

**English 250****Assignment #3: Rhetorical Analysis of a Written Text** (600+ words)

Spring 2018

Date Due:

**What is this assignment?**

You will write a 600-word minimum textual rhetorical analysis of one of the essays from our course reader *Monsters*:

- "Frankenstein: A Feminist Critique of Science" by Anne K. Mellor (page 43)
- "Parasites and Perverts: An Introduction to Gothic Monstrosity" by Judith Halberstam (page 123)
- "Civilized Vampires Versus Savage Werewolves: Race and Ethnicity in the Twilight Series" by Natalie Wilson (page 155).

Your rhetorical analysis should argue about how well the text fulfills (or doesn't fulfill) its purpose for a particular audience. The text might accomplish or fail to accomplish its purpose through how its words, structure, and ideas connect with the intended audience. The audience you will be writing to is an educated person who has never read the piece that you are analyzing.

Because this purpose is fairly open-ended, you'll need to focus your analysis on certain kinds of persuasive strategies the author uses to achieve his or her purpose. To assist your readers in understanding your analysis, be sure to do the following:

- include a clear thesis statement (that should argue how well the text fulfills its purpose for a particular audience)
- use forecasting statements to guide the readers.
- explain the context (historical background, original audience and publication place and date) of the text and its connection to the essay.
- analyze how the author's specific writing choices help fulfill the author's purpose.
- use quotes or paraphrase portions of the essay, rather than vague references (e.g., "the example in the second paragraph").

**What is the purpose of this assignment?**

The purpose of this assignment is to help you achieve one of the course objectives from the syllabus: to analyze professional writing to assess its purpose, audience, and rhetorical strategies. This kind of writing requires you to read actively and to clearly articulate your analysis to an audience, both of which are skills you will use in many ways in the future.

**How do I get started writing this assignment?**

The following sequence of steps is designed to help you plan and organize your ideas before you write. Because not all writers plan their writing in the same way, you may want to modify the sequence to suit your own way of planning an essay.

*Planning:* First, select a text from the choices given to you. Review the text and questions on the Focusing Your Rhetorical Analysis handout to determine which questions best apply to your text. Select two or three persuasive strategies used to carry out the author's goals; these can be related to substance, organization, and/or style. See the Rhetorical Analysis Overview document for examples.

As you read through your text, be sure to note the text's context (where/when the text first appeared and how this connects to reader expectations), purpose (the author's goals for the intended audience), and audience (who the author is writing to and the relationship the author establishes with that audience). What relationships do you note between the text's context, purpose, and audience and its rhetorical strategies? Answering this question can help you develop your thesis statement.

*Drafting:* Use the notes you developed in the planning stage to draft your rhetorical analysis. Be sure to include a description of the text's context, purpose, and audience and a thesis statement that covers the entire paper. Also, make sure that you are referring to specific portions of the text that exemplify the strategies you are writing about, and not vaguely referring to parts of the text.

*Revising:* As you revise, consider *your* audience and purpose. Revise to ensure that you are better fulfilling the assignment. Check that you have a thesis that covers the entire paper, that you include the text's context, purpose, and audience, that you are focusing on how the text you are analyzing fulfills its goals for its particular audience, and that your conclusion effectively wraps up your discussion.

### **How will this assignment be evaluated?**

At a minimum, your paper needs to satisfy these criteria. However, the grade is based not just on whether a feature is present or not, but on *how well* it has been integrated into your paper. The rhetorical analysis should

- Orient the reader to the purpose of the rhetorical analysis
  - Establish the context of the text you are analyzing
  - Present a clear, well-supported thesis
- Incorporate well-developed substance
  - Focus on two or three rhetorical choices used to carry out the author's goals (e.g., related to substance, organization, and/or style)
  - Analyze rather than summarize the text (again, assume your reader has already read the essay)
  - Support your claims with evidence from the text
- Have audience-oriented organization (not writer-oriented organization)
  - Write focused paragraphs
  - Transition smoothly from one point to another with transitions and topic sentences
- Have appropriate style
  - Use varied sentence structures and word choices
  - Avoid errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling
- Look professional
  - Properly format the analysis in MLA style
  - Accurately paraphrase the author's important ideas without using the author's phrasing

### **What if I want more help?**

In addition to peer response, feel free to talk to me during my office hours and/or schedule an appointment at the Writing and Media Center (<http://www.wmc.dso.iastate.edu/>).