RHETORICAL ANALYSIS—WHAT’S THE POINT

• What is the point of rhetorical analysis?

• A rhetorical analysis analyzes how an author argues rather than what an author argues

• Focuses on the rhetorical features of a text—situation, purpose for writing, intended audience, kinds of claims, and types of evidence—to show how the author persuades the reader
RHETORICAL APPEALS

• Ethos: credibility
  • Why do I believe you?

• Logos: facts or logic
  • What parts make sense? What parts don’t make sense?

• Pathos: emotion
  • What parts made me laugh, cry, mad, sad, etc. (or were supposed to)?
RHETORICAL APPEAL EXAMPLES

• More than one hundred peer-reviewed studies have been conducted over the past decade, and none of them suggests that this is an effective treatment for hair loss.

• As a doctor, I am qualified to tell you that this course of treatment will likely generate the best results.

• "Don’t be the last person on the block to have their lawn treated – you don’t want to be the laughing stock of your community!"
• Based on the dozens of archaeological expeditions I’ve made all over the world, I am confident that those pot shards are Mesopotamian in origin.

• You should consider another route. I heard that that street is far more dangerous and scary at night than during the daytime.

• You don’t need to jump off a bridge to know that it’s a bad idea. Why then would you need to try drugs to know if they’re damaging? That’s plain nonsense.
WHILE YOU’RE READING...

• While you’re reading, be looking for these things:
  • An example of one of the appeals
  • The author’s main point
  • The author’s purpose in writing the article
  • Who the author is writing to

• With the grain/against the grain reading
  • First read to agree, then read to disagree
ORGANIZATION OF THE PAPER

• Rhetorical analysis has three parts:

• Thesis:
  • Argues the most important rhetorical features of the text and their effects

• Summary:
  • The author’s most important points of the article

• Evidence:
  • Showing examples of how the author persuades the reader
HOW DO I ARRIVE AT A THESIS?

• Usually written after gathering and analyzing evidence

• Should represent the key ideas you will want to discuss in your essay

• Include:
  • The author’s main point
  • The rhetorical elements the author uses
  • Whether the author was effective in persuading the reader or not
EXAMPLES

• Despite the lack of supporting statistics, Leonard Calloway’s essay is effective because he appeals to our desire to be thought of as patriotic Americans.

• In “Why I Won’t Buy an iPad (and Think You Shouldn’t, Either)” published on Boing Boing in April of 2010, Cory Doctorow successfully uses his experience with technology, facts about the company Apple, and appeals to consumer needs to convince potential iPad buyers that Apple and its products, specifically the iPad, limit the digital rights of those who use them by controlling and mainstreaming the content that can be used and created on the device.
MORE EXAMPLES

• Although Myers includes many convincing logical arguments through the use of historical facts, her readers may doubt her objectivity because of her sarcastic tone.

• Roberts employs the rhetorical appeals of pathos and ethos effectively. However, his use of unsupported logical appeals causes his readers to doubt his claim that ---- is supported by research.
SUMMARY

• Simple and neutral—your analysis does not begin quite yet

• Summary should include the author’s main argument and main claims

• Should be mainly in your own words; use quotations sparingly
PARAGRAPHS OF EVIDENCE

• Remaining paragraphs should support your claim with evidence from the text. Use quotes, summary, and paraphrase to express evidence.

• Each paragraph should focus on a specific example/appeal and how that example/appeal persuades the reader.
“In a sense we've come to our nation's capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men, yes, black men as well as white men, would be guaranteed the ‘unalienable Rights’ of ‘Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.’ It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note, insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check, a check which has come back marked ‘insufficient funds’”

--Martin Luther King Jr., I have a dream speech
REVIEW

• You’re looking at how an author argues, not what an author argues

• Remember the three common rhetorical appeals

• General organization
  • Thesis
  • Summary
  • Evidence