

AP English Language and Composition
Portfolio due 5/7/20

As we have discussed, your task in this portfolio is to revise three analysis essays. You may choose any three rhetorical analysis essays from any point in the year. In addition to your essays, your portfolio will include a memo that tells me your overall theory of revision as well as the practical steps you have taken in these particular revisions. See below for more details about the memo.

Begin revising your essays:

- Review my two screencasts about rhetorical analysis as well as the rhetorical analysis assignment sheet that details eleven approaches to this kind of essay. Review the analysis sections in *5 Steps to a 5*.
- Review the comments I have made on the essays. Ask any questions you have about my comments.
- See the checklist for rhetorical analysis (next page).
- Consider points beyond the layer I have marked:
 - Are the points you cover in the most logical order?
 - Do you provide the maximum number of short, frequent quotations practical to demonstrate your point effectively?
 - Does each sentence have an analytical aspect?
- Wash your essay clean of usage errors. Remember principles from *Rhetorical Grammar* about how you should use sentence patterns that emphasize your main ideas.

Make notes toward the memo as you revise, and then use your revisions to inspire your memo:

In the memo, look back over the writing you've composed in this subgenre as well as your teacher's responses, in order to discuss what you have learned about the process of reading, writing about, and participating in conversations about literature. Keep the memo focused on your own progress.

A memo (formatted like an email) is a business letter with a particular audience (me). You don't have to worry about complex considerations of audience for this assignment, because your audience is one person, and you know how to speak to her.

Make a claim about your own progress: What have you learned? What do you have left to learn?

Support your claim with evidence, including examples from your writing and from class discussion, class texts, screencasts and handouts, and teacher comments.

What have been your challenges?

How have you addressed these challenges?

What adjustments have you made since you wrote that first rhetorical analysis paper?

What are you particularly proud of?
What do you still need to work on?
Where do you see improvement?

Be as specific as you can. Don't say "grammar," for example, but give examples and provide some specific ideas. If you are talking about literature or language, there is no chance you will go too deep in the weeds for this particular audience, who lives in that particular field.

AP English Language and Composition Checklist for Rhetorical Analysis

Introduction

- shows exigence of the issue
- shows exigence of the piece analyzed
- provides needed background
- moves to thesis (general to specific)

Thesis statement

- concise
- arguable
- impersonal
- analytical, follows our pattern: the piece accomplishes x through y

Body paragraphs

- topic sentences
 - refer to the thesis
 - cover what follows
- evidence
 - supports the thesis directly
 - proceeds logically
 - with appropriate transitions
 - is logical in itself
 - features short, frequent quotations
 - blended well
 - supporting main ideas
 - not interfering with student's own voice

Conclusion

- redefines thesis (doesn't *restate*)
- moves from specific to general
- suggests implications or future questions (without going so far as to posit a new thesis)

Style

- writing is grammatical, showing conversance with standard discourse
 - no fragments, run-ons, comma splices
- writing is effective, showing authority and persuasion
 - concise, effectively constructed sentences; strong word choice

Upper School English
Common errors: Unlucky Thirteen

Error #1. “This” as a pronoun, when there is no antecedent.

“This” is a perfectly lovely pronoun, as is “which.” Both of these words must have antecedents that are nouns. If your “this” doesn’t refer to a noun that actually appears in the preceding sentence, make your “this” into a demonstrative adjective by adding a noun after it. Change “This means…” to “This statement means…”

Error #2. Use of the second person.

Do not use “you” in academic writing: 1. It alienates the reader (don’t tell ME what to do); and, 2. It is vague. Both at the same time. Third person is fine; first person is accepted when you are talking about your process or in other situations where you aren’t using it to diminish your authority (“I think…”; “It seems to me…”).

Error #3. Comma splice.

Manage your independent clauses appropriately; if there is no coordinating conjunction, you need bigger punctuation between them. The larger lesson is that you should vary your syntax, subordinating some clauses so that you don’t find yourself with dull, repeating structures.

Error #4. Floating quotations.

Always use signal phrases. Blend your short passages (most often, shorter than a full sentence) into the surrounding prose, using quotation marks and citing in MLA style. See this essay for examples of blended passages: <http://www.english.umd.edu/interpolations/17741>. See #5, below, for a good signal phrase.

Error #5. Misused punctuation around citations.

In English class, we use MLA style. A sentence with a citation should look like this: For example, Wallace calls attention to promotional material provided by the MLF which describes the lobster’s nervous system as simple, decentralized, and lacking the structures which register pain—an explanation which Wallace then rejects as “incorrect in about nine different ways” (245).

Error #6. Unneeded passive voice.

Write in active voice when you can, as it is a stronger approach. In passive voice, the agent (do-er) of the verb is not the subject of the sentence: Mistakes were made. In active voice, the agent is the subject. Sometimes, you may have a good reason to write in passive voice, but, more often, the use of passive voice makes your writing weaker.

Error #7. Redundancy. (“Reason why,” “Reason is because,” etc.)

Edit for concision.

Error #8. Use of past tense for literature.

Use present and present perfect when you are writing about literature. If you need to couch an idea in the past, taking place before a present idea, use present perfect: “Victor has boarded Walton’s boat but is uncertain about whether Walton is traveling farther northward.”

Error #9. Nouns before gerunds.

Because a gerund is a noun, the word before it has to become an adjective—to make it an adjective, use the possessive form: “Victor’s pursuing the monster has depleted his health.” If you don’t like the awkwardness of that construction, consider other nouns to replace the gerund: “Victor’s pursuit of the monster…”

Error #10. Italics vs. quotation marks.

Small texts (lyric poems, short stories, articles) go in quotation marks; large texts (novels, epic poems, scholarly journals) are italicized. Underlining and italics have the same meaning.

Error #11. Overuse of the “it-cleft” and the “there-transformation.”

These structures have their place but should be used sparingly.

Error #12. Overuse of certain transitional expressions, especially “however” and “therefore.”

Especially in an argument paper, students tend to use these “big-club” transitions. See the list of transitional expressions on the Purdue OWL (<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/574/02/>) or in They Say/I Say in order to choose more precisely how you’d like to get from idea to idea.

Error #13. Use/Overuse of weak words.

First, watch your use of forms of “to be” as well as placeholder words such as “thing” and “very.” Moreover, please prefer fresh constructions of your own to overused turns of phrase or worn-out metaphors, known as clichés. Finally, please, unless you are talking about an actual chance operation, do not use the word “random,” and please do not suggest that writers do anything “randomly.”