



W. L. Adams Center for Writing

RHETORICAL ANALYSIS ESSAY

A rhetorical analysis essay seeks to examine how well an author communicates their message and persuades their audience (Lunsford, Ruskiewicz, & Walters, 2022). These types of essays do not focus on the writer's agreement or disagreement with the central argument of a given text. Rather, they focus on how an author presents their argument and whether the author presents it effectively.

Rhetorical Situation

A rhetorical situation is essentially several circumstances surrounding a text, and a rhetorical analysis essay illustrates an argument of how an author responds to those circumstances. According to Lunsford (2021), a rhetorical situation includes the following information:

- Purpose — what an author is attempting to achieve through writing
- Audience — those who will be seeing, reading, or listening to what an author has to say
- Stance — an author's attitude toward a topic they are discussing
- Context — what else has been said about an author's topic; historical context
- Genre — the different communicative purposes a writer hopes to accomplish, such as reporting information, arguing a position, summarizing a text, etc.
- Media — the different methods a message can be disseminated, such as print, digital, oral, etc.
- Design — how an author communicates purpose through the use of color, fonts, images, graphs, etc.

Introduction

The introductory paragraph presents the audience to the text the author analyses. It typically consists of a brief explanation of the author's argument, along with a thesis statement evaluating how the author utilizes specific rhetorical strategies and how effectively those strategies persuade the audience. Here's a brief explanation:

- Introduction: Introduce the text that will be analyzed by including the title, author, medium, publication date, and topic.
- Purpose: State the author's main claim or purpose (Lunsford, Ruskiewicz, & Walters, 2022, p. 99).
- Thesis: Write a thesis statement that clearly demonstrates the rhetorical strategies to be analyzed in the essay and explains whether or not they are effective. For example:
 - In the essay "Is Google Making Us Stupid?" Nicholas Carr effectively persuades readers through allusions to pop culture media, use of credible outside sources, and clever word choices.
- Primary rhetorical appeals include: Ethos, Pathos, Logos.
 - Ethos – an appeal to credibility; persuasion through trustworthiness, expertise, and authority
 - Pathos – an appeal to the emotions; persuasion through passion, sympathy, fear, etc.
 - Logos – an appeal to logic; persuasion through reasoning, evidence, and facts
- Secondary strategies include: Tone, Style, Diction, Imagery, Repetition, Syntax, Evidence, Word Choice, Organization, etc.

Body Paragraphs

The body paragraphs are the main opportunity to highlight sections within the text and explain what makes specific rhetorical strategies employed by the author effective or not. Here's a quick breakdown:

- Topic Sentence: Name the specific appeal/strategy, explaining further if it is effective or not.
- Context: Locate and display where exactly this appeal/strategy appears in the text.
- Evidence: Quote or paraphrase a specific example.
- Analysis: Explain how the strategy employed works and why it is effective in the given text or not.

Conclusion

The concluding paragraph serves as the last impression of the essay. Here, it is important to recap some main points of the essay and leave the reader with a takeaway that will help them reevaluate what they believe or appreciate regarding the provided analysis in personally relevant ways. Typically displayed ideas include:

- Reiterate: Restate the thesis statement.
- Recap: Summarize the main points made throughout the essay.
- Closing Remark: Provide the reader with a final thought on the overall effectiveness of the text.

Helpful Hints

- Cite in the correct format (MLA, APA, Chicago, etc.).
- Avoid summarizing the text; instead, focus on the analysis.
- Use clear and specific language (for example, "effective" instead of "good").
- Organize the essay after the structure employed in the thesis statement.

References

Lunsford, A. A., Ruskiewicz, J. J., Walters, K. (2022). *Everything's an argument: With readings* (9th ed.).

Bedford/St. Martin's.

Lunsford, A. A. (2021). *Let's talk: A pocket rhetoric*. W. W. Norton & Company.