HOW TO WRITE: AP Rhetorical Analysis Paragraphs and Essays

Things you must know in order to accurately analyze a text:

1. SOAPS (Speaker, Occasion, Audience, Purpose and Subject)
2. Rhetorical Strategies
3. Appeals (ethos, logos, pathos, etc.)
4. Why did the author choose these strategies for the particular audience, occasion, and/or purpose?

a. This is the analysis part! Without this, you are merely summarizing the text.

b. Think about these questions:

i. HOW do the rhetorical strategies help the author achieve his/her purpose?

ii. WHY does the author chose those strategies for that particular audience and for that particular 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 as long as you are still focusing on numbers 1-3 from above.

**Introduction**

The introductory paragraph to an analysis essay is usually brief. However, it must contain some essential information.

Put SOAPS in your introduction and follow this format:

FORMAT:

* Sentence #1: Speaker, Occasion, and Subject

(Writer’s credentials), (writer’s first and last name), in his/her (type of text), (title of text), (strong verb – see list at end of this handout) (writer’s subject). HINT: This is sentence #1 in your rhetorical précis.

* Sentence #2: Purpose

(Writer’s last name)’s purpose is to (what the writer does in the text) and what is this purpose trying to accomplish. HINT: This is sentence #3 in your rhetorical précis.

* Sentence #3: Audience & Tone

He/she adopts a[n] (adjective describing the attitude/feeling conveyed by the writer) tone for his/her (intended audience). HINT: This is sentence #4 in your rhetorical précis.

**Body Paragraphs**

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.

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 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.

The above items must be woven together seamlessly into one sophisticated paragraph of the body of your analysis essay. A sample format is below:

1. The first sentence identifies which section of the text you are discussing and the main idea of that section. Example Frame: (Writer’s last name) (transition word) in his/her (type of text) by (strong verb) that (main idea of this section of the text).
2. The second 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.
3. The third 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.
4. The fourth sentence identifies the effect of the writer’s use of these rhetorical strategies on the audience.

You will repeat this process 3-5 times, depending on how many rhetorical devices you introduce.

HINT: This is basically just an expanded version of sentence #2 in your rhetorical précis.

**Conclusion**

The conclusion is probably the easiest part. Be brief. In three to four sentences, simply remind your reader of the things you said in the introduction.