

# Non-literary Analysis: Textual Analysis (Paper One)

How do you approach analyzing non-literary texts such as articles, editorials, speeches, blogs, advertising, etc.?

## RHETORICAL OR TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

How does the author's language shape the meaning? How do the purpose, audience, medium, disposition, appeals, and style impact the reception of the message? How does the author use language to persuade?

### 1) Purpose

Why did the author write this text? And why did the author write this text in a certain way? What is the occasion for the text e.g. some specific incident or event? What is the intent of the piece: TO INFORM, TO NARRATE, TO PERSUADE, TO DESCRIBE?

Consider the following:

- what the author said and the diction used
- what the author did not say
- how the author said it and the alternative ways it could have been said
- what the intended effect is e.g. to reflect, to call to action

### 2) Audience

Who is the target audience? How does the text's language and rhetoric suit the audience? Are there groups excluded from the intended audience? Is there more than one intended audience?

- Age
- Gender
- Location
- Education
- Socioeconomic status
- Beliefs, Values, Attitudes (special interest groups)

### 3) Nature of the Medium

What are the characteristics that define the text? Consider the differences in the variety of texts such as newspaper articles, magazine ads, editorials, blogs, etc. What modes of writing are included: expository, narrative, descriptive, and argumentative? Does the author adhere to the conventions of the genre or stray from them? What is the impact of the medium and how the message is received? Consider the text type.

### 4) Disposition

How does the author present his or her disposition or inherent mindset on the topic(s)? Is there an inherent bias in the author? Does the bias distort the truth in some way? What influences may have impacted the delivery of the message such as historically, politically, socially, or economically? Is there a clear tone? What tone shifts are seen through the text?

Bias in the media can occur through:

- Selection & Omission--choosing to tell only parts of the story
- Placement-- where the story appears in the newspaper or during news hour or on a website
- Headlines-- often crafted to catch attention and sell papers rather than report facts
- Word Choice and Tone--using sensational and emotional words to dramatize the events
- Photos/Captions/Camera Angles --making one person look good and another bad, for example
- Names & Titles --calling a person a “bad guy” instead of by his name, for example
- Statistics & Crowd Counts--dramatizing numbers for effect
- Source Control--using information or sources that only show or support one side of a story
- You also want to consider the source: Is it a more liberal (left-leaning) source or a conservative (right-leaning) source or is it more in the center? Check out <https://www.allsides.com/media-bias/media-bias-ratings> for a chart.

### 5) Appeals

Does the rhetorical piece use Logos, Ethos, or Pathos?

#### PATHOS

How does the author use strong, connotative language that incites a reaction making an *emotional* appeal (*pathos*)?

#### LOGOS

How does the author use a *logical* appeal (*logos*) through facts, statistics, examples, organizational strategies, etc?

#### ETHOS

How does the author create an ethical appeal (*ethos*) through his or her experience and credibility in order to gain the trust of the audience?

## 5) Style

- How is the piece ordered e.g. compare/contrast, cause/effect, problem/solution, analogies, narrative, description, etc?
- What rhetorical tropes and schemes are used such as *extended metaphor*, *hyperbole*, *anecdotes*, *examples*, *antithesis*, *anaphora*, *litotes*, *analogy*, *symbolism*, *irony*, *paradox*, *rhetorical questions*, etc?
- How would you describe the word choice and its effect on conveying the message?

## Types of Evidence

### 1. *Analogical Evidence*

1. How does the author compare two things that are similar in order to show the reader parallels and make a point to support his/her argument? What is persuasive or enlightening about using analogies to support an argument?
2. How can the use of an analogy draw an insightful connection between a well known phenomenon to a less-known phenomenon?

### 2. *Anecdotal Evidence*

1. How does the author use anecdotes to tell a story in order to prove a point?
2. How does the author's storytelling of anecdotes coupled with statistics or testimonials effectively help build an argument?

### 3. *Observations*

1. How does the author use his or her own observations to form conclusions and support his/her argument?

### 4. *Statistics*

1. How does the author use numbers and percentages from verified sources to support his claim using reasoning? How do these statistics lend credibility to his/her argument?
2. Are the statistics being dramatized or manipulated for a specific effect?
3. How valid are the statistics in supporting the argument?

### 5. *Quotes or Testimonial*

1. How does the author use quotes from leading experts and authorities in order to support his/her position?

### 6. *Facts*

1. Are there facts that can't be disputed and can be accepted as true? How do these facts help support the argument?

## Organizational Strategies

When analyzing an author's style for a non-literary text such as an editorial, determine what organizational patterns he or she uses:

- **Exemplification:** specific examples, brief
- **Illustration:** examples in more detail
- **Description:** concrete, sensory diction
- **Narration:** use of stories e.g. anecdotes
- **Cause/effect:** clear reason/result
- **Compare/contrast:** similarities/differences
- **Process:** how to do something...

- **Problem/Solution:** Describe a problem and its implications and then provide a solution
- **Classification:** how something is classified e.g. science
- **Extended definition:** how to define an abstract concept e.g. patriotism, democracy, love, faith, etc.

# RHETORICAL TROPES

How do rhetorical tropes and schemes affect how the text is read?

## Rhetorical tropes

### Allusion

(historical, literary, pop cultural metaphorical reference)

### Analogy

(Comparison)

### Rhetorical question

(asking ? for effect)

### Epithet

(adjectives or nouns to used to describe another noun- accentuates a dominant characteristic for effect)

### Euphemism

(softer word instead of a harsh one)

### Litotes

(understatement, form of irony)

### Hyperbole

(exaggeration, form of irony)

### Irony

(the situation is not expected. Verbal irony occurs when someone says something that is exaggerated or understated for an effect)

### Juxtaposition

(contrasting ideas next to each other)

### Metaphor

(direct/implicit comparison between two things)

## **Pastiche**

*(A pastiche imitates the author's style in a respectful way by changing an aspect of the story: point of view, ending, change protagonist from male to female, setting, etc. You also could imitate the author's style and language with a new topic.)*

## **Parody**

(an imitation of the style of a writer or artist with deliberate exaggeration for comic effect or ridicule)

## **Personification**

(metaphor giving human qualities to nonhuman entity)

## **Negation**

(using negative constructions to emphasize a point)

## **Motif**

(a recurring element that contributes to theme/purpose)

## **Allegory**

(story in which people, events, or things often have symbolic meanings)

## **Paradox**

(something that seems contradictory but is actually true)

# **SYNTACTICAL FORMS**

## **Parenthetical Asides (authorial intrusion)**

The author interjects with her/his opinions to add humor or ridicule with dashes or parenthesis

## **Repetition**

(words, sounds, or ideas used more than once to enhance the rhythm, or create emphasis)

## **Parallelism**

(similar constructions help the audience to compare/contrast parallel subjects or to emphasize a point. Writers will use similar phrases and clauses to balance a sentence)

## **Antithesis**

(two opposing ideas presented in a parallel manner; the juxtaposition of contrasting ideas through syntax EX "She is my happiness!—she is my torture, nonetheless!")

## **Anaphora**

(the regular repetition of the same word or phrase at the beginning of successive phrases or clauses e.g. "We shall fight on the beaches. We shall fight on the landing grounds....")

# Word Choice

## LEVEL OF FORMALITY

1. **FORMAL:** elevated, learned, pretentious, ornate, flowery, archaic, scholarly, pedantic, elegant, dignified, impersonal, elaborate, sophisticated, formal, cultured, poetic, abstract, esoteric (hard to understand), colorful, eloquent, euphonious
2. **INFORMAL:** candid, detached, plain, simple, straightforward, informal, conversational, concrete
3. **COLLOQUIAL:** abrupt, terse, laconic, simple, rustic, vulgar, slang, jargon, dialect, simple

## CONNOTATIVE vs DENOTATIVE LANGUAGE

1. **Denotative language:** authentic, actual, apparent, literal, journalistic, straightforward, concrete, precise
2. **Connotative language:** poetic, lyrical, symbolic, metaphoric, sensuous, grotesque, picturesque, abstract, whimsical, euphemistic, figurative, obscure, allegorical, suggestive, idyllic, emotive

## tone

1. **POSITIVE TONES:** *cheerful, eager, lighthearted, hopeful, exuberant, enthusiastic, complimentary, confident, cheery, trusting, optimistic, loving, passionate, amused, elated, sympathetic, compassionate, proud, wistful, longing, romantic, humorous*
2. **NEGATIVE TONES:** *bitter, angry, outraged, accusing, incensed, turbulent, furious, wrathful, inflammatory, irritated, disgusted, indignant, irate, caustic, condescending, cynical, pompous, satiric, critical, grotesque, melancholic, mournful, apprehensive*
3. **NEUTRAL TONES:** *objective, nostalgic, candid, restrained, detached, instructive, learned, factual, informative, authoritative, disinterested, judicial, impartial, frank, aloof, calm, imploring*

## TYPES OF IMAGERY

1. **Visual Imagery:** Something *seen* in the mind's eye
2. **Auditory Imagery:** language that represents a *sound* or sounds
3. **Olfactory Imagery:** language representing the sense of *smell*
4. **Gustatory Imagery:** a *taste*
5. **Tactile Imagery:** *touch*, for example, hardness, softness, wetness, heat, cold
6. **Organic Imagery:** internal sensation: hunger, thirst, fatigue, fear
7. **Kinesthetic Imagery:** movement or tension

# Persuasive Techniques

The first 18 examples are taken from the following source: Media Literacy Project at [medialiteracyproject.org](http://medialiteracyproject.org)

1. **Association.** This persuasion technique tries to link a product, service, or idea with something already liked or desired by the target audience, such as fun, pleasure, beauty, security, intimacy, success, wealth, etc. The media message doesn't make explicit claims that you'll get these things; the association is implied. The association can be a very powerful technique. A good ad can create a strong emotional response and then associate that feeling with a brand (family = Coke, victory = Nike). This process is known as emotional transfer. Several of the persuasion techniques below, like Beautiful people, warm & fuzzy, Symbols, and Nostalgia, are specific types of association.

2. **Bandwagon.** Many ads show lots of people using the product, implying that "everyone is doing it" (or at least, "all the cool people are doing it"). No one likes to be left out or left behind, and these ads urge us to "jump on the bandwagon." Politicians use the same technique when they say, "The American people want..." How do they know?

3. **Fear.** This is the opposite of the Association technique. It uses something disliked or feared by the intended audience (like bad breath, failure, high taxes, or terrorism) to promote a "solution." Ads use fear to sell us products that claim to prevent or fix the problem. Politicians and advocacy groups stoke our fears to get elected or to gain support.

4. **Humor.** Many ads use humor because it grabs our attention and it's a powerful persuasion technique. When we laugh, we feel good. Advertisers make us laugh and then show us their product or logo because they're trying to connect that good feeling to their product. They hope that when we see their product in a store, we'll subtly re-experience that good feeling and select their product. Advocacy messages (and news) rarely use humor because it can undermine their credibility; an exception is political satire.

5. **Plain folks.** (A type of Testimonial – the opposite of Celebrities.) This technique works because we may believe a "regular person" more than an intellectual or a highly paid celebrity. It's often used to sell everyday products like laundry detergent because we can more easily see ourselves using the product, too. The plain folk's technique strengthens the down-home, "authentic" image of products like pickup trucks and politicians. Unfortunately, most of the "plain folks" in ads are actually paid actors carefully selected because they look like "regular people."

6. **Testimonials.** Media messages often show people testifying about the value or quality of a product, or endorsing an idea. They can be experts, celebrities, or plain folks. We tend to believe them because they appear to be a neutral third party (a pop star, for example, not the lipstick maker, or a community member instead of the politician running for office.) This technique works best when it seems like the person "testifying" is doing so because they genuinely likes the product or agrees with the idea. Some testimonials may be less effective when we recognize that the person is getting paid to endorse the product.

7. **Intensity.** The language of ads is full of intensifiers, including superlatives (greatest, best, most, fastest, lowest prices), comparatives (more, better than, improved, increased, fewer calories), hyperbole (amazing, incredible, forever), exaggeration, and many other ways to hype the product.

8. **Euphemism.** While the Glittering generalities and Name-calling techniques arouse audiences with vivid, emotionally suggestive words, Euphemism tries to pacify audiences in order to make an unpleasant reality more palatable. Bland or abstract terms are used instead of clearer, more graphic words. Thus, we hear about corporate "downsizing" instead of "layoffs," or "intensive interrogation techniques" instead of "torture."

9. **Glittering generalities.** This is the use of so-called "virtue words" such as civilization, democracy, freedom, patriotism, motherhood, fatherhood, science, health, beauty, and love. Persuaders use these words in the hope that we will approve and accept their statements without examining the evidence. They hope that few people will ask whether it's appropriate to invoke these concepts, while even fewer will ask what these concepts really mean.

10. **Name-calling.** This technique links a person or idea to a negative symbol (liar, creep, gossip, etc.). It's the opposite of Glittering generalities. Persuaders use Name-calling to make us reject the person or the idea on the basis of the negative symbol, instead of looking at the available evidence. A subtler version of this technique is to use adjectives with negative connotations (extreme, passive, lazy, pushy, etc.) Ask yourself: Leaving out the name-calling, what are the merits of the idea itself?

11. **Rhetorical questions.** These are questions designed to get us to agree with the speaker. They are set up so that the "correct" answer is obvious. ("Do you want to get out of debt?" "Do you want quick relief from headache

pain?" and "Should we leave our nation vulnerable to terrorist attacks?" are all rhetorical questions.) Rhetorical questions are used to build trust and alignment before the sales pitch.

**12. Slippery slope.** This technique combines Extrapolation and Fear. Instead of predicting a positive future, it warns against a negative outcome. It argues against an idea by claiming it's just the first step down a "slippery slope" toward something the target audience opposes. ("If we let them ban smoking in restaurants because it's unhealthy, eventually they'll ban fast food, too." This argument ignores the merits of banning smoking in restaurants.) The Slippery slope technique is commonly used in political debate because it's easy to claim that a small step will lead to a result most people won't like, even though small steps can lead in many directions.

**13. Ad hominem.** Latin for "against the man," the ad hominem technique responds to an argument by attacking the opponent instead of addressing the argument itself. It's also called "attacking the messenger." It works on the belief that if there's something wrong or objectionable about the messenger, the message must also be wrong.

**14. Analogy.** An analogy compares one situation with another. A good analogy, where the situations are reasonably similar, can aid decision-making. A weak analogy may not be persuasive unless it uses emotionally charged images that obscure the illogical or unfair comparison.

**15. Cause vs. Correlation.** While understanding true causes and true effects is important, persuaders can fool us by intentionally confusing correlation with cause. For example: Babies drink milk. Babies cry. Therefore, drinking milk makes babies cry.

**16. Group dynamics.** We are greatly influenced by what other people think and do. We can get carried away by the potent atmosphere of live audiences, rallies, or other gatherings.

**17 Scapegoating.** Extremely powerful and very common in political speech, Scapegoating blames a problem on one person, group, race, religion, etc. Some people, for example, claim that undocumented ("illegal") immigrants are the main cause of unemployment in the United States, even though unemployment is a complex problem with many causes. Scapegoating is a particularly dangerous form of the Simple solution Technique.

**18. Straw man.** This technique builds up an illogical or deliberately damaged idea and presents it as something that one's opponent supports or represents. Knocking down the "straw man" is easier than confronting the opponent directly.

**19. Card Stacking:** Only the good aspects of the product are emphasized; negative aspects appear in fine print

**20. Stereotyping:** Broad generalizations are made of people based on their gender, ethnicity, race, political, social reasons.

**21. Begging the Question or Circular Reasoning:** The argument goes around and around, with evidence making the same claim without really providing logical reasoning

**22 Non Sequitur:** (logic) a conclusion that does not follow from the premises, there is a disconnect between two statements

**23. False Dilemma (also called Either/Or Fallacy):** a statement that identifies two alternatives and falsely suggests that if one is rejected, the other must be accepted--EITHER this OR that

**24. False Analogy:** Making a misleading comparison between logically unconnected ideas

**25. Red Herring:** Red herring is a kind of fallacy that is an irrelevant topic introduced in an argument to divert the attention of listeners or readers from the original issue.



# Visual Analysis\*\*

**Rhetorical situation:** Who is the audience and what is the purpose behind the visual and the creator? Is the audience left-leaning (liberal) or right-leaning (conservative)? How does the media type influence the viewer's interpretation? Does the specific media creator influence the way the viewer sees the image? The XXX, an online and print newspaper, featured .... The XXX, an online and print newspaper, geared toward a \_\_\_ audience....

**Emphasis:** What is emphasized? Is there a focal point that draws your eyes in? Is there a balance or harmonious relationship or a clear juxtaposition of contrasting images for an effect? How is the composition of the image structured? Where are the images organized such as in the foreground, in the background, to the left, to the center, to the right, etc.? Is there an interesting perspective or camera angle? Is there a clear focal point? Are some images blurred while others are in sharper focus? Stems: The image of \_\_\_ is emphasized as a central focal point.... The creator illustrates harmony and balance through .... The creator shows a contrasting image of \_\_\_ in order to \_\_\_\_\_. The perspective suggests that \_\_\_\_\_.

**Lighting & Color:** What colors and lighting do you see? Do the colors or lighting suggest a specific connotation or even a symbolic idea? Do the colors suggest an attitude or tone of the creator? Do the warm colors connote warmth for instance?

The \_\_\_ colors of the \_\_\_ signify \_\_\_\_\_. The viewer can infer that the colors connote a feeling of \_\_\_\_\_. The colors symbolize \_\_\_\_\_.

**Appeals:** Does the creator evoke emotions in the reader with positive or negative feelings? Does the creator evoke logic in the viewer by making a comparison or showing an effect on something? Does the creator create credibility about the topic through the images (ethos)?

The creator evokes a feeling of \_\_\_\_\_ through \_\_\_\_\_. The creator appeals to the viewer's sense of logic through \_\_\_\_\_. The creator establishes credibility and trust through \_\_\_\_\_.

**Theme:** Is there a specific message that is being conveyed about humanity, society, or culture? What details construct an argument for the viewer? Are certain people represented in a certain way to convey a message? Are certain objects portrayed in a certain way to convey a message? **How does this image relate to the global issue that you selected?** **STEMS:** The photograph portrays the message that \_\_\_\_\_. The visual suggests that \_\_\_\_\_.

**Effect:** Overall, what was effective about the image in conveying the argument? End your analysis with your conclusions.

The creator effectively conveys a message of \_\_\_\_\_ through \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_.