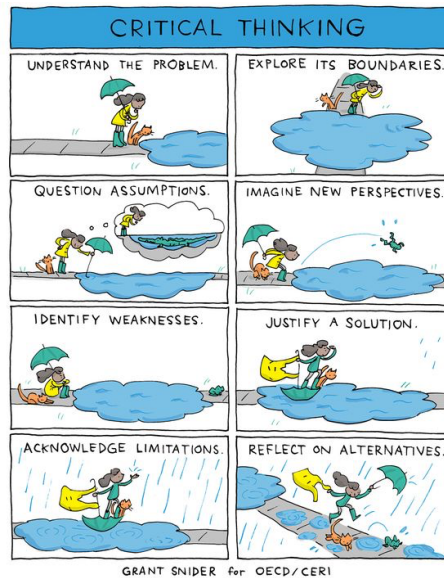


## Questions to Ask When Conducting a Rhetorical Analysis



- What motivated the author to produce this argument? To what and to whom is the author responding? What discourse community does this argument belong to? What preexisting conversations does this argument attempt to join?
- What is the purpose of this argument? Is the author attempting to change minds, call people to action, inspire them to vote in a certain way or prompt further investigations? Whose interests does the argument serve? Who does it exclude or harm?
- Who is the audience for this argument, and what assumptions, values, and beliefs must this audience hold in order to find this argument persuasive? Who does the author ignore or exclude as a potential audience?
- What appeals and techniques does the author use in their argument? Where and how do they use *logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos*? What stylistic devices do they use: allegory, alliteration, metaphor, irony, hyperbole, imagery, metonymy, overstatement, oxymoron, parody, satire, sensory detail? To what extent do these appeals suit the target audience? In what ways do the appeals fall short or miss the mark?
- What type of argument is it, and how does the genre affect the argument? (You might challenge the lack of evidence in editorials, but you wouldn't make the same complaint about bumper stickers.)
- Who is making the argument and what are their credentials to speak *on this topic*. (In the current media landscape, people with strong opinions who are highly credentialed in one area are sometimes invited to speak or write on topics that have nothing to do with their area of expertise and about which they know very little.) How does the writer's personal history, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, class, and age influence their position? What values do they hold and how can you tell?
- What authorities does the argument rely on or appeal to? You may do additional research to ascertain which authorities are being sidelined or ignored. Does the author appeal to

authorities from a mix of social, racial, and economic backgrounds, or do all the considered perspectives arise from authorities that belong to the same race, gender, or sexual orientation, and to what extent are these factors relevant to the argument being considered? What points of view and evidence does this author not consider?

- What claims does the argument make? What issues are raised—or ignored or evaded? What facts, reasoning, and evidence does the author use to support these claims and how do they present them?
- Can you identify fallacies in the argument—emotional, ethical or logical?
- Do some lateral research to check up on the author's references. Can you detect the use of misinformation, disinformation, or downright lies?
- How does the language and style of the argument work to persuade an audience? How is the argument organized or arranged? How does the organization serve or detract from the author's purpose?