

AIM: Rhetorical Analysis

COMPARTMENT 1: RHETORICAL FORMS

We have already covered the four modes of discourse, as well as ethos, logos, and pathos arguments.

In an effort to be more specific and detailed in our rhetorical analysis, we will now cover the different *rhetorical forms* writers can take to shape their messages. There are nine possible forms: **example, definition, comparison-contrast, classification, process analysis, description, narrative, cause-and-effect, assertion/justification.**

Writers decide to hang their message upon one more more of these forms. **The first step toward rhetorical analysis is to identify the DOMINANT and SUBORDINATING forms that the writer has chosen.**

Just as a sweatshirt goes nicely with jeans, and a sport shirt goes well with a pair of khakis, some of the rhetorical forms tend to pair comfortably:

- narrative and description
- definition, classification, and example
- cause-and-effect and assertion/justification

When you learn to identify the common pairings, it is easier to figure out what the dominant and subordinate forms are.

Everything has features: jeans have zippers; blouses have buttons; tennis shoes have rubber soles. If you wanted to create or describe these items, you would have to use the language of these features. Likewise, rhetorical forms have features and the features are made of language: temporal language is a feature of process analysis and of narrative; spatial language, of description; words expressing causal relationships (thus, therefore, hence...) are features of cause-and-effect forms. Learning to recognize language features of the nine rhetorical forms will allow you to improve your reading comprehension and writing skills.

COMPARTMENT 2: STYLE

Style infuses rhetoric as dye infuses fabric. Style is to be found everywhere, but it has discrete elements: diction and syntax. Via diction and syntax, the writer expresses tone, connotation, and figurative language.

COMPARTMENT 3: RHETORICAL DEVICES

Rhetorical devices are the jewelry of rhetoric: they create sparkles and interesting little gems of writer's craftsmanship. Like jewelry, rhetorical devices should not be used to excess lest they become garish. Most rhetorical devices have greek names: metonymy, synecdoche, apostrophe, anaphora, cataphora, polysyndeton, asyndeton, chiasmus, diacope...to name a few. But let's not forget the devices that are named by more accessible language: allusion, parallel structure, repetition.

ASSIGNMENT: Reread Gladwell's excerpt from his book *Blink* and answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper:

Compartment 1: What rhetorical forms does Gladwell hang his arguments on? Which is dominant? Subordinate? What are the clues (and/or language used) leading you to believe so?

Compartment 2: What is Gladwell's tone? Cite meaningful examples of his artful diction (tropes) and syntax (schemes). What effect do each of these take? Meaning, how do they change/alter/influence/move/strengthen/weaken his arguments/messages?

Compartment 3: What rhetorical devices does Gladwell employ? Evaluate each.