*). Do not simply restate the author's original thesis (remember the elements of the rhetorical situation; *your* purpose is different than the original author's). In addition to stating your stance, your thesis should provide the reader with a clear direction of where you're heading (i.e. what side of the topic/issue are you taking, what's your purpose/what do you propose, and what are your thoughts/where are you taking the reader with this?).
6. **Support Your Thesis Statement:** The body of your essay should be devoted to supporting evidence for your thesis statement. This will entail techniques of direct quotation, paraphrasing, and your own assessment. **Do not** simply summarize what the author has already stated (this is your essay). There is an important, but subtle, shift in focus from your thesis to your supporting evidence // your supporting evidence reflects what the *original author* is doing). This can be tricky, and causes some students difficulty, but we will cover this in class. Additionally, "your paragraphs should each, subsequently, address the various rhetorical elements and the aspects of the rhetorical situation. Be sure each paragraph directly addresses your thesis statement."  
"
7. **State Your Conclusion:** The purpose of your conclusion is to clearly, but briefly, reiterate what *you* were hoping to accomplish in your essay. In other words, it should reflect (mirror) your thesis. Note: It should not simply be a restatement of your thesis. It is designed to have the reader (re)contemplate on the thesis, in light of the evidence you provided in the body of the text.

# Rhetorical Analysis Worksheet

## Title or description of text:

**Author** (or name of company, sponsor, etc). *include not only the name of the author or company, but any pertinent information about them—are they writing from a position of power or expertise? Are they part of an organization that has a vested interest in this issue?*

## Audiences

**Implied audience** *this is the audience for whom the text says it is intended, not the real audience. For example, the implied audience of the country western song "Momma, Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up to Be Cowboys" is mothers whose children might become cowboys when they grow up:*

**Intended audience** *this is more like the actual audience, though since the author can't always control who reads or views the text, the intended audience may be somewhat different from the real audience. In the song "Momma, Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up to Be Cowboys," the intended audience is adults--probably men--who have already grown up and have already become cowboys or would like to pretend that they are like cowboys:*

## Purposes

**Actual purpose** *this is the purpose you believe the author/advertiser had in mind when he/she created the text. The purpose of an Internet company's television ad might be to get you to remember and go to their web page later. Texts can have more than one purpose:*

**Stated Purpose** *if different from the purpose described above. This is the purpose according to the text itself. For example, Stephen Colbert's stated purpose is to deliver serious news; we find humor in it because we know his actual purpose is to ridicule events and people in the news:*

Rhetorical Strategy	Effect (intended, real, or both)
<b>Figurative language</b> (metaphor, simile, symbolism, etc.):	
<b>Patterns of repetition or opposition:</b>	
<b>Appeal to emotion or self-interest:</b>	
<b>Modes of writing</b> (description, narration, definition, cause/effect, compare/contrast, classification; see <a href="#">Norton's "Rhetorical Strategies"</a> page for details on each mode.	
<b>Appeal to authority</b> (use of research, statement of credibility of author, etc.):	
<b>Rhetorical devices</b>	

\*The list of rhetorical strategies used by authors is almost endless. You might customize this list if you have something specific in mind.

## Visual/aural strategies

Strategy	Effect (intended, real, or both)
<b>Colors or color scheme</b> (if significant; "black and white" is a color scheme):	
<b>Page layout</b> (spacious, cramped, busy, simple, etc.; describe in your own terms):	
<b>Fonts/typfaces</b> (name or type, size, italic/bold, etc.):	
<b>Images</b> (subject--i.e. who's in the photo--pose, cropping, angle distance of camera, i °œ	
<b>Graphics</b> (lines, logos, etc.):	
<b>Authorial voice/persona:</b>	
<b>Music/soundtrack:</b>	
<b>Sound effects:</b>	

# Website Analysis Prompts

from <http://www.digirhetorics.org/rhetorical-analysis-of-favorite-websites.html>

## DEFINE THE PURPOSE

What is the purpose of the website? Who does this website work to educate and empower? Why? How?

Is the site selling something? How does it sell these items?

Does the website build some sort of community around a common cause or issue? Does the website further a political/social cause?

Does the website recruit volunteers for a project? Who? How?

Does the website inform you about a person, place, or set of issues?

How does the website communicate its purposes with more than just the words on the site?

## DISCUSS THE DESIGN

Is there a logo for this website? If so, describe it. How does the logo work with the purpose of site?

Is there a repeating image on this website (like a background image)? Describe this image. How does it work with the purpose of site?

What other kinds of images appear on the website? Describe them. How does they work with the purpose of site?

What is the color package of this website? What does that color package convey in terms of message, mood, etc?

## DISCUSS THE INTERACTIVITY

How do the authors sound on this website? Who are they talking to? How do you know?

Describe the language of the site's author. How does the language work with the content and message of the site?

What are the various features of the site? Who do you think uses this site regularly?

How do people interact with this site? What do they do once they get there? Do they comment?

What kind of links to other sites and digital work does this site offer? Why? How does that fit the message?

## INFLUENCE ON YOU

Why do YOU like this website?

You chose websites that you like. You do not have to like all aspects of your websites but their design should be something that teaches you something, something that YOU want to emulate. Describe this in detail.

Offer some comparisons between your two websites. What are the commonalities in the two websites that drew you to them both? What are the differences in these two websites that you like?