



# How to Approach a Rhetorical Analysis

# What is Rhetorical Analysis?

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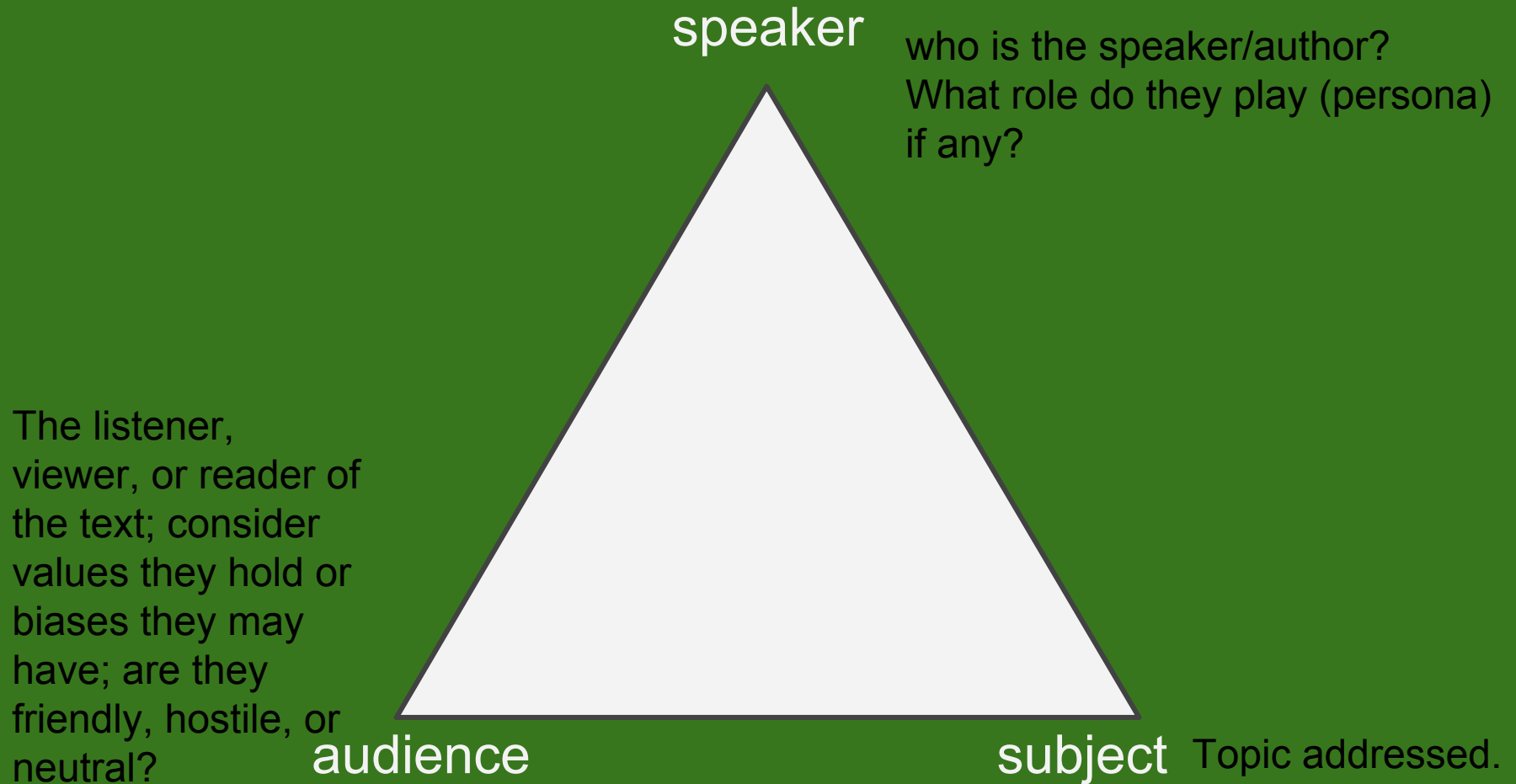
Rhetorical Analysis is the study of **HOW** an author writes rather than **WHAT** they actually wrote

# How do I start?

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- **Begin with a close reading of the text**
- **Look at the calculated choices the writer made in creating his/her work (i.e. how individual words and images connect, how his/her argument evolves)**

# First, consider the rhetorical triangle



Here is an acronym that helps you consider the elements of  
**the Rhetorical Triangle**

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- **Speaker**
- **Occasion**
- **Audience**
- **Purpose**
- **Subject**
- **TONE**

**SOAPSTONE**

# How can you identify author's tone?

**Diction:** connotation of words

**Imagery:** images chosen may have an emotional reaction attached to them and can indicate author's attitude toward subject

**Details:** details that are included (or omitted) can provide insight into author's attitude

**Language:** rhetorical devices used- metaphors, irony, etc

**Syntax:** short, simple sentences? long lists? What effect do they have?

# Be specific with your choice of tone words

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For example:

sentimental

bitter

urgent

complimentary

provocative

didactic

proud

condescending

sympathetic

irreverent

vexed

humorous

objective

mocking

candid

nostalgic

serious

# Consider the APPEALS

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**ETHOS:** builds the **author's credibility**

Mentioning the author's qualifications/credentials, providing expert testimony, and establishing shared values/experiences are ways to build ethos.

**PATHOS:** seeks to evoke an **emotional response** in the reader

Emotions can be anything from sympathy and anger to fear and hope.

**LOGOS:** appeals to the reader's **logical side**

Author may provide specific evidence or data to develop this in their argument



# How to write about the appeals

## Show, Don't Tell

Examples of Telling	Examples of Showing
<i>Providing a laundry list of terms - throwing them at the reader</i>	<i>Demonstrating an understanding of how the terms are used and the effects they have on the text</i>
“The writer uses pathos”	“the author appeals to the emotions of the audience as he...” “the author makes the audience fear the consequences, and so sways their opinion when she ...”
“ The writer appeals to logos”	“the writer uses a carefully-reasoned cause and effect argument that shows that X leads to Y” “the writer offers many examples in paragraph three to support her point that ...” or “the writer reaches a logical conclusion that ...”
“The writer uses ethos”	“ the writer establishes his authority by ...” “ the writer makes himself sympathetic to the audience by ...”

# Look at your annotations

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**Ask yourself:** How do the rhetorical strategies you've noticed help the author achieve his/her purpose?

Offer suggestions as to why he/she may have used them.

Look for ways to group/organize your ideas

# Remember the Précis

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Although the rhetorical précis was only 4 sentences and not a full essay, it modeled for you the elements to consider in a rhetorical analysis essay.

**Sentence 1:** Introduce author and text; state main idea

**Sentence 2:** offers support used for main idea

**Sentence 3:** states author's purpose

**Sentence 4:** identifies audience and author's tone

# Your Essay

- **Introduction** should provide background for your analysis and identify what text you are examining. The **thesis** makes a statement concerning what the author has done in the text in relation to answering the prompt provided (ex: Identify the author's argument and what rhetorical strategies are used to develop it.)
- **Body paragraphs** provide your analysis and evidence. Strong body paragraphs do not generalize; they include specific details to support analysis. Do NOT summarize the text.
- **Conclusion** points back to your thesis

## TECHNICAL COMMAND of LANGUAGE

- Transitions: effective transitions increases fluency and coherence of your paper. Transition words are great, but sentence structure can serve this purpose as well (think the DC, IC structure we've discussed in class).
- Sentence Structure: vary your sentence structure and be sure that punctuation is correct. Look out for comma splices.
- Conventions of Formal Writing: third person only in ANALYSIS essay. NO FIRST PERSON!
- Grammar: Look for parallel structure, subject-verb and pronoun agreement, and/or dangling or misplaced modifiers. Do your best to not end a sentence with a preposition.
- Word Choice: is clear, effective, and precise. Get rid of trite or colloquial language. Avoid words such as “got” or “a lot”. Don't overuse the word “shows”. Avoid passive voice. Avoid absolute superlatives (all, none, always, etc.)

Btw- the words “quote” and “quotes” are forbidden - Just. Don't. Do. It.