



# How to Write a Rhetorical Analysis

A rhetorical analysis is much different than other essays you may have been asked to write. With argumentative essays, you are arguing your opinion; with science essays, you are analyzing and interpreting data. But, with a rhetorical analysis, you are doing a little of both.

## What is a Rhetorical Analysis?

A rhetorical analysis is an analysis that is focused on the success or failure of the authors effectiveness of persuasion; in short, this means you are trying to conclude if the author did a 'good job' of convincing an audience to believe what they, the author, said. This kind of analysis falls somewhere between subjective and objective criticism. This analysis can be done in several ways by means of rhetorical devices. But remember, **you are not agreeing or disagreeing with the author. Your main focus should be on HOW the author wrote the text, not WHAT the author wrote.**

## Rhetorical Devices:

These are what you will be looking for. If the author uses them, then make note of them and analyze how it is used and whether it 'belongs' in the essay. The list of potential rhetorical devices is quite lengthy, but here is a short list of potential device categories you may run across:

- *Ethos*: This can refer to the credibility of the author as well as the ethical implications that are made clear in the essay.
- *Logos*: This refers to a use of logic in the essay; it can include statistics and test results.
- *Pathos*: This refers to a use of emotion in an essay; you can usually find this in an author's attempt to evoke emotional response by means of empathy or sympathy.
- *Kairos*: This refers to the timing of information; Kairos can usually be applied to the organization of the essay such as using chronological order or changing things to a sort of flashback structure. Each of these two examples will charge the reader to respond differently.

In these categories, you may find anything from alliteration to meiosis; or you may find example from your text that directly fit into one of the four categories.

## What next?

After you have identified the presence of specific rhetorical devices, you can begin analyzing them; was one rhetorical device more successful than the others? Were you able to pinpoint inconsistencies between the devices? Was there an even use of the rhetorical device categories? These are the things you will try to answer.

Once you have loosely answered these questions, you will need to make a decision; was the author's use of these devices effective? Did the author fall short of convincing an audience? Did they succeed? Why or Why not?

Then, begin outlining your essay and decide what your main points are going to be; you will be arguing the success or failure of the author, so you will be writing an objective, argumentative essay.

This is a hard idea to grasp, but if you have any questions, feel free to book an appointment with the Writing Center. We are happy to help!