In a rhetorical analysis, you will analyze an author’s argument to determine how well it reaches the intended audience. Writing a rhetorical analysis is good practice for learning to write your own effective arguments. To find an argument to analyze, just look around you. Arguments can be found everywhere, from journals and newspapers to bumper stickers and advertisements!

**The Rhetorical Situation**

To write an effective rhetorical analysis, first you must understand the rhetorical situation. Lloyd Bitzer (a famous rhetoric dude) gives the name *rhetorical situation* to the elements involved in any argument. To begin your analysis, take notes on some of these issues (Yep, we said take some notes, people!):

- **Author**: Who is the author? What is her/his background, credentials, ideas, and beliefs?
- **Genre**: What type of argument is it (an editorial, a bumper sticker, an article, etc.)?
- **Context**: What social, cultural, historical, or political contexts are involved? What event, issue, or situation gave rise to the argument? What issue is the author responding to?
- **Purpose**: Why did the author write the argument? What motivated her/him to do so?
- **Audience**: Who is the audience of the argument? What are their beliefs, values, and prejudices?
- **Claims**: What claims are advanced by the author? What is her/his argument? What issues does s/he raise? What issues does s/he omit or evade?

**The Rhetorical Appeals**

To continue your analysis, now look more closely at the text and its rhetorical appeals. Aristotle names three ways the author can appeal to her/his audience:

- **Ethos**: Ethos is the presentation of self. How does the author intend to present her/himself to the audience? Does s/he come across as s/he intends? How credible, reliable, and/or knowledgeable is s/he?
- **Pathos**: Pathos is emotional appeals. What emotional appeals are used? What types are used (personal examples, description, images, etc.)?
- **Logos**: Logos are logical appeals. What logic, facts, and evidence are used? How are the logical appeals presented (within the text, in graphs or charts, etc.)?

As you analyze the text, mark it up and take some notes (Yep, keep taking notes!):
- Identify ethos, pathos, and logos appeals
- Identify appeals that are faulty or weak
- Identify appeals that are effective and convincing
- Note the order of appeals presented
- Note the overall balance (Is there more logos than pathos? More pathos than logos?)

Making your Claim

Now you are ready to make your claim (Aren’t you glad you took those notes? 😊)! Your claim is a statement that expresses “how well the components of an argument work together to persuade or move an audience” (Lunsford and Ruszkiewicz 97). Here is an example: In *Something from Nothing: The Art of Rap*, Ice-T utilizes his own ethos as a legit rapper for decades and relies on strong emotional appeals, yet his overall argument that rap has primarily positive effects on society are not effectively supported through logical appeals.

Organizing your Analysis

Though introductions vary, in general, you should (this is the easy stuff):
- Include the author’s name, the title, the publication date, and the source
- Provide a brief overview of the author’s argument
- Identify the author’s purpose and the rhetorical situation
- Identify the author’s intended audience AND (Now it gets a little harder…)
- Make a claim about the author’s rhetorical appeals and strategies and how well the author reaches the intended audience

Content of body paragraphs will also vary, but in general you will (Put on your thinking caps, people!):
- Include a topic sentence to identify the rhetorical appeal or strategy to be analyzed
- Include direct quotations and/or paraphrases from the text
- Explain the rhetorical appeal as an example of ethos, pathos, or logos
- Explain how the author uses the appeal to reach her/his intended audience
- Analyze the effectiveness of the author’s use of appeals, evidence, etc.
- Analyze the effectiveness of the author’s overall argument
- Include a concluding sentence that logically and smoothly leads to the next point of your analysis

Finally Some Sage Advice

Keep in mind an effective rhetorical analysis:
- **Includes positives and negatives.** Do not be afraid to turn a critical eye to the argument and appeals used by the author! No argument is 100% effective.
- **Considers the intended audience.** You are analyzing how well the argument reaches the intended audience. Remember, you might not be part of the intended audience!

- **Leaves out personal opinion.** Whether you agree or disagree with the argument does not matter in a rhetorical analysis!

**Works Consulted** (Yep, using reliable sources enhances our ethos! 😊)