



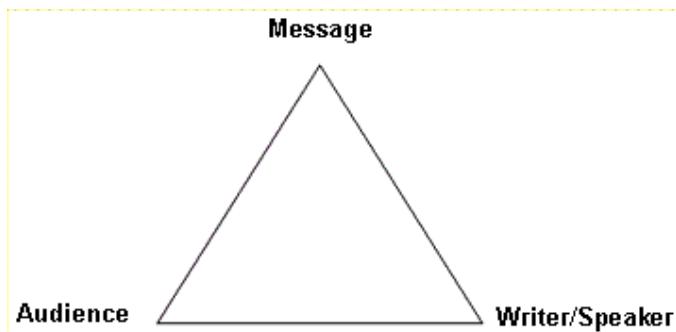
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Rhetorical Analysis

Rhetoric is a term that is broadly used, but its most classical definition is *the art of persuasion*. If you are asked to write a **rhetorical analysis**, you are really being asked to identify the particular strategies that an author is using to appeal to or persuade a given audience. Typically, the three components of the rhetorical situation are defined at the **writer/speaker**, the **audience**, and the **message**. In the traditional schema shown below, these three elements are equally related:



A rhetorical analysis paper asks you to identify these three elements and determine how they are working together. That is, what strategies is the author employing to communicate this message to this audience? What is the effect of these strategies? And, most importantly, do you find these strategies convincing, given the author's specific purpose and specific audience?

In order to plan a rhetorical analysis paper, you may begin by answering several of the following questions regarding writer/speaker, audience, and message:

The Writer or Speaker (his/her voice or persona)

- How does the author present himself or herself?
- Is the author familiar with the subject? How can you tell?
- How does the author show good judgment or a broad perspective?
- Is the author reasonable? How can you tell?
- How does the author treat those who disagree?
- How does the author value others' welfare?
- How does the author treat the reader?
- Does the author use stereotypes or show prejudice?
- Where is this published? What does that say about this work?
- What did you expect to see that was not on the page? How does the author distract your attention from this?
- What does this work look like? Is it neatly done? Does it use the page well? How does the font interact with the text? Is there white space on the page? Are there relations between parts of text?

The Audience

- What are the characteristics of the audience? How can you tell? Consider:
 - *Race, age, sex, physical characteristics, habits
 - *Economic or educational level
 - *Religious or educational level
 - *Ethnicity, citizenship, location
- Is the reader/audience encouraged to have an emotional response to this writing? How can you tell?
- How should the audience use information about opposing views?
- Is the reader encouraged to examine or question the opposition's motives?
- What reader needs, values, or beliefs are presented here? How can you tell?
- Is there a pattern to word choice or word order? Is the language simple or complex? Are terms defined?
- What is the style of this work? How is this style created? Does the style of this piece resemble that of other works?
- Consider imagery, coherence, emphasis, repetition, rhythm, analogy, metaphor, simile.

The Message (i.e. the text)

- How is this work organized? What are the cues to this organization?
- Does the organization work?
 - *Process, narration
 - *Comparison/contrast
 - *Division/classification
 - *Cause/effect
 - *Definition, description
- What claims are made? Are these claims strong, obvious?
- What evidence is used to support the claims?
 - *Examples and illustrations
 - *Facts, statistics
 - *Precedents, laws
 - *Memories, records
 - *Expert or witness testimony or opinion
- How does the work look?
 - *Is it neat or sloppy?
 - *Is the layout good?
 - *Do font and font size seem appropriate?
- Do visual aid(s) add to the overall effect?

With thanks to Susan Smith.



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