

How to Write A Rhetorical Analysis

Analytical writing moves beyond summarization by reacting to the implied meaning of the text. After writing a brief summary, look at how the author developed the ideas and information. Look closely at what the author is doing to convince the audience.

- **Purpose:** Determine what the author is trying to do by writing this piece. Is the author trying to inform the audience or trying to persuade the audience to think a certain way?
- **Audience:** To whom is the author writing? Is the author published in a peer reviewed, scholarly journal or in an online periodical for the general public? Where a piece is published can give it a different context for evaluation.

Next, analyze how well the author accomplished this purpose by looking at the ways the author is informing or persuading the audience. For example:

- **Title:** Is it informative, persuasive, or written to arouse curiosity? Think about why the author might have written the title this way.
- **Thesis or main point:** What is the author arguing or trying to get the audience to understand, listen to, or believe?
- **Evidence:** What is offered in support of the main point?
- **Organization:** What comes first, second, and last in the piece?
- **Language:** What kind is used: academic or casual?
- **Tone of voice?** Is the author talking to the audience in a formal, sarcastic, humorous, plain-speaking, indignant or sarcastic manner? How does this tone of voice add to or take away from the article's persuasive effect?

Finally, do all these parts work together to help the author achieve an overall purpose? Also, Understand that there are two voices in a rhetorical analysis, the author's and your own. Some ways to differentiate are by saying, "The author states," "The author thinks," or "The article states." Then, follow up with your own analysis, but avoid "I" phrases

The "Big Three" of Rhetorical Analysis

- **Ethos/Credibility**
 - Why should the audience read the author's work?
 - How does the author reveal the validity and importance of their work?
 - Does the author mention education or professional experience? Are the sources the author uses reliable and relevant?
- **Pathos/Emotion**
 - How is the author trying to make the audience feel, or what has he or she written that would influence someone to do something?
 - What specific parts of the writing make the audience feel joyful, dejected, etc.?
 - What literary devices, such as imagery or metaphor, does the author use to convey this?
- **Logos/Logic**
 - What evidence does the writer provide that convinces the audience that his or her argument is logical—that it makes sense?
 - What proof is the author offering the audience?
 - Is there any way of disputing the author's data or research methods?