

• Rhetorical Analysis: Key Terms

argument: A discussion in which a disagreement is expressed, or the use of rhetorical appeals to persuade an audience.

assertion: A declaration or positive statement, often offered without proof or supporting information.

audience: An audience includes spectators, listeners and/or readers of a performance, a reading, or printed material. Depending on the author's perception, an audience may be real (actually listening or reading), invoked (those to whom the author explicitly addresses) or imagined (those who the author believes will read/hear her work).

cite: To quote directly as an authority or example, or to bring forward as support, illustration, or proof.

claim: Another term for thesis, a statement of the argument. *She will need to offer lots of scientific evidence to support her claim about coffee and breast cancer.*

discourse (community): A discourse community is a group of speakers or writers connected by the same topic or common public goals. Members communicate about these goals within the community by providing information and feedback to each other. Discourse itself is a verbal expression in speech or writing or a verbal exchange or conversation. Discourse can also be a formal, lengthy discussion of a subject, either written or spoken.

ethos: The persuasive appeal based on the projected character of the speaker/writer represents the ethos of the speaker/writer. Ethical proof is proof that depends upon the good character or projected character of a rhetor.

evidence/reason: Evidence is information given to support a conclusion or judgment. *The broken window was evidence that a burglary had taken place.* Logically, a reason is a premise, usually the minor premise, of an argument. *She offered three reasons to support her claim.*

fallacy: Most commonly, a fallacy is defined as a false notion. It can also be a statement or an argument based on a false or invalid inference.

logos: In classical rhetoric, logos is the means of persuasion by demonstration of the truth, real or apparent. It is the logic or supporting information used to support a claim.

paraphrase: To restate a text or passage in another form or other words, often to clarify meaning. *He offered a paraphrase of Einstein's quote so his readers could more easily understand it.*

pathos: A quality, as of an experience or a work of art, that arouses feelings of pity, sympathy, tenderness, or sorrow. The emotional appeal used by a speaker or writer to bring about such feelings.

purpose: A reason for writing, or the aim, or goal behind a claim or thesis statement. *His thesis indicates his opposition to hate speech, but he does not explain the purpose of his argument.*

rhetorical situation: To understand the rhetorical situation, one must first understand "exigence," which is the event (or lack of event) that compels one to speak out. *For example, if the local school board fires a popular principal, a sympathetic parent might then be compelled to take the microphone at the meeting and/or write a letter to the editor.* Lloyd Bitzer defines the

rhetorical situation as the “complex of persons, events, objects, and relations presenting an actual or potential exigence.” Some elements of a rhetorical situation are: *exigence*, *persons* (*who is involved?*), *relations* (*what kinds of power relationships are at work?*), *location* (*where does discussion take place?*), *speaker*, *audience*, *method of address*, *institutions* (*what rules or conventions must be considered?*).

summarize: To present information in a condensed form.

support: The statements that back up a claim. Support takes many forms: data, facts, personal experience, expert opinion, textual evidence, emotional appeals, etc. The more reliable and comprehensive the support, the more persuasive the argument.

thesis: A proposition that is maintained by argument; the main idea, claim, opinion, or belief of the argument.

tone: A manner of expression in speech or writing. The writer's attitude toward his readers and his subject; his mood or moral view. *The tone of her essay is informative but somewhat condescending.*

usage: The way in which words or phrases are actually used, spoken, or written in a speech community. *The “to be” verb has a variety of usages, depending on which speech community you are in.*

warrant: The belief, value, assumption, and/or experience the writer hopes the audience shares or has in common with the writer. If the audience does not share a writer’s warrant—assumptions about the subject or the support—the argument will most likely fail.

Adapted:

Harris, Robert A. Virtual Salt, 2013. <<http://www.virtualsalt.com/rhetoric.htm>>.

Lanham, Richard. *Analyzing Prose*, 2nd ed. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2003.