

# Introduction to Rhetoric: What an Author Does and Why

\*\*\* REMINDER: You are required to PRINT this document and HAND-WRITE your responses \*\*\*

Rhetoric is the art of using language to accomplish a specific purpose, and it is also considered a tool for social action within the context of the writing itself. It presumes the following about the *rhetor* (speaker or writer):

- The speaker/writer believes he has **something valuable to say** (related to the context of the time) and **searches for the right language to persuade hearers/readers to consider his perspective.**
- In essence, rhetoric is all about communication.

In the following packet, you will be introduced to basic rhetorical strategies and guided through their implementation through a study of your chosen summer reading text. Read each section of the study guide CAREFULLY. Be sure you understand the language before moving on to the assignment at the end of each section. These will be terms that you will see again, so go ahead and commit them to memory! Be aware that some sections build off of each other, so do not complete out of order. **And remember: you should not start reading your summer text until this study guide instructs you to do so!**

## **PART ONE: The Rhetorical Situation**

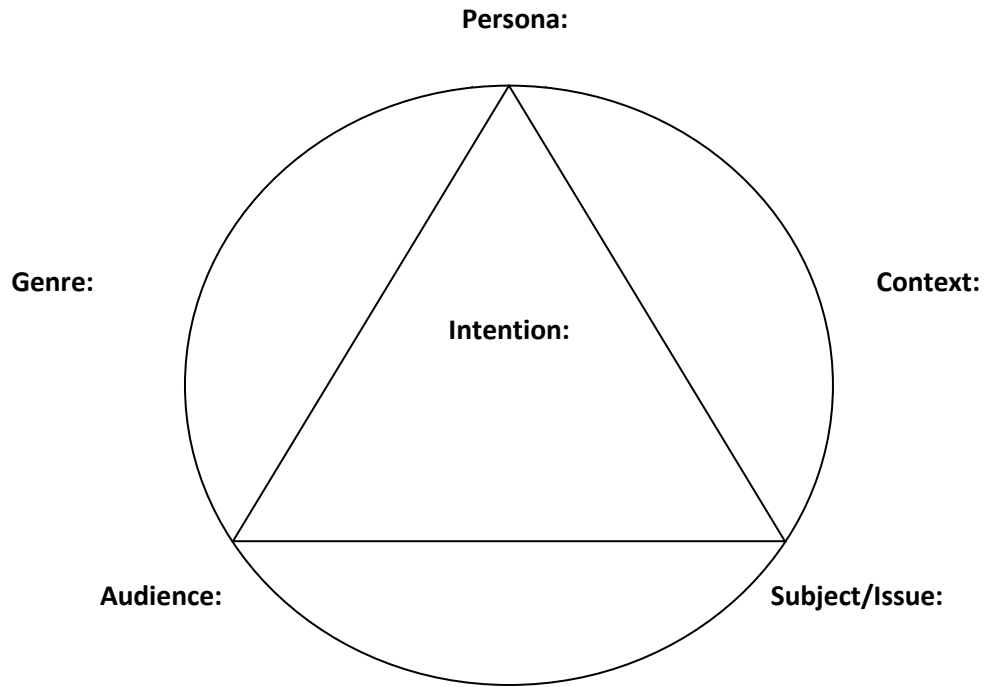
The rhetorical triangle (Aristotelian Triad) suggests that **a person creating OR analyzing a text must consider three elements:**

- **Subject/Issue** – what is being written about and what evidence is being used to develop it?
- **Audience** – don't consider the audience as just a group of listeners or readers to whom the piece is directed, but also consider an analysis of their knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs.
- **Persona** – this is the *character* of the rhetor, in particular, who he or she wants the audience to perceive himself or herself as. Basically, what personality does the author adopt in order to be the most effective at convincing the audience of his/her point?

In addition, rhetorical transactions reflect three vital facts:

- **Context** – a convergence of time, place, people, events, and motivating forces that influences how the rhetor understands, analyzes, and generates the subject matter material (as well as their persona and the appeals they use). The term you will see in the future is "**exigence.**" Exigence connotes a pressing problem in the world, which the writer or speaker asserts must be attended to, understood, and addressed. Understanding this helps the rhetor know how to present their material in order to be most effective.
- **Purpose, Aim, Intention** – every rhetorical transaction is designed to achieve something. The purpose is the reason(s) behind the writing of the text. **In analyzing a text, you usually state the purpose in infinitive form (to + a strong verb) with clarifying details (i.e., to criticize the British government for its involvement in imperialism).**
- **Genre** - when rhetors consider what aim they hope to accomplish in a particular context, they select an appropriate type of text - letter, speech, or essay - to achieve that purpose.

**ASSIGNMENT 1: BEFORE you begin reading your summer text, use the chart on the following page to guide you in a little background research on the rhetorical situation. Complete each section of the chart before moving on. This will help you have a good understanding of the goals of your text before moving forward.**



<p><b>Persona of the Speaker</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does the rhetor want to be perceived?</li> <li>• What does the rhetor presume about the audience?</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Exigence</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time</li> <li>• Place</li> <li>• People</li> <li>• Events</li> <li>• Motivating force behind the rhetor</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Audience</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge</li> <li>• Attitudes</li> <li>• Beliefs</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Purpose</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infinitive phrase</li> </ul>	

Synthesis: Combine all you know into 1-2 sentences, bringing together **all the elements of the rhetorical situation** to make one overarching statement about the **goal of your text**. Remember, this is all based on pre-reading. It's OK if your understanding of the text changes as you get deeper into the book!

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## **PART TWO: Canons of Rhetoric**

Before you begin reading, it is important to understand HOW you should be reading it. I DON'T want your focus on whether or not you agree or disagree with the author. Instead, I want you to approach your reading as an attempt to evaluate HOW an argument is being made, and whether or not the argument is successful. For that, we need to talk about the Canons of Rhetoric. The Canons of Rhetoric are basically **strategies, tools, and principles** that help you break down a written work.

### **1. Proofs – the art of generating effective material that is clear, forceful, and convincing**

- **Non-artistic proofs** - laws, witnesses, contracts, oaths, statistics, etc.
- **Artistic proofs** - appeals
  - Appeal to audience's sympathy (**pathos**)– text appeals to the audience by drawing on their emotions and interests, directly or indirectly, so that they will be sympathetically inclined to accept and buy into his or her central ideas and arguments
  - Appeal to audience's desire to trust (**ethos**) – text appeals to the audience by showing the writer to be a credible person, someone who is knowledgeable and trustworthy, and who has the individual's best interests in mind
  - Appeal to audience's reason (**logos**) – text presents and develops ideas through specific examples and/or details so that the audience can see the rationality, the logic, the reasonableness of comprehending and accepting these ideas

### **2. Structure – selecting, marshalling, and organizing ideas to achieve meaning, purpose, and effect**

- Is there some section that clearly lets the reader know what subject the text is about and what the writer's purpose is? If so, where does this section begin and end? In this section, can you find an answer to the central question that the text has been written in response to, or can you find an indication of the text's central argument?
- Is there a part that explains any background information that the reader needs to know in order to be able to understand the central question or argument? If so where does this section begin and end?
- Does the writer employ a deductive (general to specific, thesis to evidence) or inductive (specific to general, evidence to thesis) approach to the argument? Why?
- Does the writer provide transitional words or phrases that connect the different parts of the text? Do these words or phrases suggest that the writer is continuing and adding on to the material already presented, showing the material following a certain part is a result of what came earlier, or contrasting what comes later with what appeared earlier?
- Is there some sentence or paragraph that focuses the reader's attention on some particular issue, aspect, or theme that the text will examine, in contrast to others that it might? Is there a sentence that suggests the course that the remainder of the text will take? What is the effect?
- Is there some section that purposefully sets out material in support of the text's answer to the central question or its argument? Do you detect any of the following methods of development in this section: relating anecdotes or longer stories, describing scenes and evoking sensory images, defining terms and concepts, dividing the whole into parts, classifying the parts according to some principle, or providing cause-and-effect reasoning?
- Is there a part that examines possible objections to the answer, argument, or supporting material? If so, where does this section begin and end? Is there language that suggests the writer wants to *counter/refute* the objections? Does some language suggest that the writer wants to *concede* the objections?
- Is there a sentence or section where the writer specifically answers the "so what" question? Is there a direct charge to readers to think or act in a new way after reading the text, or does the writer imply new ways of thinking and acting? What does the writer do with the words, phrases, and sentences in this section to give the text a sound of finality?

### **3. Style– the art of producing sentences and words that make a favorable impression on the audience**

- Analysis of style contributes to the text's meaning, purpose, effect, and appeals to the audience – it never consists of a listing of features or techniques.
- Involves schemes, tropes, satire, and **tone**

### **PART THREE: Tone**

Tone is a very important component to any rhetorical analysis because tone helps us evaluate the speaker's attitude toward (1) the subject and (2) the audience. Anyone can sense a speaker's attitude in tone of voice, but understanding tone in written prose is an entirely different matter because the reader does not have voice inflection to carry meaning.

To misinterpret tone is to misinterpret meaning. Thus, an understanding of diction, images, details, and syntax all contribute to the understanding of tone in a written work. Effective use of rhetoric includes learning how to analyze tone in others' writing and controlling tone in your own writing. In order to accomplish this, you must have a firm understanding of basic tone vocabulary. The following words are frequently used in describing the tone of a work:

acerbic	condescending	enthusiastic	laudatory	resigned
ambivalent	confident	exultant	lugubrious	respectful
angry	confused	facetious	mocking	restrained
anxious	contemplative	fanciful	moralistic	reverent
apologetic	contemptuous	flippant	nostalgic	sarcastic
apprehensive	contentious	frivolous	objective	sardonic
argumentative	conversational	giddy	ominous	satiric
bantering	cynical	guarded	passionate	scornful
benevolent	defamatory	harsh	patronizing	sentimental
bitter	despairing	horrific	peaceful	skeptical
callous	detached	humorous	pedantic	smug
candid	didactic	indifferent	pejorative	somber
capricious	diffident	indignant	poignant	strident
childish	disappointed	inflammatory	pretentious	sympathetic
clinical	disdainful	ironic	provocative	taunting
compassionate	dramatic	irreverent	reflective	trenchant
complimentary	effusive	joking	reminiscent	urgent
concerned	elegiac	joyful	remorseful	vibrant
conciliatory	empathetic	languorous	resentful	whimsical

**ASSIGNMENT 2: Begin reading your summer text. As you read, annotate WITHIN THE TEXT for the rhetorical appeals discussed above. Mark in the margins of the book using the following abbreviations for each kind of appeal. Some appeals may use more than one, and that's OK!**

- NA = Non Artistic (laws, witnesses, contracts, oaths, statistics, etc.)
- E = Ethos (appeals to credibility)
- P = Pathos (appeals to emotions)
- L = Logos (appeals to logic)
- S = Structural (organization of ideas to achieve an effect)
- T = Tone (diction, images, details, syntax)

**Annotations should be frequent, as well as appropriate. You should aim for something of substance and importance on roughly every 3<sup>rd</sup> page to receive an "excellent" rating; however, don't let that prevent you from annotating MORE when it's obviously an important section. Mark these elements in the margins with the appropriate symbol, but DO NOT STOP WITH JUST THE ABBREVIATION. For each of the abbreviations that you include, you must also discuss what the author is attempting to accomplish with the inclusion of that rhetorical device.**

**ASSIGNMENT 3: Once you have finished reading and annotating your summer text, complete the following charts. Choose the BEST example that you found during your annotation for each of the sections below.**

<b>APPEAL</b>	<b>Evidence: Summarized or Paraphrased with Page Numbers</b>	<b>Purpose: How the Rhetorical Device Furthers the Author's Purpose</b>
<b>Non-Artistic</b>		
<b>Ethos</b>		
<b>Pathos</b>		
<b>Logos</b>		
<b>Structural</b>		
<b>Tone</b>		

**ASSIGNMENT 4: Using the provided list of adjectives, determine the tone of your summer text selection. Then, select 4 examples of language that demonstrate that tone. Explain the meaning of the language before analyzing its impact on the text.**

***Overall Tone of Text:* \_\_\_\_\_**

***Example 1 of diction, images, details, syntax:***

***How does the example shape the tone of the text?***

***Example 2 of diction, images, details, syntax:***

***How does the example shape the tone of the text?***

***Example 3 of diction, images, details, syntax:***

***How does the example shape the tone of the text?***

***Example 4 of diction, images, details, syntax:***

***How does the example shape the tone of the text?***

## **PART FOUR: Verbs to Use in Analyzing Aim/Purpose/Intention**

At this stage of the study guide, you have analyzed the way the speaker wants to be perceived, how he perceives his audience and their wants, the motivating force behind the text's creation, and some techniques used by the author in making his argument.

Now it's time to condense all of that down into a structured statement. In writing about an author's purpose or intent, or in analyzing any aspect of an author's work, avoid using such weak verbs as "said," "show," "state," and "demonstrate." Practice using a variety of precise verbs that give a clearer picture of your understanding of an author's purpose, style, and message.

accuse	certify	create	enable	harass	maximize	shock
add	characterize	criticize	encourage	hint	minimize	simplify
address	clarify	defend	enforce	honor	mislead	speculate
admonish	compare	define	enhance	identify	notify	strengthen
advise	complain	defy	entail	illustrate	pacify	suggest
affirm	complement	demand	entertain	imply	paint	support
allude	complicate	demonize	envelop	incite	plead	taunt
amplify	comprehend	deny	epitomize	indicate	portend	teach
apologize	concede	deplore	establish	infer	promote	testify
ascertain	condemn	deprecate	evaluate	inquire	propose	urge
assess	confide	deride	evoke	insult	protest	validate
assuage	confuse	deter	evolve	interpret	question	verify
attack	congratulate	detract	excite	invalidate	reaffirm	vouch
balance	connect	diminish	excuse	justify	refer	warn
beg	consider	disagree	exemplify	juxtapose	reflect	weaken
belittle	continue	discourage	flatter	lament	reinforce	yield
bemoan	contradict	discover	flaunt	laud	reiterate	
beseech	contrast	dismiss	forbid	lead	render	
blame	convince	display	foreshadow	legitimize	reveal	
boast	correlate	effect	formulate	link	reward	
cause	corroborate	emphasize	guide	magnify	scare	

**ASSIGNMENT 5: Using a highlighter, mark a minimum of 15 verbs in the list above that you feel best describe the author's purpose in writing. Then, in paragraph form, explain what you feel was the overall purpose in writing the text.**

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