

Paper 2 – A Rhetorical Analysis
Sounds scary, doesn't it?



In a rhetorical analysis, you examine how a text actually works. *Beyond Words* defines text as anything deliberately fashioned by human beings to convey an idea, a message, or even feeling.”

Examples of texts include movies, paintings, posters, murals, songs, symphonies, sculptures, advertisements, bumper stickers, T-shirts, video games, and e-mails. For this assignment, you will describe how a text (often a persuasive one) uses various devices of language, rhetoric, or

design to achieve its aims. Or you can go a step farther and actually judge the rhetorical success of your subject, whether it be an essay, article, photograph, building, mural, public space, or any other object that might have an impact on readers or audiences.



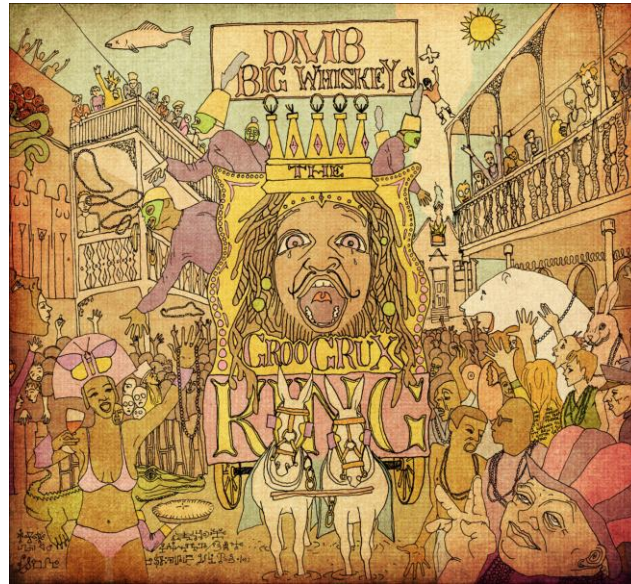
Not long ago, rhetorical analysis seemed pretty much just an academic exercise. But Web sites and blogging have drawn the activity into the mainstream: a huge number of sites you can now watch writers, from *DailyKos* on the political left to *Power Line* on the right, scrutinizing news stories, editorials, and other political discourse intensely, sometimes line by line and picture by picture. The immediacy of the Web can make these rhetorical inquisitions hasty and unbalanced at times, but it's also clear that such extremely close readings of texts have influenced the utterances of journalists and politicians. It's much harder now to get away with *anything*.

Following is some general advice for approaching a rhetorical analysis of a text:

- Examine the subject of your rhetorical analysis very closely, reading or viewing it several times, carefully noting its features and strategies.
- So far as you can, identify the purpose of the text you are examining and determine the context in which it was originally offered. If necessary, do research on this question.
- Consider the basic rhetorical features of the item and identify any that might account for its appeal or lack thereof. Begin by considering how the text deals with its potential audience. How does it signal to them? What devices does it use to make that appeal? Does it seem to exclude any readers or viewers—and is that exclusion significant?



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- Determine the genre and medium of the text. How does the genre affect your expectations for the text (for example, you expect a report to be factual, an editorial to offer an opinion). Does the medium suit the subject matter or, perhaps, challenge the audience's expectations—for example, is a cartoon used to treat a serious topic?
- Examine the types of evidence or appeals employed in the text: *ethos, pathos, logos*. Does the text rely mainly on hard facts, testimony, verifiable sources, and reasoned argument? Do the people or institutions presenting the appeal represent themselves as honest, trustworthy, and knowledgeable? Does the text target readers or viewers through strong emotional appeals?



- After a close examination of your subject, **focus your analysis around a specific claim you can support with evidence from the text itself**. Make the claim specific enough to teach your readers something about the text that they probably wouldn't notice in a casual reading.
- Early in your analysis, be sure to identify the text you are analyzing by author/creator and name. If necessary, briefly describe or summarize the work and share with readers any background information about it that you have uncovered in your research. Readers need to know exactly what you are talking about. Provide an image when appropriate.
- Present the detailed evidence you need to support your claim. Quote freely from a written text or present any images that might help readers appreciate the points you are making.