

ICaP Rhetorical Analysis Instructor Guide

Common Assignment Pilot Spring 2018
Led by Daniel Ernst, Alex Long, and Carrie Grant

Table of Contents

1. Introduction & Rationale.....	3
2. Common Assignment Pilot Requirements.....	4
3. Resources.....	5
4. Rubric.....	6
5. Example Assignment Sheets.....	7-17
6. Additional Resources (Prewriting Sheets, Key Terms, etc).....	18-29

Assignment Introduction

Description

The purpose of a rhetorical analysis is to help students understand how a text creates meaning through specific rhetorical choices. This involves identifying the author, their purpose, and their intended audience. The goal is not only to determine what an author is trying to accomplish, but *how* they go about doing that and *why*. Every text operates in a particular way, rhetorically, based on the time and place out of which it arises, as well as resulting from the rhetorical decisions made by the rhetor for a particular purpose. Our aim is to unpack how and why certain decisions were made in order to accomplish a specific goal.

Rationale

Being active participants in the world around us means recognizing the conscious decision making that goes into creating any text for a rhetorical purpose. Investigating the how and why of any given text in any context gives a student greater insight into the power of communication and allows for deeper understanding of the world around them. In addition to becoming active observers in their lives, students will also learn to make more effective decisions as rhetors themselves, making rhetorically effective choices beyond the confines of the classroom and applying to many different contexts.

We've identified a rhetorical analysis as a possible ICaP common assignment for a number of reasons:

1. It aligns easily with ICaP outcomes, particularly rhetorical awareness (Outcome 1) and critical thinking (Outcome 3). These outcomes are essential to what we teach in ENGL 106, and we want to be able to demonstrate that we teach them well.
2. Rhetorical analyses are foundational introductory composition assignments used across the country, and many ICaP instructors already teach some version of one.
3. A rhetorical analysis is a brief enough assignment that instructors can feasibly ask students to write two during the semester, which will allow us to assess growth in student writing within ENGL 106.

Common Assignment Pilot Requirements

Sequence

The rhetorical analysis common assignment needs to be given to students twice during the semester. Our goal is to be able to use the two assignments to demonstrate changes in student writing through the ICaP course.

1. **Beginning of semester.** The first time you assign the rhetorical analysis should be within the first 1.5 weeks of the semester. For this iteration, do not give extensive direct instruction about how to write rhetorical analyses, as our goal is to see the writing skills students enter the class with.
2. **Later in semester.** You'll assign a rhetorical analysis again during the semester--when is up to you. This time around, please spend at least two weeks teaching the assignment--reviewing concepts, introducing the assignment genre, looking at examples, and providing student feedback.

Shared Rubric

The rhetorical analysis common assignment operates with a shared analytic rubric, which gives points for various categories of evaluation. When collecting the common assignment, ICaP will ask for your students' rhetorical analyses in addition to your scores for each paper using this rubric. *However*, we recognize that this may not be the format for evaluation you would like to provide directly to your students. You may customize the format of the shared rubric for your students--for instance, you may translate it into a holistic rubric, or use a scale without points attached, so long as you are still teaching students toward the shared rubric criteria, and you translate your scores using the points-based shared rubric for submission to ICaP.

Assignment Sheet and Topics

You have freedom to create your assignment sheets as you see fit. You may also use any type of texts for rhetorical analysis you choose--print ads, literature, op eds, commercials, etc. We only ask that students analyze the same genre of text for their first rhetorical analysis as their second, though they may use a different example (ie. a Geico commercial for the first rhetorical analysis and a Dove commercial for the second).

Resources for Teaching Rhetorical Analysis

During ICaP's 2015 internal assessment project, researchers found that student rhetorical analysis samples varied in levels of effectiveness. Students can easily latch onto the idea of naming examples of ethos, pathos, and logos, without taking their analysis much deeper than that. These assignments can be challenging to teach well. If we are going to make a rhetorical analysis the common assignment across all sections of English 106, we want to ensure that instructors have the tools to teach rhetorical analysis effectively.

To that end, we've included a variety of resources for teaching rhetorical analyses:

1. Rhetorical analysis common assignment rubric (required for submitting student materials to ICaP, format can be customized for students--see "Shared Rubric" section above)
2. Unit plans/Activities
3. Sample assignment sheets
4. Key terms
5. Additional supplementary materials

Rubric for Rhetorical Analysis

___/20 Rhetorical Situation - The paper follows the constraints of the genre of the assignment. There is a clear focus appropriate to assignment guidelines; the author appropriately addresses their audience(s); and the language and formality are suitable for the situation.

___/20 Thesis - The paper develops a complex, cohesive argument about the speaker's rhetorical purpose and strategies. This means not only identifying the rhetorical approach the text employs, but how it achieves its purpose through choices within the text. The argument is apparent to the reader because it is invoked deeply throughout the analysis.

___/20 Analysis/Evidence - Demonstrates depth of understanding of rhetorical situation concepts through rigorous analysis of the rhetorical features of the text, deeply "unpacking" how they work. Analytical points are substantiated with focused use of specific evidence.

___/20 Structure/Organization- The paper follows a clear structure that enhances delivery of the content. Each section has a point relating to the main goal of the paper, and each paragraph works logically to follow the last. There is a clear reason for the organization of paragraphs/sections.

___/10 Style/Voice - The writer uses rhetorical stylistic choices to create credibility for analysis. The writing is clear and easy to follow at the sentence level. Sentence structures and emphasis are varied through strategic use of tone and word choice.

___/10 Formatting/Mechanics- The paper accompanying works cited page is properly formatted to MLA standards, and the paper contains few mechanical errors.

Designing a Unit of Study for Teaching Rhetorical Analysis

(Do we have source info for this?)

Have you ever planned a trip to a new destination? If you have, you know that it requires having some knowledge of where you are going, what you would like to do when you get there, where you will stay, and how you will get back home. Designing a unit on teaching rhetorical analysis is not so different from planning a trip. The assignment you give your students plots out the destination at which you want your students to arrive and this becomes their initial "map" for the task. Understanding the rhetorical vehicles of logos, ethos and pathos assists students on their way to analyzing a text. The critical thinking process students engage in to analyze a text results in the ability to focus on specific aspects. For example, determining textual citations and maneuvers of logos, ethos and pathos allows students to rhetorical analyze to determine which textual "souvenirs" might be effective in persuading an audience and which may not. Overall, though the student is given the tools to embark on their own analytical journey, this process can be fraught with obstacles and difficulties. Included here are some ideas for using this handbook, as well as ideas that may help you guide your students along their individual paths.

The Planning Stage

Guide Questions to Design the Unit (Samples)

Creating a Unit Timeline:

The key to teaching rhetorical analysis is to start small. Students need to understand the "building blocks" of ethos, pathos, and logos before analyzing text. Some helpful methods to include in a unit timeline are:

- **Visual Analysis**
Just a few of the mediums to consider using here include magazine advertisements, commercials, films, and news clips.
- **Close Reading**
To prepare students to analyze a large piece of text, it is helpful to start with small pieces of text, such as poetry or song lyrics.
- **Practice, Practice, Practice**
Now that your students have a grasp on the concepts of analysis, it is time to practice these skills on large pieces of text, such as newspaper editorials, magazine articles, etc.

Sample Lesson Plans With the above mentioned units to cover, there are many different ways to tackle teaching them.

Teaching Ethos, Pathos, and Logos Lesson One

Knowing the ways in which these rhetorical stepping stones work in texts and visuals is key to being able to analyze any kind of rhetoric. Students should read the definitions of these terms

located in an earlier section of this book. In order to make these terms "come to life" for the students, some sample lesson ideas are included here:

Visual Analysis Sample One

One of the first concepts to teach in rhetorical analysis is that rhetoric exceeds the boundaries of the written text. If "Everything is a text," as Derrida insists, students foremost should be instructed pay heed to the very things they may have previously, habitually overlooked. An effective method to bring students awareness and sight to things they may have been blind to is advertisement analysis.

Lesson: From a brief collection of magazines, allow students to individually choose advertisements that intrigue them. (This is the first step of the day's lesson--a coy mask should be donned in order that students' choose ads which compel them without knowing what the lesson will after entail). Upon a volunteering of an ad for class analysis, ask student(s) the following questions:

- Who is the target audience of the ad?
- Is it effective? (Do you/would you buy this product?) Why? How does it do what it does to enact this effectiveness?
- What is the tone of the ad?
- What does the ad seem to be selling (other than the product)?
- What else might you (the students) evaluate about the ad?
- After this preliminary reading (in which the students' might feel they have exhausted analysis), attempt to interrogate the ad further through the following question prompts:
- What is the overarching rhetorical appeal utilized in the ad? *How* does the text move you? Through Logos, ethos or pathos? Why? What can be cited in the ad that demonstrates all three? Can you find an example that might, at first glance, be cited as demonstrating logos, but upon further inspection may instead be imbued with pathos? Can the same be done for ethos?
- How are the above complications involving logos, ethos and pathos accomplished in the ad? Here typical "things unseen" can be brought to attention: What is the appearance or absence of space, color, language, font, affect, clothing, skin, sex, gender, race, ect. *doing* and *saying* in the ad? What does it *mean*?
- Most provocatively, how does the ad portray a certain set of values? What are they? Do these values confirm or repeal the status quo? What connections or associations is the reader supposed to make through this ad that is not apparent through the text of the ad itself, but the common, social knowledge that the ad must be operating from? In other words, how can the ad be held up as a social artifact? (A successful lesson may be determined by student resistance, oftentimes heard as such, "Do we have to analyze everything to death?").

Finally, students might write a brief, one page, in-class response that addresses their primary, superficial analysis at the start of class vs. their final analysis. An attached assignment to this

lesson might be to write a 500-750 word rhetorical analysis of an ad that mimics the formula conducted in-class.

Visual Analysis Sample Two

To prompt students to practice their ability to analyze a variety of visual rhetorics, it can be helpful to have students work with non-static images that engage dimensions beyond fixed pictures and words . For this lesson, conduct a viewing of a short (2-4 minutes) video (or clip [SNL is especially ripe for this type of analysis]). This lesson is most effective when a song is chosen that may have a deeper read than what can be garnered superficially, especially in relation to a discordance between the audio and visual tellings of the song. (I favor and find effective "Get Down" by P.O.S.; though, to be warned, this is a song for a class that will not be ill-moved by raw language). This viewing should be conducted in four parts:

1) Audio only: Play the video using a muted screen. Students note reactions and observations while listening. Discuss briefly: What is the tone of the song? Can you dance to it? Cry to it? Run to it? What can you decipher of the lyrics? What might the song be about? What is the refrain? Who might listen to this song? Might you? Why or why not? Begin prompting associations here that will fruit in the remaining two reads.

2) Visual only: Engage the aforementioned questions from the ad analysis. Also: What does the visual reveal that the audio does not? Does the visual betray or align with the associations you might have made while listening (only)? Is there discord apparent between the two mediums of text? Say more.

3) Audio and visual: Reiterate prior questions. What now arises? What analysis can you make in this double reading about how logos, ethos and pathos are being engaged?

4) Lyric analysis: Display song lyrics. Analyze collaboratively. How does this fourth step yet further shift our understanding and ultimate analysis of the song?

Post-lesson: Brief, one page, in-class response, answering the following prompt: What distinctions can you make between simple analysis and rhetorical analysis after the last two lessons? Explain and demonstrate.

Assignment: Again, students may conduct a similar rhetorical analysis of a song following the above steps. Briefly discuss what a thesis in such a rhetorical analysis might look like--collaborating on a thesis for the class lesson analysis might be an effective way to demonstrate and prompt this goal for students' own work.

Close Reading (Sample Assignments)

- Bring samples readings of poetry to the class. As a class or in groups, have students conduct a line by line analysis of the poem. What does each line mean? How does it contribute

the the poem as a whole? Are there any words/phrases you do not understand? Are there any double meanings to any of the phrases or the poem as a whole?

- A similar way to conduct a close reading is through isolating song lyrics for rhetorical analysis. Bring examples to class, or have students bring their own examples for a close reading. Analyze the piece line by line and also as a whole.

Practice, Practice, Practice (Sample Assignments)

- Create an ad or logo for a company or product you admire. Keep your audience in mind and include visuals and text that they would find appealing. Attach to this visual a description of how you use each of the rhetorical appeals (ethos, pathos, logos) in this ad to get your ideas across and persuade your audience. The descriptions for each appeal should be at least one paragraph in length.
- Split students into groups and have each group create an ad for the same company or product, but each will target different age groups, categories, etc. For example, have each group create an ad for Nike. How will one group appeal to teens, middle-aged people, men women, etc.? What can students glean from the distinctions between age brackets? What can be inferred about assumed and enacted behavior patterns of each group? Are these accurate? How might ads, in addition to selling us products, prescribe us "how to be"?
- Practicing rhetorical analysis with the class as a whole is important. Using editorials from newspapers and magazines, discuss as a class or in groups the elements of the piece. What is the author's message? What is the author's purpose? What rhetorical devices does the author use? What kind of language? Is the author successful in relaying his or her message? Continue engaging these rhetorical questions throughout the semester, for every assignment and every text (which is every thing--even the classroom. In fact, what might a rhetorical analysis of your classroom evaluate?).

Sample Rhetorical Analysis Assignments

Sample One

Rhetorical analysis is a way of understanding and interpreting texts by examining and interpreting rhetorical devices used in a piece of writing. You are to find a piece of published work that is persuasive in nature; in other words, it argues a point. Editorials and pieces from opinion/commentary sections of magazines or newspapers will generally work the best. You may find these online at sites such as startribune.com or sctimes.com, or in an actual publication. The piece you choose should be at least 350-500 words in length. Choosing an article that is too short may result in not having enough to write about in your paper, choosing something too long may not fit the parameters of this assignment. Write an essay in which you in which you ANALYZE the author's rhetorical effectiveness/ineffectiveness. How does the author appeal to ethos, pathos, and logos? You will need to consider the points we have discussed in class, as well as the strategies discussed in Chapters 10 and 11 in your book.

Primary Audience: Educated readers who have not read the text you are analyzing.

Point of View: Objective

General Purpose: To help your readers understand the connections between purpose, audience, subject matter, and rhetorical techniques.

Things to consider when writing the rhetorical analysis:

- Take the time to find an article with a topic you can relate to. Don't just choose the first article you find.
- Photocopy the article, because it will need to accompany all drafts.
- This paper is NOT a summary. One will be included, but it should be no more than one paragraph in length.
- Your focus is not to agree or disagree with the author's article, but to analyze how effective or ineffective the author is in presenting the argument.
- Sample Peer Review For Rhetorical Analysis

Project 2: Social Awareness Rhetorical Analysis

Draft Due: September 22nd 2017

Final Due: September 29th 2017

Location: Submitted on Blackboard

Length: About 1500-2000 words (5-6 pages)

Weight: 15% (150 points)

What is the Purpose?

Now that we are a few weeks into the semester, we will be taking up a slightly longer writing assignment. This next project will be a rhetorical analysis of a text of your choice. I recommend avoiding novels simply because they are large texts and it would be difficult to give a sufficient analysis of them. You may analyze an advertisement, commercial, comic strip, episode of a tv show, video game, or any number of other texts. We will go through examples in class so that you have an idea of what kinds of texts work well for this and what is expected. You will be required to get approval from me before committing to a text. The goal of this assignment is to further explore how a text can shape our understanding of the world, but in a more analytically grounded way. This should have a more formal tone than your last paper and conduct a much more thorough excavation of the rhetorical devices at work in your text.

Grading Criteria

A successful “A” profile does the following things very well, a “B” profile will do most of these things fairly well, and a “C” profile will be lacking numerous elements from the list below. Anything lower will neglect most or all of the following criteria:

- Writing presented distinguishes itself by creating a strong and unique **voice**, and using that voice strategically. The author does not try to impress readers by using jargon or SAT vocabulary.
- The introduction discusses the **major goals and/or effects** of the text being analyzed. The conclusion returns to the overall effect(s) of the text and may **present a “moral” or “take-a-way” for audiences** (this isn’t necessarily required).
- Body paragraphs include **pertinent information** about the given subject in an organized fashion. Each body section is organized (you may use headers if you like, but they are not required).
- Writing is **presented logically** where the reader can follow the flow of thought. All sentences relate to each other through well-placed transitions, paragraph breaks, etc. Clear thesis statements and topic sentences are used an easily identifiable.
- Writing **identifies various rhetorical appeals** and analyzes both their use and effect with **examples** and **strong evidence**.

- Writing avoids being too speculative or vague, keeps the analysis grounded in what we can actually observe in the text, and supports claims with **evidence** from the text.
- The writing is **polished and professional**. This means that you should edit for grammatical errors and typos prior to submitting your final draft. The visual rhetoric of the piece should convey a strong degree of effort and care in the construction of your analysis.
- Your analysis should include the following components:
 - 1" margins on all sides. Times New Roman, 12 pt font, double-spaced.
 - Distinctive title, headers, and subheaders used consistently throughout (if you choose to use them at all)

RHETORICAL ANALYSIS

Rhetoric is the study of how writers and speakers use words to influence an audience. A rhetorical analysis is an essay that breaks a work of non-fiction into parts and then explains how the parts work together to create a certain effect—whether to persuade, entertain or inform. You can also conduct a rhetorical analysis of a primarily visual argument such as a cartoon or advertisement, or an oral performance such as a speech. In this handout we will use the word *rhetorician* to refer to the author of a speech or document or to the creator of an advertisement, cartoon, or other visual work.

A rhetorical analysis should explore the rhetorician's goals, the techniques (or tools) used, examples of those techniques, and the effectiveness of those techniques. When writing a rhetorical analysis, you are NOT saying whether or not you agree with the argument. Instead, you're discussing *how* the rhetorician makes that argument and whether or not the approach used is successful.

Artistic and Inartistic Proofs

An artistic proof is *created* by the rhetorician and encompasses the appeals, canons, and most of the techniques given below. An inartistic proof is a proof that *exists outside the rhetorician* such as surveys, polls, testimonies, statistics, facts, and data. Either type of proof can help make a case.

Appeals

An appeal is an attempt to earn audience approval or agreement by playing to natural human tendencies or common experience. There are three kinds of appeals: the pathetic, the ethical, and the logical.

The *pathetic* appeal invokes the audience's emotion to gain acceptance and approval for the ideas expressed. (Note that in this context, the word "pathetic" has none of the negative connotations associated with it in other contexts but refers only to the ability to stir emotions.) In a pathetic appeal, rhetoricians tap a reader's sympathy and compassion, anger and disappointment, desire for love, or sadness to convince the audience of their argument. Effective rhetoricians can create these feelings in an audience even if the feeling wasn't there before.

Ex. TV commercials asking viewers to sponsor a third world child appeal to the viewer's compassion and instinct to protect the innocent.

The *ethical* appeal uses the writer's own credibility and character to make a case and gain approval. Rhetoricians use themselves and their position as an "expert" or as a "good person" to give their argument presence and importance. An everyday example of this is a minister, rabbi, priest, or shaman—individuals who are followed because they have established themselves as

moral authorities. Writers using ethos may offer a definition for an obscure term or detailed statistics to establish their authority and knowledge.

Ex. A speaker from the American Heart Association visiting a kinesiology class to talk about healthy lifestyle choices is a practical example of ethos.

The *logical* appeal uses reason to make a case. Academic discourse is mostly logos-driven because academic audiences respect scholarship and evidence. Rhetoricians using logos rely on evidence and proof, whether the proof is hard data or careful reasoning.

Ex.1 In his Divine Watchmaker argument, William Paley employs logical comparison to prove that something as complex as life and our world could not have occurred by chance.

Ex.2 Toothpaste commercials like to appeal to logos by citing statistics and using scientific language to describe the process of preventing cavities.

Remember that a single document, speech, or advertisement can make all three appeals. Rhetoricians will often combine techniques in order to create a persuasive argument.

Building Analysis by Prewriting

In writing an effective rhetorical analysis, you should discuss the goal or purpose of the piece; the appeals, evidence, and techniques used and why; examples of those appeals, evidence, and techniques; and your explanation of why they did or didn't work. A good place to start is to answer each of these considerations in a sentence or two on a scratch piece of paper. Don't worry about how it sounds—just answer the questions.

Example preliminary notes for a rhetorical analysis of Horace Miner's article "Body Rituals Among the Nacirema"

Ex. The goal – to get readers to see the ridiculousness of Americans' obsession with physical appearance and our weird ideas about "hygiene."

Ex. Rhetorical techniques used and why – didactic tone makes the author sound like a high scholar to give credibility and create a sense of superiority for himself and the reader. Uses detached, academic diction to put distance between the reader and the "tribe" being studied. Uses common ground to place himself and the reader on the level of superior, civilized beings studying this tribe, only to turn it when the reader realizes the "tribe" is America. Uses amplification to describe and display the idiocy of practices like teeth whitening. Does all of this to appeal to logic and readers' sense of pride and superiority (pathetic appeal). Uses irony by including a quote from another author at the end that pokes fun at us for our feeling superior.

The next step is to identify examples of these uncovered techniques in the text. For example, in discussing the use of a didactic tone, you might point to the following sentence as an example: "the anthropologist has become so familiar with the diversity of ways in which different people

behave in similar situations that he is not apt to be surprised by even the most exotic customs.” You should have multiple examples for each technique used.

Next, address the effectiveness of each technique. For example, in Miner’s article, the didactic tone draws us in, but about halfway through the article we realize that Miner is talking about current American society and that “Nacirema” is “American” spelled backwards. We realize that the tone is ironic and that Miner is making a point about how Americans believe in magic and superstitions rather than being the enlightened, rational, and scientific creatures we imagine ourselves to be.

Thesis, Body, and Conclusion

After brainstorming and doing the actual analysis, you are ready to write a thesis. Remember to choose the three (or four) techniques for which you can make the strongest case. Rhetoricians employ many techniques; focus on the ones that are the most prevalent or interesting and that you can describe persuasively.

Ex. Thesis In his article “Body Rituals Among the Nacirema,” Miner effectively convinces his reader of the ridiculous nature of America’s obsession with the body’s health and visual appeal by allowing his readers to form a third party opinion of themselves before realizing they are their own subject. Miner achieves this by employing an academic tone, detached diction, and superior common ground to place his reader on the level of a scholar observing a native “tribe.”

Finally, write your introduction, paragraphs, and conclusion. Following is a few tips for each. An *introduction* should lead cleanly into your argument. If your argument involves an author’s stance on the death penalty, you might begin by giving factual data and/or the history of the death penalty. Remember that your argument begins with the first words of your paper. Your introduction should provide background that will make the reader see your argument’s relevance.

Each *body paragraph* should have its own topic sentence. Make sure every idea or sentence in a paragraph relates to its topic sentence; you don’t want to jump between topics. It gives your paper a sense of cohesion to place your body paragraphs in the same order in which they’re presented in your introduction. Consider how you will organize the paragraphs. Will you discuss each technique—every instance of ethos, then every instance of pathos, and finally every instance of logos—then end with a discussion of the overall effectiveness? Or will you review the essay in terms of the least effective technique to the most effective? Or will you use a chronological order, discussing each technique as it occurs sequentially? For the Nacirema paper, for example, the first paragraph could focus on the academic tone, the second on diction, and the third on *common ground*.

For each paragraph, give several examples and explain how those examples illustrate the technique being discussed. At the end of each body paragraph, make sure you connect your

topic sentence back to your thesis. This creates cohesion, solidifies your argument, and provides a transition to your next topic.

Your *conclusion* should briefly restate your main argument. It should then apply your argument on a higher level. Why does your argument matter? What does it mean in the real world? For example, the conclusion of the rhetorical analysis of the Nacirema article may point out Miner's underlying message of tolerance and appreciation of other cultures and how his authorial choices influenced the delivery of that message.

Rhetorical Analysis Pre-writing

1. List at least 5 options for a rhetorical analysis text. If it's an image or video that can be found online, provide a link for each.
2. List the text you think would work the worst and best. Give at least 3 reasons why you think each respective text would work well, or not, for this assignment.
3. Provide a brief outline of your analysis. Describe the rhetorical situation. What things will you discuss in your analysis? What order will you address these aspects of the text? Will there be any reference to outside material?
4. What background knowledge is necessary to understand this text? What assumptions does the rhetor make about the audience for this to operate effectively? Does the text depend on a particular context to operate effectively? How does changing the context affect the effectiveness of the text?
5. Every analysis has the implicit argument that what is being discussed is worth exploring, but are there any other arguments or perspectives you will be forwarding that are up for debate in this analysis? What are they? Briefly, what evidence do you intend to use to support your claims?
6. Why did you select this text? Why is it the appropriate level of challenging for this assignment? What makes it rhetorically complex?
7. Discuss the above questions and answer with someone next to you. Do they agree with your choice of text to analyze? Do they think another one might work better? Do they agree with/understand the points you make about your selected texts? Do they see anything differently? Is there anything they think you could add to your analysis?

RHETORICAL TERMS

A rhetorical analysis breaks an essay, speech, cartoon, advertisement, or other persuasive or argumentative performance, into parts and considers how those parts come together to create an effect. The following is an alphabetically arranged list of terms often used in rhetorical analysis.

In the list below, the “rhetorician” would be the writer, speaker, or artist who has created the text being analyzed. For example, if you’re writing a rhetorical analysis of an essay by Mark Twain, Twain is the rhetorician, and your analysis would discuss the choices he made as an author and the effect those choices have on readers.

Alliteration: the repetition of letters or sounds at the beginning of a word. It can be used to create a mood or make a passage memorable.

Ex. “I have stood still and stopped the sound of feet” (Robert Frost, “Acquainted with the Night”).

Amplification: extensive development of one subject or idea. Rhetoricians may intentionally treat a point in many ways so that it can be shown in different lights or emphasized.

Ex. “Life is but a walking shadow, a poor player who frets and struts his hour on stage and then is heard from no more. It is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing” (Shakespeare, “MacBeth”).

Allusion: a brief reference to a historical or literary figure, event, or object that the target audience would know, thus helping them identify with the rhetoric and also showing the rhetorician is well-read. For example, allusions to the Bible and Shakespeare are common among English-speaking rhetoricians.

Ex. “And this will be the day—this will be the day when all of God’s children will be able to sing with new meaning: ‘*My country ’tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing . . .*’” (Martin Luther King, “I Have a Dream”).

Analogy: a comparison between two things. Analogies can be used to make a subject/ idea memorable or easier to understand. Arguments by analogy are easily refuted since analogies, inevitably, can only be carried so far.

Ex. “Withdrawal of U.S. troops will become like salted peanuts to the American public; the more U.S. troops come home, the more will be demanded” (Henry Kissinger in a 1969 memo to Nixon).

Arrangement or organization: how information is located in an essay or speech. Consider the different effects on the reader if the author presents a startling statistic at the very beginning of an essay as opposed to the middle of the second paragraph. No matter what kind of writing, the most emphatic positions are beginnings and endings—whether of sentences, paragraphs, chapters or the piece as a whole. Arrangement should be considered in light of the purpose of the writing and the audience.

Ex. Rhetoricians who want to make a strong argument against an opponent may place the refutation section in the beginning or end, but they will not bury it in the middle.

Authority: the invocation of an expert or facts to increase the credibility of a message. Often, the authority is quoted directly and his or her credentials mentioned to show exactly what was said.

Ex. “As Lancelot Hogben, the eminent social biologist and early critic of the concept of race, remarked in 1932: ‘Geneticists believe that anthropologists have deiced what a race is. Ethnologists assume that their classifications embody principles which genetic science has proved to be correct. . . .’” (Ashley Montagu, *Man’s Most Dangerous Myth: The Fallacy of Race*).

Common ground: the point at which people in general disagreement can agree. Rhetoricians often use the technique of laying common ground if their target audience is likely to oppose their claims or reject their arguments. Beginning with common ground places the rhetorician and the audience on the same level, opening the way for the audience to consider the argument.

Ex. One side of an argument opposes the death penalty for first-degree murder; the other advocates it. They find common ground by agreeing that stern punishment is in order, and they may also agree that nothing less than life imprisonment without parole is a starting point.

Definitions: Explanation of the meaning of a term or word. A definition can seem (but is not) inarguable. Rhetoricians use definitions when the target audience is likely to disagree or when they come from a very different background. A definition is a form of common ground because it places the rhetoricians and audience on the same page.

Ex. Rhetoricians may argue against euthanasia by defining the nature of euthanasia as murder.

Delivery: the presentation. In oral rhetoric, delivery encompasses the speaker’s gestures, clothing, visuals, tone of voice, mannerisms, or interaction with the audience. In written or visual rhetoric, delivery may refer to the format or layout of the page, the tone, and design elements.

Diction: word choice. Word choice affects style and tone. A word’s connotation, or its suggestive and emotional impact, is as important as its dictionary meaning. Consider the differences in the following statements:

Ex. 1 The subjects on the ship knew that their time was limited, and they began to prepare for their inevitable demise.

Ex. 2 The people on the ship had realized that they would die and spent their last few hours in prayer and with their families.

Enthymeme: an argument that implies or assumes but does not state one of its premises. The effectiveness of the enthymeme depends upon the acceptance of the premise being drawn not from certainties, as with the syllogism, but from the beliefs and presuppositions of the audience.

Ex. Rhetoricians arguing that euthanasia is murder are arguing with the unstated premise that murder is immoral. They assume their audience will agree and come to the conclusion that euthanasia is immoral. Their argument is as follows:

Premise A: Euthanasia is murder.

Suppressed Premise B: Murder is immoral.

Conclusion: Euthanasia is immoral.

Exaggeration, also called **hyperbole**: the tactic of overstating a topic to emphasize or illustrate a point, appeal to emotion, or get attention. Exaggeration is an effective technique, especially when used with humor or irony.

Ex. The commercial for Old Spice cologne with the man riding a horse backwards is an example of exaggeration. The company's goal was to establish Old Spice as a product for "real men." Therefore, it exaggerated the stereotype of the "real man" in a humorous way to make the product both memorable and desirable.

Example: a specific instance used to illustrate, clarify, or bolster an argument. Anecdotes may serve as extended examples. Although most people find examples helpful and entertaining, they are not considered sufficient evidence in academic circles.

Fact: as opposed to opinion, an assertion supported by well-documented, quantifiable, or empirical evidence or by expert testimony. Rhetoricians use facts as one way to support a claim, especially in academic, business, scientific, or technical documents. Although they may be disputed, if they are established by a well-documented scientific method, they can be considered facts. It is important not to skew or misrepresent facts.

Ex. In *An Inconvenient Truth*, Al Gore argues that global warming is an impending threat. He cites factual researched patterns of climate change over the millennia and includes explicit detail about melting icebergs. He uses facts in an attempt to prove that global warming is taking place and that action is necessary to lessen its detrimental effects. Those who disagree may try to undermine his argument by disputing the quality of his facts or by saying the facts, although correct, don't support his claims.

Fallacy: a false or invalid argument. Fallacies often seem convincing but are illogical—fallacies might oversimplify or overgeneralize, fail to provide adequate evidence, make jumps in logic, or divert attention from the pertinent issues or arguments.

Irony: a statement in which there is an incongruity or discordance that goes beyond the simple and evident meaning of words or actions. Verbal and situational irony are often intentionally used as emphasis in an assertion of a truth

Ex. In the TV drama *House*, Dr. Gregory House tells a nurse "Perseverance does not equal worthiness. Next time you want to get my attention, wear something fun. Low-riding jeans are hot." This statement is an example of ironic humor that allows House to mock both the aspiring doctor and the societal norm of men ignoring women's abilities and focusing on their looks.

Loaded diction (slanted language): using biased or prejudiced word choices that predispose a reader to one position. Though it may be suspect to reasonable audience members, loaded diction may also be an effective way to sway an audience.

Ex. Politicians using the terms “terrorist” or “act of terror” intend to inspire fear and the need for security. These words immediately invoke audience reactions whether they are being used accurately or with real evidence to back them up. “Communism” has an immediate negative connotation in America, whereas Europeans may hear the term more neutrally.

Paradox: a seeming contradiction that contains some truth, such as “so close and yet so far.” Paradox is usually used to show the complexity of an idea, to make a point, or for poetic effect.

Ex. “Water, water everywhere but not a drop to drink” (Coleridge, “Rime of the Ancient Mariner”).

Parallelism: repetition of a word/phrase or grammatical structure for effect. The repetition of a word or phrase can create a feeling of cohesion in a paper or strong emotion in the audience (e.g., Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream” speech). It creates a rhythm and can be used to build a speech to a crescendo.

Ex. Repetition of a Word “The question we writers are asked most often, the favorite question, is: Why do you write? I write because I have an innate need to write. I write because I am angry at everyone. I write because I can partake of real life only by changing it. I write because I want others, the whole world, to know what sort of life we lived, and continue to live . . . I write because I love the smell of paper, pen, and ink. I write because I am afraid of being forgotten” (Orhan Pamuk, “My Father’s Suitcase”).

Ex. Repetition of a Phrase “She’s safe, *just like I promised*. She’s all set to marry Norrington, *just like she promised*. And you get to die for her, *just like you promised*” (Capt. Jack Sparrow, *Pirates of the Caribbean*).

Ex. Grammatical Repetition “To exist is *to change*, *to change* is *to mature*, *to mature* is to go on creating oneself endlessly” (Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*).

Refutation (rebuttal): a counter argument that specifically and successfully shows an argument to be false. Many arguments contain a refutation section in which the rhetorician points out fallacies in the opposition’s argument.

Ex. Supposedly, Edmundson’s study clearly shows that video games do not lead to violence. However, it must be considered that this study was funded by the video game industry (Parent’s Defense League). The research proclaiming the blamelessness of video game violence is biased and, therefore, unacceptable. Further unbiased research should be conducted to verify that rising violence in children is linked to rising violence in their games.

Rhetorical question: a question to ponder rather than answer, a question that does not have an immediate answer. A rhetorical question will be ineffective if it can be answered with a simple *yes* or *no*.

Ex. “That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain’t I a woman?” (Sojourner Truth, “Ain’t I a woman?”).

Statistics: facts expressed in quantifiable form such as numbers, charts, or graphs that lend support to a claim or warrant. Using statistics can lend validity to an argument, but like facts, statistics can be disputed. Statistics can be manipulated to misrepresent the facts. It’s a good idea to support arguments with valid, reliable statistics; it’s not a good idea to influence, make up, or change facts or statistics.

Testimony: using someone’s words to give an argument greater credibility. It is similar to **authority**, although it also includes the statements or stories of non-experts or may be based on someone’s experiences (as an eye-witness, a user, or a participant) rather than more solid or reliable evidence. Non-expert testimony is easily refuted.

Ex. Advertisements for weight loss products often employ testimony. “I lost 30 lbs in a week.” People who have “used the product” talk about great it is, how easy, and how much weight they’ve lost.

Tone: how a rhetorician sounds to an audience: arrogant, silly, pompous, smart, serious, authoritative, friendly, sarcastic, impassioned, etc. Tone creates a relationship with the audience and evokes specific reactions. It’s achieved by word choice, sentence or paragraph length, and structure.

Ex. 1 “You wouldn’t think there is anything life threatening about speech impediments, but let me tell you, there is nothing more dangerous than being a kid with a stutter and a lisp. A five-year-old is cute when he lisps and stutters. Heck, most of the big-time kid actors stuttered and lisped their way to stardom. . . .” (Sherman Alexie, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*).

Ex. 2 “Communication depends upon the supposition that other minds are like one’s own and that another’s terms are affixed to the same ideas as one’s own. Otherwise reasoning together would be fruitless. To discuss the origins of worlds beyond human capacity or the region of spirits is to waste time beating the air. This pertains to the long disputed question concerning liberty and necessity. It has been sophistry where a few intelligible definitions would have ended the controversy” (David Hume, “On Liberty and Necessity”).

Writing Tips

Sentence Variety and Style

Strategies for Variation

Adding sentence variety to prose can give it life and rhythm. Too many sentences with the same structure and length can grow monotonous for readers. Varying sentence style and structure can also reduce repetition and add emphasis. Long sentences work well for incorporating a lot of information, and short sentences can often maximize crucial points. These general tips may help add variety to similar sentences.

1. Vary the rhythm by alternating short and long sentences.

Several sentences of the same length can make for bland writing. To enliven paragraphs, write sentences of different lengths. This will also allow for effective emphasis.

Example:

The Winslow family visited Canada and Alaska last summer to find some native American art. In Anchorage stores they found some excellent examples of soapstone carvings. But they couldn't find a dealer selling any of the woven wall hangings they wanted. They were very disappointed when they left Anchorage empty-handed.

Revision:

The Winslow family visited Canada and Alaska last summer to find some native American art, such as soapstone carvings and wall hangings. Anchorage stores had many soapstone items available. Still, they were disappointed to learn that wall hangings, which they had especially wanted, were difficult to find. Sadly, they left empty-handed.

Example:

Many really good blues guitarists have all had the last name King. They have been named Freddie King and Albert King and B.B. King. The name King must make a bluesman a really good bluesman. The bluesmen named King have all been very talented and good guitar players. The claim that a name can make a guitarist good may not be that far-fetched.

Revision:

What makes a good bluesman? Maybe, just maybe, it's all in a stately name. B.B. King. Freddie King. Albert King. It's no coincidence that they're the royalty of their genre. When their fingers dance like court jesters, their guitars gleam like scepters, and their voices bellow like regal trumpets, they seem almost like nobility. Hearing their music is like walking into the throne room. They really are kings.

2. Vary sentence openings.

If too many sentences start with the same word, especially *The*, *It*, *This*, or *I*, prose can grow tedious for readers, so changing opening words and phrases can be refreshing. Below are alternative openings for a fairly standard sentence. Notice that different beginnings can alter not only the structure but also the emphasis of the sentence. They may also require rephrasing in sentences before or after this one, meaning that one change could lead to an abundance of sentence variety.

Example:

The biggest coincidence that day happened when David and I ended up sitting next to each other at the Super Bowl.

Possible Revisions:

- Coincidentally, David and I ended up sitting right next to each other at the Super Bowl.
- In an amazing coincidence, David and I ended up sitting next to each other at the Super Bowl.
- Sitting next to David at the Super Bowl was a tremendous coincidence.
- But the biggest coincidence that day happened when David and I ended up sitting next to each other at the Super Bowl.
- When I sat down at the Super Bowl, I realized that, by sheer coincidence, I was directly next to David.
- By sheer coincidence, I ended up sitting directly next to David at the Super Bowl.
- With over 50,000 fans at the Super Bowl, it took an incredible coincidence for me to end up sitting right next to David.
- What are the odds that I would have ended up sitting right next to David at the Super Bowl?
- David and I, without any prior planning, ended up sitting right next to each other at the Super Bowl.
- Without any prior planning, David and I ended up sitting right next to each other at the Super Bowl.
- At the crowded Super Bowl, packed with 50,000 screaming fans, David and I ended up sitting right next to each other by sheer coincidence.
- Though I hadn't made any advance arrangements with David, we ended up sitting right next to each other at the Super Bowl.
- Many amazing coincidences occurred that day, but nothing topped sitting right next to David at the Super Bowl.
- Unbelievable, I know, but David and I ended up sitting right next to each other at the Super Bowl.
- Guided by some bizarre coincidence, David and I ended up sitting right next to each other at the Super Bowl.

Contributors: Ryan Weber, Allen Brizee.

Summary:

This resource presents methods for adding sentence variety and complexity to writing that may sound repetitive or boring. Sections are divided into general tips for varying structure, a discussion of sentence types, and specific parts of speech which can aid in sentence variety.

Sentence Types

Structurally, English sentences can be classified four different ways, though there are endless constructions of each. The classifications are based on the number of independent and dependent clauses a sentence contains. An independent clause forms a complete sentence on

its own, while a dependent clause needs another clause to make a complete sentence. By learning these types, writers can add complexity and variation to their sentences.

Simple sentence: A sentence with one independent clause and no dependent clauses.

- My aunt enjoyed taking the hayride with you.
- China's Han Dynasty marked an official recognition of Confucianism.

Compound Sentence: A sentence with multiple independent clauses but no dependent clauses.

- The clown frightened the little girl, and she ran off screaming.
- The Freedom Riders departed on May 4, 1961, and they were determined to travel through many southern states.

Complex Sentence: A sentence with one independent clause and at least one dependent clause.

- After Mary added up all the sales, she discovered that the lemonade stand was 32 cents short.
- While all of his paintings are fascinating, Hieronymus Bosch's triptychs, full of mayhem and madness, are the real highlight of his art.

Complex-Compound Sentence: A sentence with multiple independent clauses and at least one dependent clause.

- *Catch-22* is widely regarded as Joseph Heller's best novel, and because Heller served in World War II, which the novel satirizes, the zany but savage wit of the novel packs an extra punch.

Contributors: Ryan Weber, Allen Brizee.

Summary:

This resource presents methods for adding sentence variety and complexity to writing that may sound repetitive or boring. Sections are divided into general tips for varying structure, a discussion of sentence types, and specific parts of speech which can aid in sentence variety.

For Short, Choppy Sentences

If your writing contains lots of short sentences that give it a choppy rhythm, consider these tips.

1. Combine Sentences With Conjunctions:

Join complete sentences, clauses, and phrases with conjunctions:

and, but, or, nor, yet, for, so

Example: Doonesbury cartoons satirize contemporary politics. Readers don't always find this funny. They demand that newspapers not carry the strip.

Revision: Doonesbury cartoons laugh at contemporary politicians, but readers don't always find this funny and demand that newspapers not carry the strip.

2. Link Sentences Through Subordination:

Link two related sentences to each other so that one carries the main idea and the other is no longer a complete sentence (subordination). Use connectors such as the ones listed below to show the relationship.

after, although, as, as if, because, before, even if, even though, if, if only, rather than, since, that, though, unless, until, when, where, whereas, wherever, whether, which, while

Example: The campus parking problem is getting worse. The university is not building any new garages.

Revision: The campus parking problem is getting worse because the university is not building any new garages.

Example: The US has been highly dependent on foreign oil for many years. Alternate sources of energy are only now being sought.

Revision: Although the US has been highly dependent on foreign oil for many years, alternate sources are only now being sought.

Notice in these examples that the location of the clause beginning with the dependent marker (the connector word) is flexible. This flexibility can be useful in creating varied rhythmic patterns over the course of a paragraph.

Contributors: Ryan Weber, Allen Brizee.

Summary:

This resource presents methods for adding sentence variety and complexity to writing that may sound repetitive or boring. Sections are divided into general tips for varying structure, a discussion of sentence types, and specific parts of speech which can aid in sentence variety.

For Repeated Subjects or Topics

Handling the same topic for several sentences can lead to repetitive sentences. When that happens, consider using these parts of speech to fix the problem.

1. Relative pronouns

Embed one sentence inside the other using a clause starting with one of the relative pronouns listed below.

which, who, whoever, whom, that, whose

Example: Indiana used to be mainly an agricultural state. It has recently attracted more industry.

Revision: Indiana, which used to be mainly an agricultural state, has recently attracted more industry.

Example: One of the cameras was not packed very well. It was damaged during the move.

Revision: The camera that was not packed very well was damaged during the move.

Example: The experiment failed because of Murphy's Law. This law states that if something can go wrong, it will.

Revision: The experiment failed because of Murphy's Law, which states that if something can go wrong, it will.

Example: Doctor Ramirez specializes in sports medicine. She helped my cousin recover from a basketball injury.

Revision 1: Doctor Ramirez, who specializes in sports medicine, helped my cousin recover from a basketball injury.

Revision 2: Doctor Ramirez, whose specialty is sports medicine, helped my cousin recover from a basketball injury.

2. Participles

Eliminate a be verb (am, is, was, were, are) and substitute a participle:

Present participles end in -ing, for example: speaking, carrying, wearing, dreaming.

Past participles usually end in -ed, -en, -d, -n, or -t but can be irregular, for example: worried, eaten, saved, seen, dealt, taught.

Example: Wei Xie was surprised to get a phone call from his sister. He was happy to hear her voice again.

Revision 1: Wei Xie, surprised to get a phone call from his sister, was happy to hear her voice again.

Revision 2: Surprised to get a phone call from his sister, Wei Xie was happy to hear her voice again.

3. Prepositions

Turn a sentence into a prepositional phrase using one of the words below:

about, above, across, after, against, along, among, around, as, behind, below, beneath, beside, between, by, despite, down, during, except, for, from, in, inside, near, next to, of, off, on, out, over, past, to, under, until, up, with

Example: The university has been facing pressure to cut its budget. It has eliminated funding for important programs. (two independent clauses)

Revision: Under pressure to cut its budget, the university has eliminated funding for important programs. (prepositional phrase, independent clause)

Example: Billy snuck a cookie from the dessert table. This was against his mother's wishes.

Revision: Against his mother's wishes, Billy snuck a cookie from the dessert table.

Contributors: Ryan Weber, Allen Brizee.

Summary:

This resource presents methods for adding sentence variety and complexity to writing that may sound repetitive or boring. Sections are divided into general tips for varying structure, a discussion of sentence types, and specific parts of speech which can aid in sentence variety.

For Similar Sentence Patterns or Rhythms

When several sentences have similar patterns or rhythms, try using the following kinds of words to shake up the writing.

1. Dependent markers

Put clauses and phrases with the listed dependent markers at the beginning of some sentences instead of starting each sentence with the subject:

after, although, as, as if, because, before, even if, even though, if, in order to, since, though, unless, until, whatever, when, whenever, whether, and while

Example: The room fell silent when the TV newscaster reported the story of the earthquake.

Revision: When the TV newscaster reported the story of the earthquake, the room fell silent.

Example: Thieves made off with Edvard Munch's *The Scream* before police could stop them.

Revision: Before police could stop them, thieves made off with Edvard Munch's *The Scream*.

2. Transitional words and phrases

Vary the rhythm by adding transitional words at the beginning of some sentences:

accordingly, after all, afterward, also, although, and, but, consequently, despite, earlier, even though, for example, for instance, however, in conclusion, in contrast, in fact, in the meantime, in the same way, indeed, just as... so, meanwhile, moreover, nevertheless, not only... but also, now, on the contrary, on the other hand, on the whole, otherwise, regardless, shortly, similarly, specifically, still, that is, then, therefore, though, thus, yet

Example: Fast food corporations are producing and advertising bigger items and high-fat combination meals. The American population faces a growing epidemic of obesity.

Revision: Fast food corporations are producing and advertising bigger items and high-fat combination meals. Meanwhile, the American population faces a growing epidemic of obesity.