

Writing a Rhetorical Analysis

1. Read the text you want to submit to a rhetorical analysis, and then read it one more time.
2. Answer the following questions (adapted from p. 224 in *Acting on Words* (2nd ed)) in a sentence or two:
 - a. Who is the author and what do you know about him or her?
 - b. When and where was the essay/book/story published?
 - c. What is the essay/book/story's overall rhetorical mode (personal, persuasive, creative, and so on)?
 - d. Who is its intended audience?
 - e. What are the current public beliefs about the topic?
 - f. Are these beliefs the same here and now, and if not, how do they differ?
 - g. What is the author's controlling idea?
 - h. What are the author's arguments/reasons?
 - i. What research methods are used to support the idea and arguments?
 - j. Where would you find more information about the subject matter?
 - k. Does the author imply or presume things about the subject that are not explicitly stated?
 - l. How did the author organize the information and what strategies and patterns does he or she use to present the information?
 - m. What is the overall style and tone of the work?
3. Reduce the answers to the above questions to a reasonably clear statement about what the essay/book/story says and how it says it. Write this down.
4. Decide if the author did an effective job in both what the text says and how it says it.
5. Outline your conclusions for a formal analysis:
 - a. Summary statement
 - b. your controlling idea (Keep in mind that this is different from the author's controlling idea. This is YOUR idea ABOUT what the author has said.)
 - c. your reasons for that idea
 - d. your thesis (idea+reasons)
6. Write your **introduction** (summary/brief indication of idea and reasons/thesis)
7. Write **body paragraphs** expanding each of the reasons with details and explanations.
8. Write your conclusion (recap and point to further possibilities for thought/research/implication, beyond the rhetorical analysis).

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References

Brundage, D. & Lahey, M. (2007). *Acting on words: An integrated rhetoric, reader, and handbook.*
2nd Edition, in press. Toronto: Pearson,.