

# Rhetorical Analysis and Rhetorical Appeals



Writers often employ strategies (both consciously and subconsciously) in order to help make their arguments more persuasive to their readers. When analyzing arguments, it's crucial to not only name **what** strategy is being employed, but to also adequately illustrate **how** the strategy is used, and comment on **why** the author likely chose to use the strategy (usually commenting on the desired effect on the intended audience).

## Some strategies authors employ when presenting claims:

- a) Presenting claims as informed conclusions rather than personal opinion (presenting claims authoritatively, often making claims through other authorities or research).
- b) Using qualifiers (aka hedging: language or phrases that limit a claim) so that the claim doesn't appear general or absolute. If an author claims, "The Chargers will win the Super Bowl," he or she could appear too sure about the claim and unrealistic about other possibilities. Adding a qualifier helps claims appear more reasonable: "The Charges will *likely* win the Super Bowl." Qualifying words: limiting time (*often, usually, frequently, sometimes, etc.*), limiting conditions (*may, might, could, should, probably, possibly, virtually, etc.*), limiting quality/quantity (*more, less, harder, easier, seems, appears, etc.*).

## Some strategies authors employ when presenting evidence:

- a) Providing a greater amount of evidence in support of the claim versus contrary evidence.
- b) Providing commentary on preferred reader-interpretation of presented data.
- c) Providing context to field research (who conducted the research, where, when, and how).
- d) Providing imagery (vivid descriptions) that illustrates a particular point or example.

## Some strategies authors employ when organizing the text:

- a) Using subtitles, transitions, metacommentary, and/or summary to help guide readers.
- b) Using repetition to enhance or highlight a concept or claim.
- c) Developing content in a linear, fragmented, chronological, and/or theme-based fashion.
- d) Putting contrary claims after claims that readers will find easier to accept.
- e) Strategically placing the main claim in the beginning, middle, or end of an argument.
- f) Putting contrary evidence after evidence that readers will find easier to accept.
- g) Beginning or ending the argument in a non-traditional way (e.g. with an anecdote).

## Other Strategies often employed by authors:

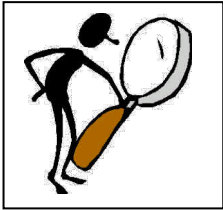
- a) Acknowledging the strengths of the opposition's argument.
- b) Anticipating and addressing possible exceptions or objections to a claim.
- c) Conceding to (acknowledging) some of the claims made by the opposition and then rebutting (counter arguing) those claims.
- d) Using a tone or writing style to appeal to audiences by seeming trustworthy and unbiased.

# Rhetorical Appeals: Logos, Ethos, and Pathos

Whenever you read an argument you must ask yourself, “How is the author working to be persuasive? And to whom?” There are several ways to appeal to an audience. Among them are appealing to logos, ethos, and pathos. These appeals are prevalent in almost all arguments.

<b>To Appeal to LOGOS</b> <b>(logic, reasoning)</b>	<b>To Develop or Appeal to ETHOS</b> <b>(character, ethics)</b>	<b>To Appeal to PATHOS</b> <b>(emotion)</b>
: the argument itself; the reasoning the author uses; logical evidence	: how an author builds credibility & trustworthiness	: words or passages an author uses to activate emotions
Types of LOGOS Appeals	Ways to Develop ETHOS	Types of PATHOS Appeals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theories / scientific facts</li> <li>• Indicated meanings or reasons (because...)</li> <li>• Literal or historical analogies</li> <li>• Definitions</li> <li>• Factual data &amp; statistics</li> <li>• Quotations</li> <li>• Citations from experts &amp; authorities</li> <li>• Informed opinions</li> <li>• Examples (real life examples)</li> <li>• Personal anecdotes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Author’s profession / background</li> <li>• Author’s publication</li> <li>• Appears sincere, fair minded, knowledgeable</li> <li>• Concedes to the opposition</li> <li>• Morally / ethically likeable</li> <li>• Appropriate language for audience and subject</li> <li>• Appropriate vocabulary</li> <li>• Correct grammar</li> <li>• Professional format</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotionally loaded language</li> <li>• Vivid descriptions</li> <li>• Emotional examples</li> <li>• Anecdotes, testimonies, or Narratives about emotional experiences or events</li> <li>• Figurative language</li> <li>• Emotional tone (humor, sarcasm, disappointment, excitement, etc.)</li> </ul>
Effect on Audience	Effect on Audience	Effect on Audience
Evokes a cognitive, rational response. Readers get a sense of, “Oh, that makes sense” or “Hmm, that really doesn’t prove anything.”	Helps reader to see the author as reliable, trustworthy, competent, and credible. The reader might respect the author or his/her views.	Evokes an emotional response. Persuasion by emotion. (usually evoking fear, sympathy, empathy, anger,)
How to Talk About It	How to Talk About It	How to Talk About It
The author appeals to logos by defining relevant terms and then supports his claim with numerous citations from authorities.	Through his use of scientific terminology, the author builds his ethos by appearing knowledgeable.	When referencing 9/11, the author is appealing to pathos. Here, he is eliciting both sadness and anger from his readers.

## Sample Rhetorical Analysis



**Rhetorical analysis** looks not at what a text *says*, but what it *does*. It's an examination of the "moves" authors (sub)consciously make to make their argument persuasive. This work may include analyzing the complex relationships between author, audience, text, purpose, context, and exigence, as well as an analysis of an author's argument, use of evidence, rhetorical strategies, and textual arrangement.

The student example paragraph below analyzes one of Jeremy Rifkin's rhetorical strategies in "A Change of Heart About Animals." Notice that the focus is on how the strategy helps build the author's argument (*how* the strategy works for the argument and *why* the audience is affected). Note that the rhetorical strategy is central and the discussion of pathos emerges only at the end.

The student begins by identifying the claim that is being supported by the strategy in question.

Then, the student explains the strategy Rifkin is utilizing (discussing *how* the author uses it) and supplies and explains numerous examples to help illustrate. Look how much time is spent providing an analysis of these examples!

Finally, the student spends a significant amount of time providing commentary highlighting important and meaningful analysis of the strategy in question. S/he comments on *why* Rifkin likely chose the strategy and *how/why* the audience would likely be affected (emotionally).

One strategy Rifkin employs to build the argument that animals should be treated more like humans is his subtle use of animal names when introducing data. When he offers new research about the problem-solving abilities of New Caledonian crows, for example, Rifkin cleverly describes how "Abel, the more dominant male...stole Betty's hook" in order to obtain a better feeding tool (Rifkin). Rifkin, of course, could have chosen to ignore the bird's test-subject names – which in all likelihood, were arbitrarily assigned by lab technicians and remain of little importance to the conclusions of the experiment – but by including them he bestows a human quality to the animals beyond what the data suggests. He repeats this technique twice more to the same effect, once when introducing "Koko, the 300 pound gorilla," who displays close-to-human intelligence and an impressive sign language vocabulary, and again when describing an "Orangutan named Chantek," whose use of a mirror displays human-like self awareness (Rifkin). Surely the data alone make the argument that animals are, by turns, capable of human qualities of problem-solving, communication, learning, and self-awareness. By offering the names of the test animals, though, he imbues them with greater individuality, personality and dignity. Giving the animals human names invites readers to think of them in terms usually reserved only for human beings. This strategy is likely intended to play on the emotions of readers by establishing a relationship of similarity between the animals mentioned and ourselves. The more human animals seem, the more it follows that they should be treated with the empathy and dignity we assume all humans deserve. This appeal to pathos thus helps advance Rifkin's claim that we should "expand and deepen our empathy to include the broader community of creatures with whom we share the earth."