

English 112
Rhetorical Analysis Guidelines
Spring 2010

Assignment

Rhetorical analyses are mini-essays. They must be *at least* one page typed (double-spaced, 1-inch margins) and respond to the reading material shown on the course calendar for the day the rhetorical analysis is due. If more than one work is on the assigned readings for the day the rhetorical analysis is due, choose to write about *only one* of those works.

Plot Summary Is Not Allowed

Your analysis should present your critical thinking about a text, not a retelling of a given story. Do provide details or quotes from the text to highlight key points or interesting items, but we all have read the text and do not need to be reminded of the story.

Guidelines

I want you to explore a single idea in your analysis. Think, question the text, speculate, and note features that grab your attention. You may notice something about the author's technique, about a character, a specific scene, or an issue/question the work raises. Analyses dealing with particulars are far stronger than generalities, and you should cite specific passages (with page numbers in parentheses) to support your ideas.

You may choose to write one paragraph on one area that interests you and one or more paragraphs on unrelated items. However, focusing on one key area will help you practice exploring an idea that could be used on a longer/major essay. The rhetorical analysis should demonstrate that you have read and *effectively* engaged a given text. A complete response will receive full credit; an incomplete or *inadequate* response will receive no credit.

Some examples of possible analyses are:

Explore Details: Highlight interesting details or puzzling questions raised by a text and suggest potential answers to them based on your own ideas. Explore what interests you in the text and highlight items that other readers may have missed. Offer tentative explanations about why you think certain details appear in the text (comment on what effect they have on your reading).

Examine Rhetorical Strategies: Analyze the text by examining rhetorical strategies found in the text and identifying how the writer achieves a certain effect (tone, character development, persona, symbolism, narrative structure, etc.).

Persuade: Argue for or against an idea/concept (or theme) within the text. Support the argument with details from the text. Consider ways in which you would convince a reader to understand the text the way you do.

It's fine to combine several of the above types. The above are only suggestions. The idea is to practice responding to literary texts in a way that helps you prepare for class discussion (bring ideas that interest you) and helps identify areas that may work well in your major essays.