

Rhetorical/Critical Analysis

Your task for this essay is to write a rhetorical analysis of the strategies used in an article related to your research paper topic. This article must be different from the ones you used in essay 1. Good sources of articles suitable to this assignment might be found in either newspapers, (the op-ed page) magazines, (*Time*, *Newsweek*, etc.), or the Opposing Viewpoints Resource Center. Critique and clarify the article for your audience: me. You are not necessarily persuading me to accept a particular point of view in this essay. Rather, your goal is to analyze the strategies and overall techniques the writer uses to develop the article.

What is a Rhetorical or Critical Analysis?

A rhetorical or critical analysis simply means that you are critiquing or evaluating the strategies or techniques the writers uses in developing the article. This does not necessarily mean saying something negative. Think about book or movie review you have might have read. Critics may have mixed response. They might like some aspect of the book or movie and review it positively. They may also dislike some feature and offer negative commentary. Essentially, being critical does not mean you are making only negative comments. You are simply carefully scrutinizing the article and then offering your critique on its effectiveness.

The “analysis” part of a critical analysis simple means that you are breaking “something” into its component parts. For this assignment, you may want to consider the following rhetorical strategies or features of the article you have chosen:

- Identify what you think the author’s thesis is (implied/explicit)
- Identify the author’s purpose (to persuade, to inform, to inflame)
- Examine the writer’s persona, i.e., attitude, tone, role
- Determine the author’s bias
- Determine the original audience might have been and the author’s intended effect on it
- Evaluate the author’s use of:
 1. diction (inflammatory language, connotation, denotation, vocabulary, style, figurative language)
 2. statistics (biased)
 3. expert or authoritative sources
 4. personal anecdotes
 5. examples (real or invented)
 6. appeals (emotional, logical, ethical)

Don’t feel compelled to address ALL of these areas. How can you evaluate the author’s use of statistics if NO statistics are used in the article? What is there to say about the

author's use of personal anecdotes if none are presented? The point is: focus on what YOU think are the most significant features of the article and offer your commentary.

Arrangement of a Rhetorical or Critical Analysis

Typically, a critical analysis begins by introducing the writer (full name on first reference, last name only on second and subsequent references); the title of work; a short summary of article content (focus summary on MAIN points of content); your thesis, and, a short summary of what you plan to analyze in your discussion.

After the introduction, some critical analyses evaluate the essay on a paragraph-by-paragraph basis. For shorter works, this might work well. Organization might not be such a problem. But for longer works, like the ones you will be using, you will want to develop your analysis by using a single organizing principle.

The thesis, presented in the introduction, should suggest the order of your discussion. Remember, one idea or point per paragraph. Your thesis should:

- name author
- name article title
- be in one sentence
- allude to elements being analyzed
- be based on a single analytical principle
- offer some opinion of the work (think of adjectives)

Your conclusion should offer a closing comment on what you thought of the article and why. Feel free to disagree, agree, take issue with, and criticize the work. Did you like it? Why or why not? Does the article seem to touch a central nerve or common chord? Is the discussion a fair representation of the issue?

Remember these important points:

1. Summary is only a very small part of this assignment. Your task is to analyze the rhetorical strategies and techniques and comment on their effectiveness.
2. This is not the forum in which you express your ideas on the issue. You will have ample opportunity to do this in the research paper.
3. You should select an ARTICLE. This means discourse that has an introduction, a body and conclusion. A “factoid sheet” or list of quotations is not suitable. Further, you should consider finding an article that takes a position on the issue and defends it. An objective “just the facts” news article may not lend itself to the type of analysis you’re being asked to do here.
4. You do not have to analyze every single feature of the article. For example, a writer may use expert testimony, statistics, analogy and real examples to develop the article. However, you may choose to write on only the use of expert testimony and real examples because they are the most notable features.