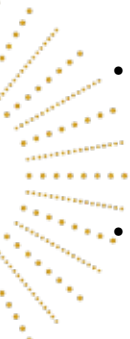


# How to Write A Rhetorical Analysis


Analytical writing moves beyond summarization by reacting to the implied meaning of the text and considering the context. A rhetorical analysis requires you to apply your critical reading skills in order to break down a text. The goal is to articulate how the author writes, not what the author actually wrote; you're looking for strategies the author uses to achieve their goal or purpose, not just a summary of explanation of the work.



It is also key to stay focused on analysis and not evaluation! Stay away from claims like, "greatest ever given" or "this was a great article." Remember, this isn't about your opinion of the content of the text, it's about how well the writer/speaker did their job. Instead, stay focused on being evaluative of how well the originator supported their claims and achieved their goals. If the goal was to motivate, state that—and back it up with quoted material and an explanation of what makes that material so motivational.

You'll want to begin by writing a brief summary of the text, including title and author. Then, as you work through your analysis, examine how the author developed the ideas and information presented in the text. Look closely at what the author is doing to convince the audience, and how they do it. There are three key elements to discover and determine in the text you are analyzing:

- **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? Keep in mind there may be more than one purpose, and the purpose is what shapes our writing, determines our genre and audience, and helps us understand what to say and how to say it.
  - **Audience:** To whom is the author writing? What is said, how much is said, and how it is phrased is all influenced by the audience. For example, is the work 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.
  - **Genre:** What kind of writing is it—a letter, report, profile, poem, instruction, parody? How does the genre affect the content and what can be included—does it require a specific strategy or format? Does it affect the tone or type of language (formal or informal)?
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Next, analyze how well the author accomplished their purpose by looking at the ways the author is informing or persuading the audience, and if they chose an appropriate genre. 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?
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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?
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