

**Rhetorical Analysis Format – Step by Step**  
*This can change a bit based on your confidence and writing ability.*

**Introduction**

Sentence 1 – Identify the context of the passage—Why did the author write it? What was the purpose? What is the subject?

Sentence 2 – Identify what the writer *does* and *why*.

Example: Biologist Rachel Carson wrote Silent Spring in order to educate the public about the dangers of the use of environmental poisons. In this passage, Carson uses rhetorical strategies like death-related diction and emotional appeals to convey the central argument that the use of these poisons is irresponsible.

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**Body Paragraphs**

This is where you include a detailed explanation of strategies used by the writer.

The most logical thing to do is to organize your body paragraphs around significant rhetorical strategies.

**Three steps to a solid body paragraph:**

- Identify a significant **rhetorical strategy** used in the passage.
- Incorporate **specific text examples** and references to the text.
- Clearly and specifically **explain how** the rhetorical strategies are used to help the writer achieve his purpose.

Example:

Rachel Carson uses diction related to death and killing in order to convey the idea that the use of poison is not only unnecessary, it is an irresponsible and cruel act. Carson begins this passage with the phrase “As the habit of killing grows.” It becomes apparent later in the passage that the “habit of killing” that Carson refers to is the “habit” of farmers who find birds to be an “inconvenience” to their crops. Later, Carson uses other words and phrases related to killing that include “casualty list,” “doomed,” and “universal killer.” Carson uses all of these words and phrases to create a picture of widespread, calculated mass murder. This image is particularly shocking in juxtaposition with the fact that the issue with the unwanted birds “could have been solved easily by a slight change in agricultural practice.”

**If you find yourself still struggling with the steps above, try these sentence starters:**

\_\_\_\_\_ uses \_\_\_\_\_ in order to **convey** \_\_\_\_\_  
author’s name rhetorical strategy purpose

OR

\_\_\_\_\_ uses \_\_\_\_\_ in order to **illustrate** \_\_\_\_\_  
author’s name rhetorical strategy purpose

OR

\_\_\_\_\_ **creates** \_\_\_\_\_ through the use of \_\_\_\_\_  
author’s name purpose rhetorical strategy

Here is a list of verbs to help you make connections. To understand how they work, just put the phrase “The author…” in front of them.

conveys, illustrates, creates, implies, describes, suggests, compares, enumerates, contrasts, emphasizes, establishes, argues, defines, characterizes, connects, demonstrates, elaborates, employs

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**Conclusion--** The conclusion of a rhetorical analysis essay doesn’t need to do much. Your score is going to be based on how well you’ve analyzed strategies. So keep the conclusion short. A very simple, very short restatement of your thesis and main ideas is all you need.

