

English 12 Summer Homework

Rhetoric Scavenger Hunt

What is this assignment?

“Rhetoric” is anything that is designed to persuade. It’s often in written form – like a newspaper opinion article or a speech. For this project, however, you’re not going to focus on these forms of writing. You’re going to focus on **images, videos, and songs**. These forms of rhetoric sometimes include formal rhetorical strategies like ethos, pathos, and logos; however, **more commonly they include other strategies like color, images, rhythm, patterns, and font**. Here’s how the assignment will work:

1. You’ll collect a piece of rhetoric from the real world.
2. You’ll summarize what you see or hear.
3. You’ll analyze the methods/techniques (the colors, images, rhythm, patterns, font, etc.) that the rhetoric uses to persuade its audience.
4. You’ll do this for a total of 8 times.
5. You’ll turn it in on your first day of English 12.
6. I will not accept submissions after the first Monday of the year. If the assignment is not turned in by then, that’s a zero. I don’t want you to get backed up on work at the start of the year, so I’m not going to let you do summer work once the semester has kicked off.
7. I’ll grade it as a Major Assessment.

FAQ

Q: What sort of “rhetoric” can I choose?

A: Be creative! The only requirement is that it’s something created in order to persuade an audience to do something or believe something. It’s anything with a message or an argument or a sales pitch. It’s “This Is America” by Childish Gambino. It’s an anti-drunk driving poster on a bus stop. It’s a video posted by Black Lives Matter about police violence. It’s a clever slogan at the end of a commercial on TV.

Q: How do I “collect” the rhetoric?

A: Depends on what it is, but the general rule is that I should be able to see it. If it’s a photo you took on your phone, email it to me at pwallace@ccscambridge.org. If it’s a YouTube video, write down the web address so I can look it up. If it’s a song, I’ll just find it on Spotify, but tell me the title of the song and the artist. If it’s a magazine advertisement, cut it out and bring it in with you. Use your best judgement about how to get the rhetoric to me by the first day of school.

Q: What should my summaries and analyses look like? How long do they have to be?

A: Follow the example on the reverse. I’m grading this for completion and thoughtfulness. If you have eight analyses of approximately the same length as the model on the back, that’s good. If your analyses are sophisticated, detailed, and perceptive, that’s great. In other words, try to be smart in your analysis. Say something interesting, or funny, or provocative.

Example



Title: “Moment of Joy” by Jack Hunter. Cover of *The New Yorker* magazine, July 8th & 15th, 2013

Description of the Rhetoric: In this drawing, the familiar Sesame Street characters Burt and Ernie are sitting together watching TV. On the TV appears to be a picture of the Supreme Court: nine people dressed in black robes. The picture is drawn so that the viewer is looking at Burt and Ernie from behind. We see Ernie’s head resting on Burt’s shoulder, and Burt’s arm around Ernie. There’s not much color in the drawing – just enough to see the red and blue of Ernie’s shirt and the yellow of Burt’s skin. It looks like they’re sitting in the dark, bathed only in the light of the TV. It’s an intimate moment.

Analysis of the Rhetoric: The context of this drawing is important to understand its message. At the time that this magazine issue came out, the US Supreme Court had just struck down a law banning gay marriage. Therefore, the picture of the nine justices on the TV screen is a clear reference to that legal decision. How do Burt and Ernie fit into that? Based on their close, loving posture on the couch, the suggestion seems to be that they are gay, and happily watching a discriminatory law get struck down. So what is the message here? What is the artist trying to persuade me of? I think the clue here is the selection of Burt and Ernie in the first place. These Sesame Street characters are some of the most well-loved, delightful Muppets that were ever created. They’re goofy and funny and nice (even if Burt is grumpy!) and they’re a huge part of my childhood. In other words, they are symbols for something “good.” The fact that they are the ones shown celebrating the Supreme Court ruling in such a loving way – that’s my clue that the artist is trying to say that we should all support that ruling. In other words, the artist is trying to say that gay marriage is good, and that laws prohibiting it should be struck down.

AP Students Only: Additional Assignment

Instructions: Learn the definitions of each of the attached 60 words, and be ready for a comprehensive quiz on day one of the class.