



Success Center Guidelines for Writing a Rhetorical Analysis

A rhetorical analysis of a written work explains how an author structures their message. It **identifies** the critical thinking process the author uses to persuade readers, and the deliberate choices they make while writing. A rhetorical analysis **evaluates** how well the author accomplishes their intended purpose or message. Another component of a rhetorical analysis describes the impact of the author's attitude (tone) on the readers. In short, you are writing a critique of the author's work.

Note: While this handout refers to the "author," a rhetorical analysis can also be used to evaluate multimedia creations such as printed or televised ads, political cartoons, artwork, songs, or movies.

Read the work and record the following information:

- What is the author's **purpose** (in a text, this is usually located in the thesis statement)?
 - What rhetorical situation prompted the author to create this work? Did the author choose the most opportune time and place to make their argument heard (**KAIROS**)? Why or why not?
 - What audience (group of people or organization) did the author intend to persuade in this work?
- How does the author **structure the argument/claim** of the paper?
- How does the author **support their argument**? What facts are present? How are the readers persuaded? Use the words **ETHOS**, **PATHOS**, and **LOGOS** in your written analysis to explain the following:
 - How does the author establish **ETHOS** (an appeal to ethics by displaying character and credibility)?
 - To what extent does the author use **LOGOS** (an appeal to logic using facts and evidence from reliable sources and authorities)?
 - How does the author use **PATHOS** (an appeal to emotion by creating an emotional effect on the reader)?
- What **tone** (attitude or treatment of the subject) is indicated by the author's words (e.g., sarcasm, humor, seriousness, exaggeration)?
 - Does the tone fit the author's writing goals or purpose?
 - Does the tone distract readers from the message or enhance the message? How?
- What ideas or objects are used as **symbols** to represent larger, more complex ideas or concepts? How effective is the use of symbols?

In your rhetorical analysis, you will write a critique that judges the quality of the author's discussion using all of the bulleted points listed above.