4. Rhetorical Analysis

Rhetorical Analysis

4.1 Appeals

Appeals

Rhetoric involves using language in an effective way. Good writing is persuasive and is able to keep the reader's attention. It may aim to make the reader feel a certain way. It may strive to change long-term attitudes or views on a certain subject, and even influence behavior outcomes.

Appeals

We discussed in module 2.8 the different types of appeals based on the Aristotelian model. To review them, they are:

<u>Pathos</u> – appeal to emotion: to create an emotional response

<u>Ethos</u> – appeal to ethics: convincing readers of the credibility of the writer

<u>Logos</u> – appeal to logic: to persuade readers by reason

Appeals

These three models are the traditional approaches to rhetorical persuasion. They combine appeals to the readers' intellect, beliefs and emotions. Sometimes they are intertwined and more than one appeal can be found in one piece of writing. As readers, we must evaluate the logic and evidence that are presented.

4.2 Tone

Tone

Audience, Purpose and Tone

These three elements have to be considered together. They were previously mentioned in module 2.3, but let's look at them in greater depth.

Tone

Audience, Purpose and Tone

Audience: **For whom is the text written? Consider length, language, style, level, etc.**

Purpose: **Why is the text written? To inform, persuade, motivate, entertain, analyze, argue?**

Tone: **What is the author's attitude? Choice of vocabulary, focus, content and opinion.**

All three of these are in inextricably connected.

4.3 Organization/Structure

Organization/structure

Rhetorical analysis also involves understanding how a work is organized and structured. Here are the most common types of organization:

Organization/structure

Cause-and-Effect Order is the relationship between events and/or things, when one is the outcome of the other, as in action and reaction*: I twisted my ankle— I can't run for at least three weeks*.

Chronological Order is when information is given in sequence, like telling a story or explaining an historical event.

Organization/structure

Comparison Order is when two or more things are compared and/or contrasted.

Emphatic Order is when things are presented in order of importance, perhaps like in a news article, where the first lines are the most prevalent.

Organization/structure

General to Specific Order starts with a general theme but moves to a specific topic.

Problem-Solving Order is when a problem is presented and solutions are given.

Organization/structure

Framing

This is when a writer makes readers explicitly aware of what is to come in the piece of writing. It can pertain to the entire text (for example, in the thesis statement), to one passage (for example, in the topic sentence), or to one sentence (for example, detail of an idea).

Organization/structure

Framing

Framing is important because it is when you are going to "tell them what you are going to tell them".

Framing should tell readers about the organization as well as the content of what they will read.

Organization/structure

Transitions

Transition words were covered in another section of this course. They are important for flow and sequence. They also provide a framing for what is to come next. Words like *for example, however, also, in contrast, in conclusion,* etc., tell readers how the next words will relate to the previous ones. Please review module 2.13 for more information on transitions.

4.4 Rhetorical Effects

Rhetorical Effects

Rhetorical devices

Many techniques are used to entice readers. Here are some of the more common ones:

Parallelism: a parallel syntactic or word structure that is repeated

Alliteration: the repetition of similar sounds

Metaphor: speaking of one thing like it were another by making a figurative comparison

Rhetorical Effects

Rhetorical devices

Simile: making a comparison using "like" or "as"

Hyperbole: an exaggeration

Antithesis: parallel structure of ideas that contrast one another

Rhetorical question: asking a question to raise an issue but not necessarily seeking an answer to it

Rhetorical Effects

Rhetorical devices

Analogy: comparing something well known with something less well known

Allusion: a reference to a person, place, event, etc.

Enumeratio: a list of details about something

Exemplum: providing the reader with examples

4.5 Use of Language

Use of Language

There are many writing techniques that are related to style.

As mentioned in module 1.5, <u>diction</u> is very important when writing. Some words   can be confused for others (effect/ affect; capitol/ capital). In addition to, and beyond word confusion, general word selection is important for good writing.

Use of Language

Diction

Consider these sentences:

He had no understanding whatsoever of the outcome.

His understanding of the outcome was questionable.

The outcome caused some confusion for him.

It seems that when the results came out, he wasn't quite with it.

The outcome seemed a bit beyond his understanding.

Use of Language

Point of View

As mentioned in previous modules, the consistency of the point of view is important, whether the writer uses first, second or third person. This is also important in rhetorical analysis. They have different effects on the writing style.

Use of Language

Point of View

The first person (I) gives the writer's perspective. It is more personal but in some writing it can be considered less objective.

Use of Language

Point of View

The second person (you) is from the reader's perspective. This is the least used and can be the least convincing if used too much.

Use of Language

Point of View

The third person (it is, etc.) is neither of these; it is mostly unspecified. It is more objective and is often used with the passive voice.

Use of Language

Diction

How a person writes will depend on the tone, audience and purpose of the piece of writing. This has been touched on in previous modules. Word selection (diction) will influence the effectiveness and clarity of the author's writing.

Use of Language

Syntax

The syntax (grammar), as mentioned before, should reflect a wide range of sentence length, forms and structure (use of clauses and modifiers). Rhetorical analysis involves the use and recognition of this diversity.

Use of Language

Syntax

The use of the <u>active voice</u> or the <u>passive voice</u> can have an outcome on the effect of the writing. Some writers believe that first person is more effective because there is a direct causal relationship; however, third person may be better if the outcome is more important. Example: *It can't be undone.*

4.6 Evaluation of Evidence

Evaluation of Evidence

It's important to think critically, to analyze and evaluate language and evidence. We must be able to separate <u>fact</u> from <u>opinion</u>. Sometimes it's clear what is fact and what is opinion, but in the case that it is not, the reader must analyze the rhetoric the author uses.

Evaluation of Evidence

Effective rhetorical analysis evaluates the arguments a writer presents. This involves understanding the logic and the evidence. This case is obviously misleading:

Sam was quite the recluse misanthropist; he really enjoyed spending time with his friends.

The second part doesn't logically follow the first part.

Evaluation of Evidence

Fallacies: We must analyze the author's assertions. They could be fallacious in nature. Here are a list of some common fallacies:

Ad hominem: attacking the person instead of the argument

Appeal to ignorance: ignorance as evidence (we have no evidence God doesn't exist, therefore he does)

Evaluation of Evidence

Fallacies

Argument from (false) authority: someone isn't really qualified to say that

Bandwagon fallacy: because everyone does it, or believes it, it is true

Circular argument (begging the question): repeating the claim but not providing support

Evaluation of Evidence

Fallacies

<u>Dogmatism</u>: unwilling to consider the opponent's argument

<u>Faulty analogy</u>: saying two things are more alike than they really are

<u>Non Sequitur</u>: something that does not follow the premise

Evaluation of Evidence

Fallacies

Red herring: diverting the attention by changing the subject

Slippery slope: a change in policy or law will lead to dire consequences.

Straw man: creating a false scenario and then attacking it