Rhetoric Tool Chest

"Rhetoric may be defined as the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion."—Aristotle

Three Major Types of Rhetorical Appeal

- **Logos** (appeals to logic)
- **Pathos** (appeals to audience's emotions)
- **Ethos** (appeals based on *the rhetor's personality*).
    1. There are 2 types of ethos:
        - *situated* ethos: a speaker/writer's character, position in society, or good reputation
        - *invented* ethos: the impression that one is knowledgeable and of good character
    2. There are 3 ways to demonstrate ethos:
        - By displaying **sagacity** (one's knowledge of the issues, wisdom, expertise).
        - By demonstrating your **moral character** (moral excellence, credibility, justice, self-control, common sense)
        - By showing **good will** (having concern for audience's survival and growth needs)

Canons of Rhetoric

In addition, rhetoric has traditionally been broken down into 5 canons:

1. **Invention**: methods for finding or creating ideas
2. **Arrangement**: ways of ordering your discourse
3. **Style**: saying things well
4. **Memory**: information and methods for accessing information. Also methods for reminding readers of what they have already read (e.g., forecasting and continual forecasting and other internal pointers or repetitions in the text that help serve to orient readers through a dense text).
5. **Delivery**: ways of presenting your ideas in various media

Elaboration on Canons

Invention

The early Greeks, including Sophists and Aristotle, and later rhetoricians developed a series of questions (called "common topics" and "special topics") to help their students ***think through*** a topic. They divided the universe into 4 things—objects, events, abstract concepts, and propositions. This handout offers a simplified and modernized version of those questions to help you think about speech and essay subjects.

This approach helps you discover material by asking questions about your topic. The questions direct your attention to each aspect of a topic, thus preventing you from forgetting some aspect in your thinking about that topic. Writing a paragraph (or more)

response to each question in the appropriate set(s) will deepen your insights into your topic. Often you will need to use more than one set of questions to explore your topic.

Questions to Ask About Any Physical Object (e.g., a computer)
1. What are its physical characteristics?
2. What sort of structure does it have?
3. What other object(s) is it similar to?
4. How does it differ from things that resemble it?
5. Who uses it? For what?

Questions to Ask About Any Event (e.g., the assassination of Lincoln)
1. Exactly what happened (who, what, when, where, why, how)?
2. What were the causes of the event?
3. What were the consequences of the event?
4. How was this event like or unlike similar events?
5. To what other events was it connected?
6. How might the event been altered or avoided?

Questions to Ask About Any Abstract Concept? (e.g., fairness, love, justice)
1. How has the term been defined by others?
2. How do *you* define the term?
3. What other concepts have been associated with it?
4. In what ways has this concept affected the lives of people?
5. How might this concept be changed to work better? How might it be applied to be more useful?

Questions to Ask About Any Proposition (e.g., "The death penalty is immoral.")
1. What must be established before readers will believe the proposition?
2. What are the meanings of the key words in the proposition? (Note that here you might need to go back to "Questions to Ask About Any Abstract Concept"—e.g., in the example, the concept *immoral* must be defined).
3. By what kinds of evidence can the proposition be proved or disproved?
4. What counter-arguments must be confronted and refuted?
5. What are the practical consequences of the proposition?

Arrangement

The essay must have an effective, clear, and logical structure. It must use transitional words, phrases, and devices to make explicit connections between ideas and between paragraphs. The organization exists to present your ideas in the most effective manner possible to your readers.

- All academic essays have a beginning, middle, and end-- but that fact is not particularly useful in helping us organize our ideas.
- It helps if we think in terms of sections.
- In ancient rhetorical terms, your essay should have the following sections (in specific cases, some might be omitted or combined, depending upon your topic

and audience). Unless you have a good reason for altering the order, however, you should probably follow this basic rhetorical structure developed by Cicero and Quintilian:

- **Exordium** (Introduction): The exordium is intended to make the audience willing to listen. Modern rhetorical theory says that, if possible, the introduction should do several things:
  - It should establish some connection between audience and rhetor (i.e., it should "predispose" audience to listen via ethos).
  - It establishes a sense of kairos for the readers (urgency).
  - It should hook the readers' attention.
  - It should announce your topic (the question your essay will answer or the issue that it will explore).
  - It should reveal what your approach to the topic will be.
  - It should establish what your primary tone will be.
  - It should usually start very close to your thesis (never start with "Since the beginning of recorded history....").
  - It often establishes the nature of the larger issue (your topic is an example of this larger issue-- e.g., the larger issue for the topic of abortion might "What are the limits of government intervention in our private decisions?" or it might be "How do we decide whose rights are more important when there is a conflict between the rights of different individuals?" or it might be "Do the ends always justify the means?"). When you establish this in the introduction, you will return to this larger issue in your conclusion.
  - It often forecasts what the organization of the essay will be.
- **Narratio** (Background of the Issue)-- this section:
  - It gives your readers the relevant background information that they will need in order to understand the issue before you start the argument.
  - It includes up-to-date information about the current situation (e.g., pending legislation, proposed solutions).
  - It defines key terms that you will use and that readers might not know.
  - It explains why this situation/issue is a problem and for whom, explains any key concepts that are needed to understand the complexity of the issue, and it defines any key terms your readers might not know.
  - It states your position (thesis/claim).
- **Confirmatio** (Proof)-- This section gives evidence to prove the claims made in the narratio:
  - It states your reasons for supporting your position.
  - It gives your evidence for each reason.
  - It anticipates your opponents' objections to your reasons and respond to those objections.
- **Confutatio or Refutatio** (Refutation)-- This section answers the opposition's counter arguments:

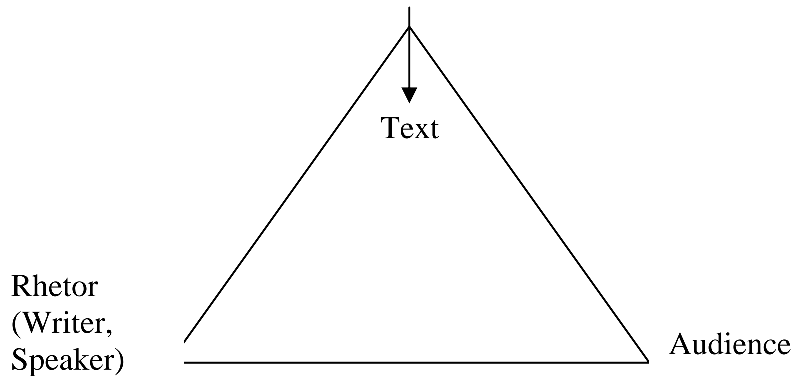
    - It explains your opponents' main reasons and evidence for supporting that position.
    - It refutes (or occasionally concedes) those reasons and evidence.
    - Some modern rhetoricians advocate a dramatic, back-and-forth presentation of pros and cons rather than saving all the refutation for the last major body section.
  - **Peroratio** (Conclusion) -- This section demonstrates again the "full strength" of your argument. Modern rhetorical theory suggests that your conclusion should never be only a summary or repetition of your major points, although often you might touch on the major points you've made. Your conclusion should always include a "discovery," an opening up toward the world beyond the limits of your argument essay:
    - an explanation of some interesting implication of your position/thesis that you haven't yet discussed explicitly.
    - and/or an indication of what future thinking must be done.
    - and/or a suggestion of what new issues arise if your solution/position is adopted.
    - and/or an exploration of the implications of your argument and thesis for the larger issue that you mentioned in the introduction.

Diachronic and Synchronic Reading

- A text can be read, analyzed, and understood either diachronically or synchronically
- The **diachronic approach** says that the text was created by a particular person at a particular time which had particular historical and cultural pressures and assumptions.
  1. **When we read a text diachronically**, we look at it as, at least in part, a historical document, as a document that reveals something about the time and place and author.
  2. So we might read a text (e.g., the Bible, a novel by Hawthorne) to learn about other eras.
- The **synchronic approach** says that, regardless of the history of the text, that text exists now and affects current readers.
  1. **When we read a text synchronically**, we read it, at least in part, for its impact on us—as a means of explaining life or the world, of giving us guidance, of giving us amusement.
  2. So we might read a text (e.g., the Bible, a novel by Hawthorne) to learn how to deal with a current problem (e.g., guilt, sin, a sense of being alienated).

Rhetorical Situation

Who is speaking? Who is reading or listening? Is this a “known” audience or an “estimate” of the intended audience? How do you know? What kind of text has been produced?



What is the context? Who has the power to speak?

Key Terms

1. **Rhetor** = the speaker or writer, someone who creates discourse that is intended to affect community thinking or events [Crowley 436]
2. **Rhetorician** = someone who studies or teaches the art of rhetoric [Crowley 436)
3. **Rhetorical critic** = someone who analyzes discourse using rhetorical tools
4. **Unit of Analysis** = is one significant rhetorical element or rhetorical strategy. Often in discussions (and in this course), "unit of analysis" is a blanket term that covers all the concepts in this handout.
    a. A unit that is incredibly significant for one text might be totally insignificant for another text.
        i. For instance, for a free verse poem, the unit "rhyme" would be useless since, by its very definition, a free verse poem does not rhyme.
        ii. For a text which displays little literary impulse or craft, using the unit "memorable phrasings" or "parallel structure" would not reveal much about the text. Using "memorable phrasings" or "parallel structure" to analyze an essay by Bacon or Dillard, however, would be very productive.
    b. In other words, it is up to you to select units of analysis that are significant for the text you analyze.
5. **Rhetorical strategy** = a plan or series of maneuvers to achieve a specific persuasive goal. The strategy will usually combine a particular approach (e.g., narration) or approaches (e.g., narration plus exposition) and will use several units of analysis. Often one or two strategies will predominant in a text (although many might appear). We think about which strategies are most emphasized and are most distinctive.
6. **Rhetorical maneuver or rhetorical move** = an action (within a text) that is intended to achieve a rhetorical purpose—e.g., after a somewhat neutral description of an environmental problem, the rhetor suddenly states, "And ***you*** have caused this

problem." This sudden change of tone is intended to shock readers out of their current assumptions and attitudes and force them to ask themselves, "Am I really responsible?"

7. ***Kairos*** = The propitious moment or *window of opportunity* for addressing a particular issue and a particular audience. Most issues (e.g., gun control) are often "back burner issues" until a moment occur when they become "hot issues" (e.g., the shootings at Virginia Tech on April 16, 2007). Later (and often quickly) the window of opportunity closes as other issues blaze forth. When occasions do not create *kairos* for us, we have to create it for our audiences. When an issue is "hot," we do not have to do to convince audiences to listen (e.g., simply mentioning the Virginia Tech shootings). However, often issues are not yet "hot" (consider the decades-long effort to get Americans to pay attention to global warming) and therefore we have to create *kairos*. In short, we have to ask "Why should my audience (e.g., members of 21W.747) care about this particular topic at this particular time (e.g., in the middle of this semester)?
   Kairos raises the following questions for us:
   1. "Have recent events made the issue urgent right now, or do I need to show its urgency or make it relevant to the present? Will a history of the issue help?
   2. "What arguments seem to be favored by what groups at this time? That is, which communities are making which arguments? How are their interests served by these arguments?
   3. "What venues give voice to which sides of the issues? Does one group or another seem to be in a better position—a better place—from which to argue? In other words, what are the power dynamics at work in an issue? Who has power? Who doesn't? Why?
   4. "What lines of argument would be appropriate or inappropriate considering the prevailing needs and values of the audience?
   5. "What other issues are bound up with discourse about this issue right now, in this place and in this community? Why?" (Crowley 52)
   6. "Which arguments receive more attention?
   7. "Who is making these arguments?
   8. What arguments receive less attention?
   9. Who is making these arguments?" (Crowley 61)

Stasis Theory = A method of asking questions to aid invention and to help decide exactly what is being argued (in trials, we'd say "what is the point at issue?"). Stasis questions help the debaters come to that agreement. The four questions are:

- **Fact (Conjecture):** Did the act happen? Does the thing exist?
- **Definition**: How can the act be defined?
- **Quality**: How serious is the act?
- **Policy**: Should this act be submitted to some formal procedure?

Here is an example:

- ***Question of Fact***: "Did Brutus, as has been alleged, kill Caesar?"
- ***Question of Definition***: "If it is granted that Brutus *did* kill Caesar, was the act murder or self-defense?

- ***Question of Quality***: “If it was in fact murder, was Brutus justified in murdering Caesar?”
- ***Question of Policy***: “If Brutus was not justified in murdering Caesar, should we punish Brutus?”

Elaboration on Stasis Questions

- **Questions of Fact (Conjecture, Inference)**: Cicero says
  - Does it exist? Is it true?
  - “If it exists, what is it?
  - What is its origin?
  - What is its cause—who or what or who produced it?
  - Can it be changed?
- **Questions of Definition**
  - What kind of thing or event is it?
  - To what larger class or things does it belong?
  - What are its parts? How are they related?
- **Questions of Quality**
  - Is it a good or bad thing? Is it right or wrong?
  - Should it be sought or avoided?
  - Is it honorable or dishonorable?
  - Is it better or worse than something else?
  - Is it more or less desirable than any alternatives?
  - Is it more or less right (or wrong) than any alternatives?
- **Questions of Policy**
  - Should some action be taken?
  - What actions are possible? Desirable?
  - How will proposed actions change the current situation? Make it better or worse? How? In what ways? For whom?
  - Should some state of affairs be regulated (or not) by some formalized policy?
  - Which policies can be implemented? Which cannot?
  - What are the merits and defects of competing proposals?
  - How is my proposal better than others? Worse? (Crowley 86-92)

UNITS OF ANALYSIS

One grouping of units of analysis is Appeals

Appeal to Logos (Rational Argument, Appeal to Logic)—relies on evidence and reasoning. You should identify the main arguments in the text, the different types of reasoning used, and the kinds of support used to back up the arguments. Three sub-categories exist:

1. **Evidence-oriented argument**: There are at least 8 different kinds of evidence:
   a. The testimony of experts or authorities or eye witnesses
   b. The rhetor’s personal experiences

    c. Statistics
    d. Examples
        i. Real life (e.g., current events)
        ii. Historical
        iii. Hypothetical
        iv. Fictional (e.g., from novels, movies, plays)
    e. Comparisons such as analogies and metaphors
    f. Logical demonstration
    g. Legal documents and concepts (e.g., the Constitution)
    h. Codes of conduct (e.g., Hippocratic oath)
2. **Enthymematic argument**—the rhetor hopes audience will fill in the missing premises, evidence, or support for his/her claim
3. **Refutative argument**—the rhetor answers opponents' objections to his/her position as well as explaining why his/her position is better than the opponents.'
4. **Engagement with the opposition**. The rhetor anticipates and tells his/her audience what the opposition will say about his/her point, then counters that opposition point with an answer. (Strang)
5. **Narrative**—rhetor tells a story
    a. Usually narrations appeal, in part, to pathos because the rhetor makes the scene and action vivid.
    b. Narratives might use dialogue and vivid descriptions.

Appeal to Pathos – techniques are used to make audience feel various emotions—e.g., sympathy, anger, patriotism, fear, pride

Appeal to Ethos—Ethos belongs to the rhetor (we do not talk about the audience's ethos). There are two types of ethos.

1. The rhetor's external authority and reputation (e.g., the Pope, the president, a famous scientist)
2. The rhetor's ethos from within the text itself
3. Because we are interested primarily in how to become better rhetors, we do not focus on the external authority and reputation.
4. Instead, we analyze texts to discover the techniques rhetors use within the text to make audiences believe in their credibility and in their sincerity and in the accuracy of their statements and positions.

Appeals to Values—basic societal values and attitudes (e.g., equality for all, freedom, fairness)--also a source of pathos. Here too explicit appeals to ethical theories and ethical analysis can be very effective.

Appeals to Commonplaces: Commonplaces are part of the dominant discourse community (i.e., they seem to be "plain commonsense" and "so obvious that they don't need to be named, let alone examined"). For instance, an American commonplace is "all men are created equal."

Appeals to Needs-- essential human needs (e.g., the need for security, food, shelter). Sometimes these appeals are to pathos.

Appeals to Symbols—societal symbols (e.g., the flag, a rose) or symbols created within the text itself (e.g., the child in the cellar in LeGuin's "Omelas" or the horse in Alice Walker's "Am I Blue?"). Sometimes these appeals are to pathos.

A second grouping of units of analysis is Figures of Language

A "figure of language" (Crowley's term, 432) is any artful use of language. Language is used to make a point vivid and/or to make a conclusion more understandable and memorable, and/or to add emphasis. Figures of language can augment ethos, logos, or pathos. There are several types of figures of language (Rowland 123 ff)

1. **forms of comparison** such as metaphor, simile, analogy (2 key dimensions)
    a. degree of development
    b. literal (e.g., comparing 2 presidents) or figurative distinction (comparing a lion to a president)
2. **antithesis** ("not this, but that")
3. **parallel structure and repetition**
4. **rhetorical questions** (questions that the rhetor believes the audience will answer the same way he/she does—i.e., the rhetor assumes the audience shares his/her assumptions, or questions to which the rhetor assumes there is no answer)
5. **depiction or vivid description**
6. **personification**
7. **definition and redefinition**
8. **allusion** (indirect reference to a work of literature, rhetoric, or history)
9. **label or slogan** (e.g., "X is a terrorist," "X is a freedom fighter," "if you outlaw guns, then only outlaws will have guns")
10. **irony** (explicitly saying X but meaning Y)
11. **memorable phrasings**
12. **sound strategies** (often more important in poetry than in prose)
    a. alliteration and assonance
    b. rhythm and rhyme
    c. onomatopoeia

GLOBAL ISSUES TO CONSIDER WHENEVER ANALYZING A TEXT

1. **The Rhetorical Situation**—where the text was first published or the speech delivered, what type of real-life audience was there, what was the context of the text, what was the occasion.
    a. For speeches, the rhetorical situation is always crucial.
    b. For a lot of published texts, however, this information is often only mildly important
    c. As Wayne Booth points out, the ultimate rhetorical success of a text should not be judged by how well it was received when first delivered or published

2. **The Text's Tasks**—these are the tasks that the rhetor tries to accomplish with and within the text. For many texts (and especially for speeches), we can distinguish two primary types of tasks (Strang)
    a. **Internal tasks**: what the rhetor is trying to accomplish within the text itself
        i. e.g., consider a State of the Union address
        ii. its internal tasks are
            1. to trumpet the accomplishes of the president over the last year
            2. at times to justify decisions made in the past year
            3. to suggest what will be accomplished in the coming year
    b. **External tasks**: the effect(s) that the rhetor hopes to create in the audience via the text (Strang)
        i. e.g., consider a State of the Union address again
        ii. its external tasks are
            1. To gain or maintain support for the president (Strang)
            2. To gain support for the president's plans for the upcoming year (Strang)
            3. If it is an election year, to convince people to vote for the president or the candidates from the president's party
            4. In short, the external tasks are about influencing or affecting the audience in some way, either a call to action or an attempt to change opinions or to give information (Strang)
            5. Although we can usually deduce the external tasks quite easily, there is rarely a way to discover if they were actually accomplished
                a. How did the audience react to the speech?
                    i. Immediately after hearing the speech?
                    ii. A week later?
                    iii. A year later?
                    iv. How can we know?
                b. Is our own response to the speech/text really representative and how can we know that? (Strang)
    c. It is important to keep these two tasks separate because beginning critics often focus only on the external tasks and hence miss the more important point of the text

3. **The Text's Goal(s) or Purpose(s)**—the aim(s) stated or implied in the text (comparable to the internal tasks).
4. We **infer** the goal from the rhetoric itself, not from knowledge of the rhetor or the subject. Occasionally a rhetor will simply state his/her goal. Rarely, however, is a stated goal the *only* goal of the text.
5. **The Text's Thesis**—the main point of the text
    a. The thesis can usually be stated by rhetorical critics in one sentence
    b. But we may have to infer the thesis if the rhetor only implies it or never states it succinctly
6. **The Text's Theme(s)**—main threads/ideas that run throughout the text

7. **The Text's Requested Action**—what the rhetor wants accomplished and what the rhetor wants the audience to do in order to achieve that aim (Rowland 18).
8. **The Text's Organization**—always examine organization (it reveals emphasis)—It is usually a good idea to outline the text paragraph-by-paragraph (doing so not only gives you control over the ideas and the flow of ideas, but it is also an effective way to discover various rhetorical strategies and devices as well--Strang).
    a. **The Text's Introduction**—usually the Introduction and Conclusion are proportionally more important than the Body. Among other things, the Introduction establishes the rhetor's credibility and gains attention of audience (Rowland 19).
    b. **The Text's Main Body**—identifies the "overarching organizational pattern" and reveals what the rhetor intends to emphasize (Rowland 20)—usually the most important idea is developed last (all other things being equal) (Strang). If you have three main points, often begin the Body with your second best idea, follow it with your weakest point, then conclude with the best point. But as with all things rhetorical, the nature of your audience and of the rhetorical situation determine what order you use (Strang).
    c. **The Text's Conclusion**—summarizes the argument, calls on the audience to act, uses some sort of "illustrative material" to maintain the audience's attention (Rowland 20). Usually the Conclusion includes both a summary and a "discovery" that makes explicit something that was only implicit in the text: This discovery might be the call to action or it might be the revelation of an implication of the thesis/theme (Strang).

9. **The Role of Rhetor**—the role assumed by the rhetor strongly limits what the rhetor can say, and the role influences the way the audience evaluates the rhetor's credibility.
    a. Implied relationship between rhetor and audience: ***peer-to-peer, superior-to-inferior, and inferior-to-superior*** (the types of evidence cited, the references and allusions that are explained, and the moral tone of the rhetoric are key clues).
    b. The specific role played (if any) by the rhetor—e.g., moral leader, mourner, cheerleader (Rowland 22).

10. **The Text's Linguistic or Aesthetic Tone**—the "feel of the language" and symbols, the rhetor's attitude toward the subject and/or toward the audience. For example, the tone might be sarcastic, mournful, sad, humorous, satiric, professional, angry, happy, objective, subjective, tongue-in-cheek, businesslike, etc. (Rowland 22). An inappropriate tone might make a text ineffective—e.g., jokes in a funeral oration (Strang)

        i. The ***original audience*** is those people who actually heard the speech or read the text in the journal etc. in which it was first published. The nature of this audience (their starting attitudes, beliefs, etc.) help the rhetor decide on his/her purpose. The rhetor usually at least partially tailors the delivery and approach for this audience (although not necessarily the message). The rhetorical critic can discover who the original audience for a speech through

research. But the critic can never really know the long-term effect of the speech was—the critic can know that many people in the original audience applauded loudly or that they booed, but even that initial reaction cannot be completely trusted. Many of us have been to performances or speeches at the end of which several people stand and applaud and slowly most of the rest of the audience follows suit. Research will show that it takes a very small critical mass of people standing up initially (particularly if they are clumped together) to cause most of the others to stand as well. Also, giving a standing ovation is often a sign of convention rather than actual response.

ii. The ***intended audience*** is people whose attitudes the rhetor thinks he/she knows. These are the people the rhetor is trying to communicate with. These are the people to whom he consciously tailors his/her message. Sometimes (perhaps even many times) the original and intended audiences are the same. Sometimes, though, the rhetor misjudges the attitudes or beliefs of the people he/she is addressing.

iii. The ***incidental audience*** (SMS) are people who hear or see recordings of the speech or who read reprints of the speech or text (e.g., in anthologies or assigned for classes). The rhetor has not designed purpose, approach, language, delivery, message, etc. for this audience since he/she cannot anticipate who they will be

iv. The ***ideal audience*** is people who would be most influenced by the speech or text (influenced in the way the rhetor wishes). Since no rhetor is perfect in his/her judgment or ability and since no message can be effectively fine-tuned to work perfectly on an audience of more than one person and since no one person can understand the complexities of a bunch of humans gathered together to hear a speech (and less can understand not only the people but also the circumstances under which individuals will pick up a journal and read an article), the ideal audience and the original audience will never be an exact match.

1. To discover who the ideal audience is, we have to focus internal evidence—diction, allusions, the way ideas are developed and supported, the variations of tone, the use of logos and pathos, the ethos of the rhetor, etc. External factors do not matter here.
2. To prove who the <u>ideal audience</u> is, say something like "Author X's thesis, along with his/her use of units q and y, indicates that the ideal audience for this text would be people who already agree with him/her [or "people who are skeptical about his/her thesis" or "people who do not initially see the relevance of the thesis to themselves" or "people who are curious" or "people who share characteristics K and V with the author, etc.")

v. Sometimes the intended and ideal audiences are, of course, similar—sometimes, not.

vi. At times the rhetor might use the occasion to deliver a message the audience doesn't want to hear but which the rhetor feels they must her—imagine, e.g., a minister or rabbi denouncing the previous week's activities of his congregation, or a politician telling the public that

11. **The Text's Implied Audience**—this is the audience for whom the rhetoric is best adapted as a work of persuasion (it is <u>**NOT**</u> necessarily and, in fact, is often not the real audience).

a. We **infer** the nature of the implied audience by considering the **complexity** of the message, the **knowledge** the rhetor assumes the audience has, any **values or principles** that rhetor assumes the audience accepts, and the **linguistic patterns** in the rhetoric (a speech about Astronomy for 3rd graders differs from one for college sophomores seeking a major--Strang).
b. **No** text is "written for ***everyone***." Every text is written (consciously or not) for a particular audience. When rhetors say they are writing for everyone, what they really mean is that they are writing for people who are part of the dominant discourse community or for people who are like themselves, people whom they mistakenly believe are "everyone" (Strang).

12. **Accommodation of audience**—includes establishing common ground with audience in the Intro (and carrying it on throughout the text) as well as indicating the rhetor's understanding and appreciation of the opponents' points (even though the rhetor disagrees with them) (Strang)

GENRE

A *genre* is a category of texts. Categories can be based upon such things as a text's subject (e.g., nature poems), the time, place or occasion when the text was presented (e.g., a Fourth of July speech, an inaugural address at a presidential inauguration), or the situation (an employment interview).

a. Knowledge of the genre of a text helps us analyze and evaluate the text.

13. With such a variety of possible genres, it is important to select appropriate (and useful) genres. For instance, the genre of "job interview" provides us with several **conventions** with which to discuss the text and to evaluate it (e.g., appropriate dress, demeanor, diction). The genre "New England rhetoric," on the other hand, would probably not be very useful since there are no clear conventions associated with it (Rowland 203).
14. The **Perceived Strategic Constraints** on the Form, Content, Substance and Style of the Genre (Rowland 206). Consider the job interview as an example of a text (actually several texts—the written texts and the actual interview itself)
    a. Recurrent problem (e.g., the rhetor's need to get a job)
    b. Purpose of the rhetor (e.g., to get a job)
    c. Societal limitations on acceptable rhetoric (e.g., the candidate is not encouraged to threaten the life of the potential employer if she/he doesn't give the job to the rhetor)
15. Format of the genre (e.g., for the job interview, for a resume, a job application letter, an interview)
16. Type of content appropriate for the genre (e.g., for the job interview, emphasizing your strengths, downplaying and/or explaining any weaknesses)
17. Substance and style of the genre (e.g., for the job interview, dress appropriately for interview, use accepted format for resume and letter, avoid slang, emphasize your strengths)

More About Genre

1. According to Alan McKee, “Genre is a powerful tool for making sense of texts. Genres work by providing conventions which allow efficient communication between producers and audiences” (95).
2. Understanding the genre of a text is one way of determining the text’s context (Strang). The kind of speeches given at a “celebrity roast” (humorous, sarcastic) would be grossly inappropriate at that same celebrity’s funeral (where the genre of eulogy would be appropriate and the genre of stand-up comedic routine would not be) (Strang).
3. Modality--*Modality* is a concept from linguistics that refers to verb inflections that express how the action or state is conceived by the speaker. “Texts with a high modality are expected to offer information and ideas that can be applied to other parts of our lives” (McKee 97). For instance, a news report will give us information that will help us decide how to vote in the next election, and a traffic report gives us information that will help us decide which route to take.
    a. Texts with **low modality**, on the other hand, do not give us info or ideas that can apply to other parts of our lives.
        i. For instance, being bitten by a radioactive spider will probably not turn us into superheroes, although it worked well for Peter Parker who became Spider-Man (Strang).
        ii. Dropping an anvil on someone’s head in a *Roadrunner* cartoon ultimately causes no damage and has no consequences. If we applied that idea in real life, however, we would probably kill the anvil-receiver and would probably end up in prison (Strang).
    b. In other words, some genres “are perceived to be strongly related to reality (such as news, current affairs, and documentaries), while others are strongly distanced from it (cartoons, musicals)” (McKee 97). Problems obviously occur when those with low modality are thought to be genres with high modality—e.g., kids jumping off buildings thinking that they can fly like Superman (Strang).
    c. Unless readers misperceive the modality of a text, modality is rarely a concept to be pursued in an analysis.

For Evaluation

1. *Evaluation* means an “internal form of evaluation” since it is very difficult to discover the actual effect a text had on the actual audience. So we ask, “Does the rhetor present strategies that are well-designed to overcome the rhetorical barriers (and maximize the rhetorical advantages) in order to achieve his/her purpose?” (Rowland 44).
2. Part of determining the **advantages** and **barriers** the rhetor faced is considering the rhetorical situation (e.g., the situation the rhetor faced)
3. **Rational Argument**—does the evidence actually support the claims? What types of evidence are used—examples, statistics, comparisons, expert testimony. (Rowland 61)

4. **Narrative Argument**—vividness, identification of audience with characters, plot, theme, and scene (Rowland 86)
5. **Credibility (Ethos)**—the rhetor's expertise/experience, good character, good will, charisma (Rowland 101). Two types--extrinsic and intrinsic credibility
    a. Extrinsic credibility means rhetor has well-known credentials and is the more powerful of the 2 forms
    b. But intrinsic credibility --rhetor demonstrates his/her competence, honesty, etc.--is more important and is the one that rhetorical critics focus on (Strang)
    c. What techniques does the rhetor use to establish credibility and ethos?
6. **Figures of language**—what figures of language call attention to themselves? Which work on a more subtle level? (Strang)
7. **Genre**—to evaluate a text in terms of its genre, it is crucial that you first be sure that it fits most (if not all) of the criteria of that particular genre (e.g., inaugural speeches, prize acceptance speeches, eulogies, full-fledged arguments). Then you evaluate how well the text works at fulfilling all the requirements of that genre.
    a. At times, of course, a rhetor intentionally steps beyond the criteria of a genre to shock us (Strang).
    b. Sometimes (and only sometimes) that strategy works. At other times, it backfires (Strang).

<u>To Analyze and Evaluate Rhetoric</u>: We always need to first **analyze** a text fully before we can **evaluate** its effectiveness as an act of persuasion. To analyze effectively, we need tools to deconstruct the text and to examine the effect of those "pieces." Invention is crucial if we ourselves consider what arguments are available for the topic before we start analyzing a particular text. Then, as we examine that text, we can see what was left out--and often what was left out is at least as important as what was included.

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21W.747-1 Rhetoric
Spring 2010

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