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# Persuasive Speech Analysis

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## WHAT IS RHETORICAL CRITICISM?

1. Rhetorical criticism can be said to be the study of speeches since it required the critic to determine the effect of the rhetoric on the immediate audience.
2. However, it is also the study of speakers because the sheer number of topics to cover relating to the rhetor and the speech make dealing with more than a single speaker impossible.

## HOW IS RHETORICAL CRITICISM ACCOMPLISHED?

The neo-Aristotelian approach to rhetorical criticism involves three major tasks:

### I Reconstruction of the context in which the rhetorical act occurred.

- A First, the critic discovers information about the rhetor.
  - 1 This is not necessarily a biography of the individual.
  - 2 Rather it seeks to discover links between the rhetor's history, experience, and character and that person's rhetorical efforts.
  - 3 The critic, for example, may want to seek information about early environmental influences on the rhetor's attitudes, motivation, and communication skills.
- B Second, the critic turns to an examination of the occasion.
  - 1 The critic attempts to determine what elements in the occasion influenced the rhetor in choice of subject and approach.
  - 2 The critic also seeks to determine what historical antecedents gave rise to and followed the rhetorical occasion.
- C Third, the critic completes the analysis of the context by examination of the audience.
  - 1 Knowing about the audience helps the critic understand why the rhetor selected particular strategies.
  - 2 The same forces that helped to shape the occasion help to shape the audience and the attitudes held by the audience.

### II Analyzing the artifact itself.

- A **Invention:** the location and creation of ideas and materials for the speech. Invention is based on two major forms of proof:
  - 1 Inartistic proof: are those the rhetor uses from other sources but does not create, including the testimony of witnesses or document such as letters or contracts.
  - 2 Artistic proof: are those created by the rhetor and fall into three categories:
    - a Logos -- logical arguments
      - i Inductive reasoning
      - ii Deductive reasoning
    - b Ethos -- the appeal of the rhetor's character
      - i Referred to today as *credibility*.

- ii Credibility is displayed largely through three qualities:
      - ◆ Moral character or integrity
      - ◆ Intelligence as demonstrated by common sense, good taste, and familiarity with current topics.
      - ◆ Good will or the establishment of rapport with the audience.
    - c Pathos -- emotional appeals
  - B **Organization:** the structure or arrangement of the speech.
    - 1 What organizational patterns are used?
    - 2 What parts of the presentation are emphasized?
    - 3 Those placed at the beginning or end.
    - 4 Those on which the rhetor spends the most time.
  - C **Style:** language of the speech.
    - 1 This focuses on the type of language used by the rhetor to create varying effects.
    - 2 Was the effect common and ordinary, forceful and robust, or stately and ornate.
  - D **Memory:** mastery of the subject matter.
    - 1 Rarely focused on today since memory is not as significant a factor.
    - 2 Generally, it deals with the rhetor's control of the materials and methods of improving memory.
  - E **Delivery:** management of the voice and gestures in the presentation of the speech.
    - 1 Is it delivered impromptu
    - 2 Is it extemporaneous
    - 3 From memory
    - 4 Read from a script.
    - 5 The critic also examines the bodily action of the rhetor.
    - 6 Finally, the rhetor considers the vocal quality of the rhetor.

### III Assessing the impact of the artifact on the audience considering the various options available to the rhetor.

- A Was the rhetor's goal accomplished?
- B What were the immediate and long-term effects of the speech?

## WHAT TO PUT IN THE CONTENT OF THE ESSAY?

The APA style manual should be followed when writing the manuscript. Your paper should be approximately 10-15 pages and consist of the following:

- Title page
- Introduction
- Description of the artifact and research question (speech, persuasive message, etc.)
- Description of the critical method
- Report of the findings of your critical analysis
  - Interpretation of the findings
  - Evaluation of the artifact

- Contribution of the study to rhetorical theory
- Conclusion
- Reference List
- Appendix
  - Copy of the speech
  - Video of speech is available

If you would like to read a sample rhetorical criticisms using the Aristotelian method check out the following article: Thomas, G. (1953). Aaron Burr's farewell address. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 39, pp. 273-82. (The link is below)

<http://web.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=5&sid=c9ae3bc4-d9e3-4965-a810-4053b7886989%40sessionmgr4007&hid=4201>



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