

Cheat Sheet: Rhetorical Analysis Paragraphs and Essays

SPACE CAT (Speaker, Purpose, Audience, Context, Exigence, Choices, Appeals, Tone)

I. Rhetorical Situation- Why the author choose these strategies for the (target) audience, occasion, and/or purpose?

II. Rhetorical Strategies

- **Appeals** (ethos, logos, pathos)
- **Language** (diction, devices, details, imagery, tone, etc.)
- **Structure** (format, beginning to end, function of paragraphs, syntax)
 - a. This is the analysis part! Without this, you are merely summarizing the text. Think about these questions: 1. **HOW** do the rhetorical strategies help the author achieve his/her purpose?
 2. **WHY** does the author choose those strategies for that particular audience and occasion?

Once you've identified the information above, it's time to begin putting your thoughts and ideas **into a format that proves you have accurately analyzed the text.**

There are many ways to write an effective rhetorical analysis essay. Below is ONE way that is a good, simple format to help you get started. You may find as you become more comfortable with analysis that you want to deviate from this format. **That's fine...I encourage it...**as long as you are still focusing on numbers 1-3 from above.

INTRODUCTION: It is usually brief. However, it must contain some essential information.

Put SPACE in your introduction and follow this format:

Format:

1. **Speaker**, **Context** (occasion), and **Subject**

(Writer's credentials), (writer's first and last name), in his/her (type of text and occasion), (title of text), (strong verb – see list) (writer's subject).

Popular culture writer, Leslie Kinzel, in her article written in 2010 when Michelle Obama initiated a program for kids that were overweight, "Fat Kids, Cruel Word...Why the first lady's fight to end childhood obesity does damage to the children it's trying to help," recounts her experience as a fat kid growing up and being singled out.

2. **Purpose**

(Writer's last name) + (strong verb)+ (what the writer attempts to do).

Kinzel conveys the idea that, labels and fat shaming is more damaging to children than actually being overweight.

3. **Purpose in terms of Audience**

He/she adopts/displays/ a[n] (adjective describing the attitude/feeling conveyed by the writer) + in order to/ to (verb phrase describing what the speaker wants the audience to DO)

She adopts a reflective tone in order to provoke a change in the way children are taught about fatness and cause her audience to join in the effort to teach kids healthy life choices instead of toxic labels.

4. **Thesis = Rhetorical choices + Purpose**

(Author's Last Name) + (strong verb that implies usage -ex: employs, utilizes, etc.) + (rhetorical choices you will be exploring **WITHOUT LISTING**) to (purpose + claim)

Kinzel employs personal testimony and careful diction to convince her audience that fat labeling is detrimental in the lives of children for there are better ways of teaching healthy habits.

Example:

Popular culture writer, Leslie Kinzel, in her article written in 2010 when Michelle Obama initiated a program for kids that were overweight, "Fat Kids, Cruel Word...Why the first lady's fight to end childhood obesity does damage to the children it's trying to help," recounts her experience as a fat kid growing up and being singled out. Kinzel conveys the idea that, labels and fat shaming is more damaging to children than actually being overweight. She adopts a reflective tone in order to provoke a change in the way children are taught about fatness and cause her audience to join in the effort to teach kids healthy life choices instead of toxic labels. Kinzel employs personal testimony and careful diction to convince her audience that fat labeling is detrimental in the lives of children for there are better ways of teaching healthy habits.

BODY

This is the analysis part! This is where you include a detailed explanation of strategies used by the writer. When writing an analysis, it is crucial that you work **chronologically** through the text.

This means that you start at the beginning of the text and work your way through it by discussing what the writer is saying and the effectiveness of the strategies he/she is using at the beginning, middle, and end of the text.

Sometimes this means that you will discuss each **paragraph** (one at a time), and sometimes this means that you will divide the text into **sections** and discuss the beginning, middle, and end of the text. Whether you discuss each paragraph or each section depends on the length and organization of the text itself.

To help you move chronologically through the text, there are **transition words** you can use. A few are listed below:

*begins *opens *closes *contrasts *shifts to *juxtaposes *ends *moves to

Every analysis paragraph MUST:

- Identify the part of the text you are analyzing by using **transition words** and **STRONG VERBS** to explain what is being said.
- Identify the **strongest rhetorical strategies** used in that particular section. This includes incorporating **specific text examples** (Textual Evidence) into your own words. **Do NOT** try to discuss every strategy the writer uses; pick the strongest!
- Clearly and specifically **explain how** the rhetorical strategies are used to help the writer achieve his purpose and reach his audience. Do not simply list!!! The technique/strategy used must somehow be connected to the author's purpose.
- The above items must be woven together seamlessly into **one sophisticated paragraph** of the body of your analysis essay. A sample format is below:

Format and Example

[from Pres. Reagan's speech after the space shuttle Challenger explosion in the 1980s]:

1. The 1st sentence identifies which section you are discussing and the main idea of that section (**Claim**)

(Writer's last name) (transition word) his/her (type of text) by (strong verb) that (main idea of this section of the text).

Kinzel begins her article by presenting a personal connection to the problem of fatness and the weight such word carries.

2. The 2nd sentence conveys the writer's support for the main idea by identifying and providing a specific example for one rhetorical strategy used by the writer. (**Textual Evidence**) *[This sentence is repeated if you want to discuss more than one rhetorical strategy.]*

She uses personal experience and strategic word use to convince her audience that focusing on the weight of a child and not on his/her health leads to a lifelong of bad choices, "If I hadn't felt singled out, if I hadn't been convinced that no one in the world would like me, let alone love me, until I stopped being fat, I might not have been as fat as I am today...the entrenched culture of guilt around the state of our bodies is unlikely to succeed in making any of us healthier."

3. The 3rd sentence explains how the rhetorical strategies you discussed in the previous sentences help the writer achieve his purpose by using an *in order to* statement (**Analysis**)

By creating common ground with the audience in order to appeal to their sense of pity and by using words such

as “singled out,” “entrenched” and “fat,” Kinzel strengthens her position that singling out kids because of their weight leads to unhealthy adult lives.

4. The 4th sentence identifies the effect of the writer’s use of these strategies on the audience. (**Analysis/ SO WHAT?**)

This outpouring of emotional testimony from the speaker conveys a sense of caring and sincerity that furthers her argument and gently sways her audience.

Put it all together and this is what one paragraph of the body of a rhetorical analysis essay might look like:

Kinzel begins her article by presenting a personal connection to the problem of fatness and the weight such word carries. She uses personal experience and strategic word use to convince her audience that focusing on the weight of a child and not on his/her health leads to a lifelong of bad choices, “If I hadn't felt singled out, if I hadn't been convinced that no one in the world would like me, let alone love me, until I stopped being fat, I might not have been as fat as I am today...the entrenched culture of guilt around the state of our bodies is unlikely to succeed in making any of us healthier.” By creating common ground with the audience in order to appeal to their sense of pity and by using words such as “singled out,” “entrenched” and “fat,” Kinzel strengthens her position that singling out kids because of their weight leads to unhealthy adult lives. This outpouring of emotional testimony from the speaker conveys a sense of caring and sincerity that furthers her argument and gently sways her audience.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion is probably the easiest part. Be brief. In one-two sentences, simply remind your reader of the things you said in the introduction by bringing it full circle. **DO NOT** re-state the thesis. Include a **BGI** (Big Global Issue) and end with a **BANG!!** Try to incorporate a metaphor, simile and or paradox that leaves the reader with the impression that **YOU** are a mature, strong writer!

Strong vs. Weak Verbs

To help you move away from summary and toward **ANALYSIS**, you need to begin to incorporate strong verbs into your writing when discussing the writer’s rhetorical choices. Below is a list of verbs that are considered weak because they imply summary and a list of verbs that are considered strong because they imply analysis. Strive to use the stronger verbs to help push yourself away from summary and toward analysis: **“The writer expounds...” NOT “The writer says...”**

WEAK VERBS (Summary)

says	goes on to say	this quote shows	states
relates	tells	explains	describes

STRONG VERBS (Analysis)

- | | | | |
|--------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|
| • admonishes | • emphasizes | • minimizes | • sustains |
| • analyzes | • employs | • nullifies | • trivializes |
| • argues | • establishes | • processes | • testifies |
| • compares | • expounds | • promotes | • undermines |
| • contrasts | • facilitates | • probes | • vilifies |
| • defines | • flatters | • praises | • vindicates |
| • demonizes | • formulates | • qualifies | • warns |
| • denigrates | • illuminates | • questions | |
| • discovers | • implies | • reconstructs | |
| • dismisses | • incorporates | • reflects | |
| • elucidates | • lionizes | • ridicules | |
| • enumerates | • manipulates | • suggests | |