

ARGUMENT AS
INQUIRY:
QUESTIONING A TEXT

*Adapted from Reading Rhetorically (A Reader for Writers), 2nd edition
by Virginia A. Chappell and Alice M. Gillam and
Writing Arguments: A Rhetoric with Readings, 9th edition
By John D. Ramage, John C. Bean, and June Johnson*

Question a
text?

Isn't that a
bit, um...
RUDE?



After all, these authors are

Really really really really really really
really really really **SMART...**

And I'm just a
college
freshman

What do I
know?



That's just the point.



**Learning to question a text is central to
your academic success in college.**

Questioning an author's text

does not mean
that you are
dismissing an
author's ideas
wholesale.



**Think of it, rather, as
reserving judgment...**

**So that you can make
a sound analysis...**

and offer a
thoughtful,
informed,
intelligent
response.



YOU CAN BE CRITICAL...



But not in the
negative sense
of the word,
characterized by
**HARSH
JUDGMENT!**

CRITICAL CAN ALSO MEAN...



“characterized
by careful and
exact
evaluation
and
judgment.”

Critical Reading Strategies

One of the most important skills you can learn during your college years is how to become a thoughtful reader.

A **thoughtful reader** is above all a **patient re-reader**, concerned not only with **comprehending** and **remembering** but also with **interpreting** and **evaluating**.

In short, a
“critical”
reader.

READING STRATEGIES

Some of the critical reading strategies you will be practicing this semester as you read various arguments include:

- ✓ Playing the Believing and Doubting Game
- ✓ Placing Texts in a Rhetorical Context
- ✓ Thinking “Dialectically”
- ✓ Understanding Classical Rhetorical Appeals

We'll examine them briefly.

READ TO BELIEVE
(EVEN IF YOU DISAGREE)

“EMPATHIC” LISTENING

TEMPORARILY LAY ASIDE
YOUR OWN BIASES

RE-STATE AUTHOR’S VIEWS
(SUMMARIZE) CLEARLY AND
ACCURATELY.

READING TO DOUBT (EVEN IF YOU AGREE)

RAISE OBJECTIONS

EXPRESS SKEPTICISM ABOUT
CLAIMS AND EVIDENCE

ASK CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

EXAMINE WHAT THE AUTHOR LEFT
OUT

PRACTICE

Find a partner and “play” the believing and doubting game by choosing one of the controversial claims below and making a list of reasons to AGREE and a list of reasons to DISAGREE with the claim.

Claim 1: A student should report a fellow student who is cheating on an exam or plagiarizing.

Claim 2: Women should be assigned combat duty equally with men.

Claim 3: Athletes should be allowed to take steroids and human growth hormone under a doctor’s supervision.

CLAIM 1: A student should report a fellow student who is cheating on an exam or plagiarizing.

REASONS TO BELIEVE

- ❖ Cheating is unethical, so students have an ethical responsibility to report wrong doing.
- ❖ Cheating creates an un-level playing field academically
- ❖ People shouldn't be rewarded for unethical behavior.
- ❖ Other?

REASONS TO DOUBT

- ❖ It's not the students' responsibility to act as a disciplinarian.
- ❖ Instrutcors should be responsible for detecting problems.
- ❖ Everyone cheats.
- ❖ Other?

Claim 2: Women should be assigned combat duty equally with men.

REASONS TO BELIEVE

- ❖ Women are equal to men.
- ❖ Women can operate machinery just as effectively as men.
- ❖ Women are strong in group problem-solving and thus could be assets in combat.
- ❖ Other?

REASONS TO DOUBT

- ❖ Women are physically weaker than men.
- ❖ Women are too emotional for combat missions.
- ❖ Privacy and hygiene issues.
- ❖ Sexual tension and/or sexual abuse.
- ❖ Other?

Claim 3: Athletes should be allowed to take steroids and human growth hormone under a doctor's supervision.

REASONS TO BELIEVE

- ❖ Taking steroids and HGH is fine as long as a doctor is supervising the dosages.
- ❖ In many sports, these substances don't provide competitive advantages.
- ❖ Athletes should be able to use whatever advantages they can find.
- ❖ Other?

REASONS TO DOUBT

- ❖ Unprofessional or unethical physicians will prescribe these substances for monetary reasons.
- ❖ Steroids/HGH's provide unfair competitive advantages;
- ❖ Taking these substances is cheating.
- ❖ Other?

RECONSTRUCT THE RHETORICAL CONTEXT *

- ◆ GENRE
- ◆ AUTHOR
- ◆ AUDIENCE
- ◆ MOTIVATING OCCASION
- ◆ PURPOSE
- ◆ SOURCE
- ◆ BIAS (“ANGLE OF VISION”)

* See pages 36-37 for Questions to Ask about Rhetorical Context and Genre.

PRACTICE

Choose one of the two articles you read and analyze its rhetorical context by answering the questions on pages 36-37 in your text dealing with the following categories:

- ◆ GENRE
- ◆ AUTHOR
- ◆ AUDIENCE
- ◆ MOTIVATING OCCASION
- ◆ PURPOSE
- ◆ SOURCE
- ◆ BIAS (“ANGLE OF VISION”)

“Amnesty? Let us Be Vigilant and Charitable” (Kavanaugh)

Genre: Article in public affair or niche magazine

Author’s credentials: was a Jesuit priest who taught philosophy at Saint Louis University. He lectured on consumerism, spirituality, and the ethics of human dignity.

Audience: Catholic, possibly liberal

Motivating Occasion: *The Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act of 2007* would have provided legal status and a path to citizenship for the approximately 12 to 20 million illegal immigrants currently residing in the U.S. The bill failed.

Author’s Purpose: Appeal to people’s sense of duty, kindness, mercy in order to encourage support of a more humane, ethical approach to the immigration issue.

Info about Source/Publication: *America* is a Jesuit publication that bills itself as the only national Catholic weekly in the U.S. It is a forum for discussion of religion, society, politics and culture from a Catholic perspective. It’s a resource for spiritual renewal and social analysis guided by the spirit of charity.

Angle of Vision/World View: Catholic, religious, spiritual.

“Why Blame Mexico?” (Reed)

Genre: Op-ed

Author’s credentials: A former Marine and Vietnam War veteran. He currently writes weekly columns for the website *Fred On Everything*. His work, written in a unique and articulate style, is often satirical and opinionated. Reed notes that his columns are often provocative and calls himself "an equal-opportunity irritant."

Audience: Conservatives, Libertarians

Motivating Occasion: The Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act of 2007 (Secure Borders, Economic Opportunity and Immigration Reform Act of 2007).

Author’s Purpose: Appeal to people’s awareness of the hypocrisy of government immigration policies in order to encourage support for a more pragmatic approach to the immigration issue.

Info about Source/Publication: The American Conservative *The American Conservative* is a print magazine and daily site for cultural commentary and political analysis. Considers itself conservative/libertarian.

Angle of Vision/World View: common sense, cynical

THINKING DIALECTICALLY

Exploring the conflict between two or more authors who have different points of view can result in a new thesis.

As you read the “conversation” between authors who have different views, ask yourself:

- Where do the authors agree?
- Where do they disagree?
- What is the basis of their disagreement? Facts? Interpretation of facts? Values? Worldviews? Assumptions?

Then ask yourself, What do YOU think?

HOMEWORK:
PRACTICE DIALECTICAL
THINKING WITH TWO
ARTICLES

UNDERSTANDING CLASSICAL RHETORICAL APPEALS

Aristotle maintained that effective persuasion is achieved by a balanced use of the classical rhetorical appeals to an audience:

ETHOS

LOGOS

PATHOS

KAIROS.

Ethical appeals (ethos) establish the author's credibility.

Logical appeals (logos) offer clear, well-substantiated proof.

Emotional appeals (pathos) reach audiences on a personal level.

Timely appeals (kairos) reach audiences at the right or opportune moment (the supreme moment)

Let's look at these
appeals one at a
time.



ETHOS: The Persuasive Power of a Writer's Credibility or Character

Experienced readers ask themselves, Do I trust this writer?

Do I find this writer believable and trustworthy?

Why or why not?



Often our willingness to trust writers is based **not** on what they say about themselves . . .

**But what we know about them,
or try to find out.**

Ways to determine an author's credibility include

examining his or her credentials or expertise

and

examining the credentials or expertise
of his or her sources.

Experienced readers look **past**
the rhetoric and take the time
to find out if this author's
credentials or authority
is credible.



LOGOS: The Persuasive Power of the author's reasons, evidence, and logic.

Experienced readers don't take what appears to be a reasonable argument at face value.

Instead, they put the author's logic to a test.

Examining an author's "logos" involves understanding basic elements of an argument:

- ✓ **Claims** (key arguments or thesis)
- ✓ **Reasons** ("because" statements that support a thesis)
- ✓ **Evidence** (data, statistics, case studies, authoritative testimony, substantiation)
- ✓ **Concessions** (acknowledging the validity or value of opposition's argument)

Experienced readers look
past the rhetoric and take the
time to find out if this
author's argument is logical,
well-substantiated, and
balanced.



PATHOS: The Persuasive Power of the Author's Appeal to the Interests, Emotions, and Imagination of the Audience

Writers often try to
arouse emotions in
readers to get them to
agree with their point of
view or take action.

Be suspicious of writing
that is overly
sentimental...

That cites
alarming
statistics...

That
demonizes or
mocks other
people...

That identifies
with revered
authorities...

That uses
emotionally loaded
words.

RACIST!

HOMOPHOBES!

FANATIC!



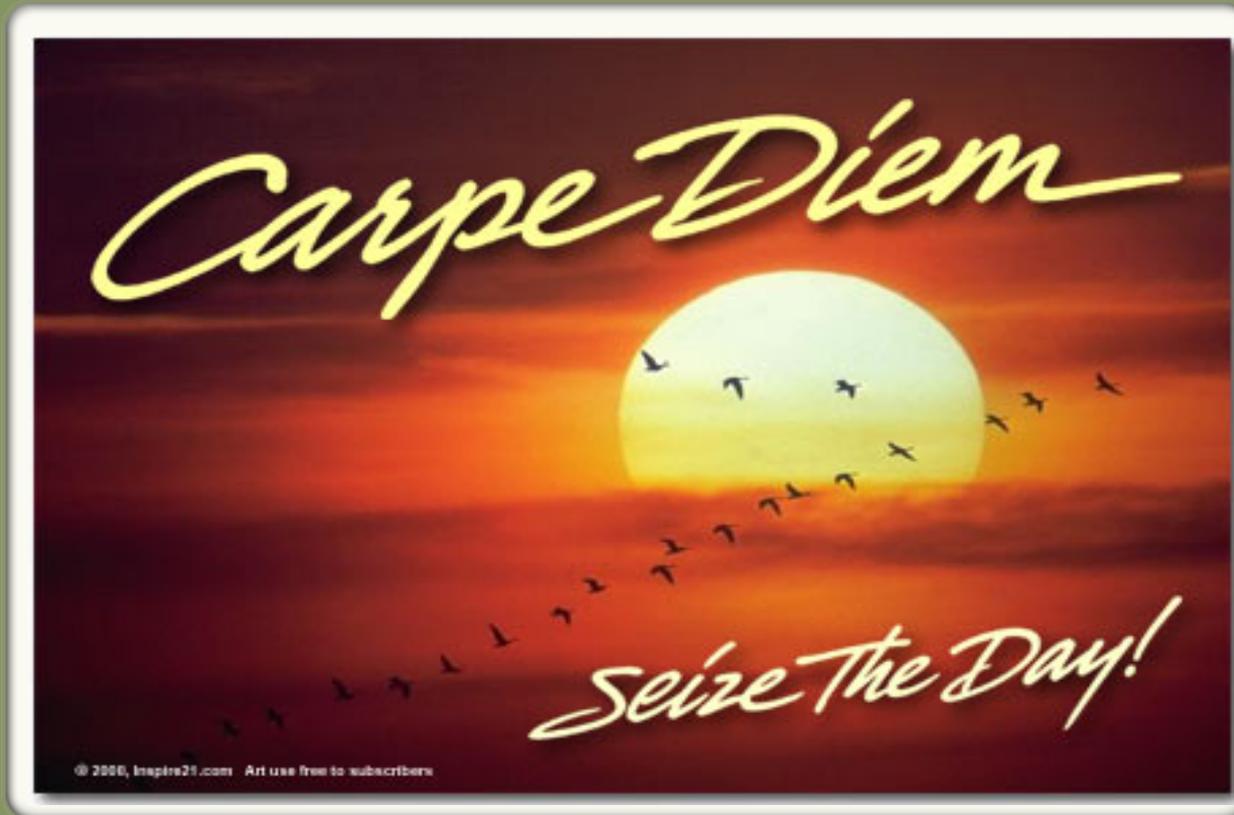
**RIGHT-WING
EXTREMIST!**

COMMUNIST!

**LIBERAL
EXTREMIST!**

TEA-PARTIER!

SOCIALIST!!



KAIROS

The Persuasive Power of TIMING

Making a compelling argument requires a deft combination of creating and recognizing the right time and right place for making the argument in the first place.

Appeals to kairos ... try to make use of the particular moment— attempting to capture in words what will be immediately applicable, appropriate, and engaging for a particular audience.

Right time!

Timing
is
everything

Opportune
moment!

Seize the day!

**Experienced readers
look **past the rhetoric**
and learn to distance
themselves emotionally
from these appeals in
order to **examine them
more objectively.****

Our job as rhetorical readers is to recognize what an author is **doing** (rhetorical strategies) as well as what he is **saying** (claims or thesis) before we are able to respond **intelligently.**

REVIEW: A CATALOG OF CRITICAL READING STRATEGIES

- ✓ Placing Texts
- ✓ Playing
- ✓ Bringing Texts
- ✓ Understanding

REVIEW: A CATALOG OF CRITICAL READING STRATEGIES

- ✓ **Placing Texts** in a Rhetorical Context
- ✓ **Playing** the Believing and Doubting Game
- ✓ **Bringing Texts** into Conversation with Each Other
- ✓ **Understanding** Classical Rhetorical Appeals

REVIEW: CLASSICAL APPEALS

ETHOS: establishes the author's

LOGOS: offers

PATHOS: reaches audiences

KAIROS: reaches audiences

REVIEW: CLASSICAL APPEALS

ETHOS: **establishes the author's** credibility.

LOGOS: **offers** clear, well-substantiated proof.

PATHOS: **reaches audiences** on an emotional level.

KAIROS: **reaches audiences** at an opportune moment.

End Show

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