

The Rhetorical Analysis Essay Q2



In this handout, you will find the following resources:

- ★ Analyzing the rhetorical situation (SOAPSTONE)
 - ★ Analyzing TONE through DIDLS
 - ★ Links for TONE, SYNTAX and DICTION handouts
- ★ A guide to the rhetorical analysis INTRO (rhetorical Precis)
 - ★ A guide to crafting body paragraphs
(says/does/connection)
- ★ A guide to discussing rhetorical appeals (Ethos, Pathos, Logos)
- ★ A very general guide for linking rhetorical choice to speaker's purpose
- ★ Further teacher observations and tips about the RA essay
 - ★ Sample student RA essays with annotations

THE RHETORICAL SITUATION: SOAPSTONE

Make sure you keep all of these questions in the back of your mind as you read the text. Doing so will help you determine which choices are the most relevant to include in your essay, and it will help you further to figure out what you should say about each choice you decide to analyze

Speaker	<p>What is the voice of the piece (narrator/speaker) and the point of view from which he or she is speaking?</p> <p>What are the speaker's characteristics, values, biases, and beliefs?</p> <p>Can the speaker be trusted?</p>
Occasion	<p>What is the time and place?</p> <p>Subject, general content or ideas. What is this piece about?</p> <p><u>CONTEXT</u>: What's going on in the world as it relates to the writing and/or the writer? How might the writer have been influenced as a result of the context? How might context affect audience members?</p> <p><u>EXIGENCE</u>: What specific set of circumstances prompted the writer to write?</p>
Audience	<p>Who is the target audience for this piece? Who is the larger audience?</p> <p>What qualities, beliefs, or values does the speaker assume the audience holds?</p> <p>Is this audience open to the message?</p>
Purpose	<p>What does this speaker hope to achieve? ---->Use strong, rhetorically accurate verbs to articulate the purpose</p> <p>What is the main argument of the piece?</p> <p><u>FORMAT</u>: What is the genre? Essay, speech, poem, etc. What impact does this genre have on emphasizing the purpose</p>
Style	<p>What are the CHOICES of the writer? HOW is the speaker moving or convincing to members of the audience? How is the speaker working toward achieving their purpose?</p> <p>Identify major moves within specific sections of the text and consider how each move helps achieve purpose.</p>

	***look for structure/organization, word choice, specific devices, syntax, analogies/comparisons, lists,
Tone	<p>What is the dominant tone and what is its effect? Look primarily at the speaker's attitude. What words, images, or figures of speech reveal the speaker's attitude? Are there any shifts in tone within this document, and if so, what is the result/effect? (Tone can be determined by analyzing DIDLS) <u>(**See "Tone words" handout)</u></p>
Evidence	What evidence does the speaker give to prove his/her argument?

DIDLS

Diction	<p>Advice from AP graders: "Do not think of diction as "word choice" it refers more specifically to the formality of the writer's language." Evaluate connotations of and denotations of words. Looking closely at the writer's selection of words and phrases, along with his or her use of sentence construction and syntax, all lead to determining how to characterize the diction of the piece of writing you are analyzing. <u>**See the Diction handout for more detailed information.</u></p>
Imagery	<p>When annotating for imagery, look for description that evokes the senses and analyze the intended effect on the audience. Never say "puts a picture in the audience's mind." Instead, describe what the speaker is attempting to get the audience to visualize and why the speaker might want to do so, given the Rhetorical situation</p>
Details	<p>Look at the facts and concrete details that are included and at what facts are omitted. Determine how the details or lack thereof help the author achieve his purpose.</p>

L anguage	Determine the type of language used (formal, informal, clinical, jargon, artificial, concrete, pedantic **favorite of AP, literal, abstract) and why the language was chosen for the particular audience and purpose.
S yntax	Syntax is the arrangement of words and the order of grammatical elements in a sentence. An author crafts a sentence to achieve a desired effect and to communicate their purpose to the audience. Syntax is a vital element to understanding an author's style. <u>**See Syntax/Sentence Structure Terms for patterns and techniques</u>

The Rhetorical Precis

This is one way to begin considering how you might craft your intro paragraph. Please note that this is **very** formulaic and in AP, we are trying to move away from formula in order to achieve sophistication. Continue to make unique choices about organization and style when you craft your intro paragraphs, just as you would do for any piece of writing. Some elements of the rhetorical situation are more important than others in different texts. You need to decide how the information should be arranged so that it makes sense for the text you are analyzing.

Rhetorical Precis

The rhetorical precis is a highly structured four sentence paragraph that records the essential elements of an RA intro paragraph.

The first sentence includes the **name of the writer** (usually including a descriptive phrase); the work's **genre, title, and date of publication**; a rhetorically accurate **verb** (asserts, argues, implies, posits (see "VERBS" handout for more ideas)); and a **that clause** containing a major assertion (claim) of the work.

The second sentence provides an **explanation of how the writer develops and/or supports the thesis**, usually in chronological order.

The third sentence includes a **statement of the writer's apparent purpose** followed by an **in order to phrase**. It should assess what the writer wanted the audience to do or to feel as a result of reading the work.

The fourth sentence describes the **intended audience and/or the relationship the writer establishes** with the audience. This sentence should consider **how the language of the work excludes or appeals to certain audiences**. The author's **tone** may also be reported.

EXAMPLE

In her article "Who Cares if Johnny Can't Read?" (1997), Larissa MacFarquhar asserts that Americans are reading more than ever despite claims to the contrary and that it is time to reconsider why we value reading so much, especially certain kinds of "high culture" reading. MacFarquhar supports her claims about American reading habits with facts and statistics that compare past and present reading practices, and she challenges common assumptions by raising questions about reading's

intrinsic value. Her purpose is to dispel certain myths about reading in order to raise new and more important questions about the value of reading and other media in our culture. She has a young, hip, somewhat irreverent audience in mind because her tone is sarcastic, and she suggests that the ideas she opposes are old-fashioned positions.

Rhetorical Précis Sentence Starters

Sentence One (Who/What?)

The _____ in the _____,
 _____,
 (Description/Author) (A) (Title)

(B)
 that

Sentence Two (How?)

_____ supports his/her _____ by
 _____.
 (Author's Last Name) (B)
 (C)

Sentence Three (Why?)

The author's purpose is to _____ in order to / so that
 _____.
 (D) (E)

Sentence Four (To Whom?)

The author writes in _____ tone for
 _____.
 (F)
 (Audience)

WORK BANK – A FEW OPTIONS TO CHOOSE FROM! (See handouts linked in the SOAPSTONE chart for more options)

A	B	C	D	E	F
scholarly article	argues/ argument asserts/ assertion	analyzing data quoting major	show describe	alter change	formal informal

novel book speech review essay column editorial research paper critique	suggests/ suggestion claims/ claim questions / question explains/ explanation declare/ declaration affirm / affirmation acknowledge / acknowledgement persuades/ persuasion convince / conviction	researches chronicling historical events comparing contrasting telling explaining illustrating demonstrating defining describing listing organizing prioritizing	alert portray illustrate depict explain point out suggest inform persuade convince prove influence provide examples	emphasize impress move advance learn educate coerce cease induce evoke prevent avert	sarcastic humorous contemptuous scientific educational professional
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A Guide to Crafting Body Paragraphs for Rhetorical Analysis

Again, this model is a formula. You need to make choices about arrangement based on the text you are analyzing. Analysis will look different for each text because each text is unique. The says/does/connection model is a way to communicate the levels of analysis that need to happen throughout the rhetorical analysis essay.

***Remember to chunk the text first and determine the purpose of each chunk. Be able to link rhetorical choice to the purpose of the chunk as well as the overall purpose of the piece of writing. DO NOT USE THE WORD "CHUNK IN YOUR ESSAY." Walk through the text chronologically.*

***Think of yourself as a docent in a museum, walking your audience through the text and showing them what they need to see in each portion of the text. Make sure you indicate how the choices relate to one another as well (use transitional phrases as you move from discussing one choice to another)*

<u>Says</u> What does the text say?	<u>Does</u> What is this section of text meant to do or accomplish?	<u>Connection to audience and purpose</u>
Direct quote or paraphrase OR EVEN BETTER YET, a combination of the two. Make sure you reference SPECIFIC parts of the text	Remember to use strong, accurate verbs and describe what the speaker is doing. If you don't know the name of the strategy or device, it doesn't matter. Simply describe what is happening in the text.	Explain how the speaker intended to move the audience AND/OR explain how the selected text helps the speaker advance or communicate his or her purpose. Make any relevant connections to the rhetorical situation. THIS PART SHOULD MAKE UP THE BULK OF YOUR ESSAY

SOME Says/Does/Connection EXAMPLES:

Prompt: In 1982, nature writer Annie Dillard published one of her most popular essays "Total Eclipse" in a collection of essays about human beings' relationship with the natural world. The collection is called *Teaching a Stone to Talk*. Read the following excerpt carefully. Then, in a well-developed essay, analyze the strategies Dillard uses to convey her message [about living] to her audience.

<u>SAYS</u> (What the text says)	<u>DOES</u> (What is the speaker trying to do in the quoted passage?) **Always use a strong, rhetorically accurate verb	<u>CONNECTION</u> (How does the quoted material help the speaker communicate their purpose, or solidify their argument in some way)
<p>"It had been like dying, that sliding down the mountain pass...The eclipse we had traveled here to see would occur early in the next morning."</p>	<p>Dillard employs morbid diction and repeats variations of the word death <u>in order to</u> emphasize the fact that leading up to the day of the eclipse, she was unhappy.</p>	<p>By emphasizing the hollow mood before the day of the eclipse, Dillard communicates to her audience that this event that would be taking place the next morning would be the saving grace that would elevate her from her dark place. The past tense prompts the audience to look for a shift in Dillard's mood and anticipate how the eclipse might cause the anticipated shift.</p>

Excerpt from the book: *Friday Night Lights: A Town, a Team, and a Dream* by H.S. Bessinger

Sample Rhetorical Analysis Prompt:

In H.G. Bissinger’s nonfiction text, *Friday Night Lights: A Town, a Team, and a Dream*, he describes Odessa, Texas and the most “winningest high school football team in Texas history.” Read the opening passage carefully. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze the techniques the author employs to characterize the town.

<p>Says (What the text says)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directly quote, but sparingly • Use your own words and paraphrase as much as you can 	<p>Does (What the author is trying to do, using strong and accurate verbs)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name the technique or device if you know it • Or describe what is happening in the writing • Use strong verbs-try to avoid saying “uses” 	<p>Connection (How does this link back to specific elements of the rhetorical situation?)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect your ideas back to what is asked of you in the prompt • Why is the author writing this way? • What is the author trying to communicate to the audience? • How does the speaker reinforce purpose/move the audience/support the overarching argument through the rhetorical choice you’re discussing
<p>“Walk in silence,” “beige brick building,” “Closed down movie theater,” “THE END in crooked letters on the marquee,” “old lettering,” “few restaurants,” “a lot of pawnshops”</p>	<p>Bissinger lists all of these details in a single sentence with adjectives in order to describe Odessa’s downtown area.</p>	<p>Listing all of these details in a single sentence prompts the reader to consider all of the details at once and make a connection among them. Mentioning “a lot of pawnshops,” for example, suggests that those who live in Odessa are in need of money. The author includes descriptions like “silence,” “beige,” and “closed down” to create a dominant impression that Odessa perhaps was but no longer is a thriving town. Through his bleak diction, Bissinger asserts that the town is desolate due to economical issues.</p>

The Death of "Ethos," "Pathos," and "Logos" A guide to discussing rhetorical appeals

Ethos, Pathos, and Logos are rhetorical appeals brought about by the choices a speaker makes within a text. Do not use these terms. Instead, link the appeal to the speaker's rhetorical choice by using any of the following sentence frames (or coming up with your own).

Make sure you are discussing the appeal AS A RESULT of the choice; the appeal is not the choice itself

I really want to say "ethos," but instead I might say...

The author notes his or her experience in this area by...

The author endears herself to her audience by...

The author demonstrates that he or she is a model of morality by...

The author makes it clear that he cares for their audience by...

The author establishes her credibility by ...

The author reminds her audience of their long-standing relationship when she writes ...

The author offers a number of concessions, including _____, suggesting to readers she has thoroughly considered the matter.

The speaker's repeated use of "we," "us," and "our" suggests to listeners that she is on their side.

The author's use of a [formal/informal] style, as exemplified by _____, helps to establish her credibility with an audience expecting exactly that.

The author's affiliative use of _____ gives readers a feeling of familiarity and respect.

The author's (device) contributes to his/her credibility by _____.

The writer inspires trust...

The writer reinforces his/her authority by...

The writer alludes to his/her experience

The writer creates a bond with the audience when she...

The writer engenders unity by assuring the audience that...

I really want to say "pathos," but instead I might say...

The author causes the audience to feel _____ by...

The author reminds the audience of _____ experiences by...

The author inspires a sense of _____ by...

Writing “_____” is a sneaky way to manipulate the audience into feeling ...
The author knows stoking the readers’ anger will push them into action, and does so by ...
The speaker’s repetition of _____ builds a feeling of _____ within her listeners.
The use of _____ imagery lends the text a sense of _____.
The authors loaded words, such as _____ and _____, are designed to give readers a feeling of ...
The author’s allusion to _____ creates a feeling of _____, as that is likely the reader’s memory of the original experience.
The author’s (device) contributes to the emotional weight of the piece by _____.
The writer elicits empathy...
The writer begs sympathy...
The writer utilizes the audience's sense of (fear, hope, patriotism, etc...) as a tool to...
The writer captures hearts by...
The writer engenders guilt/emotion/empathy/fear/unity/patriotism/hope etc...
The writer inspires...
The writer employs an emotional (humorous, cautionary, vivid, etc.) anecdote...

I really want to say “logos,” but instead I might say...

The author demonstrates the sensical nature of _____ by offering data which serves to...
The author notes the fallacy in _____ 's argument by clarifying that...
The author notes the various benefits/advantages of _____ by ...
The author notes the various disadvantages of _____ by ...
The author provides various examples which serve to...
The author uses a clever analogy when she compares ...
The author uses evidence that will appeal to her audience, citing _____ as a way to acknowledge what the audience already knows about _____.
The author’s [syllogistic/inductive/deductive] reasoning in this section should leave readers confident in her conclusion that _____.
The writer incorporates statistics...
The writer manipulates data...
The writer argues from precedent...
The writer cites _____ authority...
The writer connects... and builds...
The writer reasons...
The writer classifies...
The writer strategically arranges examples/presents data/moves from ... to ...
The writer constructs the claim/evidence/argument/reasoning...

A Very General Guide for Linking Rhetorical Devices/Strategies

Please note: On the FRQ #2 you are awarded for understanding the rhetorical strategy or concept and why/how it is used, not for simply identifying the term.

Please also note: There are 1000+ rhetorical devices. You could not possibly learn them all. Furthermore, you do not need to know the names for any of them. As long as you can describe a writer's rhetorical moves and the intended effect on the audience, you DO NOT need to identify a device by name. As a result this list will be brief.

Definition of Rhetorical Strategy (or rhetorical choice): Techniques writers use for particular effect. All writers draw upon rhetorical strategies as they express ideas and evoke responses in their audience. The different strategies have functions...it is your job to identify the function. Below is a list of general functions for common strategies.

POWER VERBS! Analyzing verbs allows you to determine an author's purpose and tone. Using power verbs in your own writing will help you to become a more mature writer!

DEVICE

FUNCTION

1. analogy	to make a pointed comparison, often a very powerful comparison
2. metaphor	"
3. simile	"
4. hyperbole	to provoke a response, to cast something in a strong light
5. understatement	to spark the reader's imagination, or make a pointed observation
6. juxtaposition	to call attention to extremes
7. imagery	to illustrate an idea, a feeling, or the particular qualities of something
8. alliteration	to create a memorable phrase
9. allusion	to lend authority to an idea, to make an association w/ something the reader knows
10. refrain	to create a memorable phrase
11. anaphora	to create a memorable, powerful effect, to reinforce an idea
12. repetition	"
13. parallelism	"
14. tone	to communicate an attitude towards the subject
15. undertone	to communicate an attitude towards the subject that cuts beyond the attitude that appears on the surface

Continued →

16. words w/heavy connotation to cast the subject in a particular light, to imply
17. selection of detail to concretize a particular idea, fact, or feeling
18. lists to create a sense of overwhelming force or magnitude
19. irony to convey complexity
20. paradox to point out an apparent contradiction
21. anecdote to provide a concrete example or humanize an abstract concept
22. humor to disarm the audience, diffuse hostility, warm the reader to the writer's ideas
23. satire to ridicule and inspire reform
24. sarcasm/verbal irony to ridicule or criticize
25. invective to ridicule, chastise or convey contempt
26. narrative pace to convey energy or intense feelings (or lack thereof)
27. appeals to reason, emotion, ethics, patriotism, religion to provoke the audience to respond in a particular way, to tap into a reader's values
28. rhetorical question to provoke the reader to respond or to think, or to lead them to the next idea
29. short, staccato sentences to call attention to an idea

Additional Notes about Rhetorical Analysis

Common student pitfalls I have noticed over the years

- **Be as specific as possible in your writing.** The #1 problem I see with student work is that the writing is vague. Remember that if it could be said about any other text, you are not being specific enough in your analysis.
- Phrases like “catches the audience’s attention” or “convinces the audience to keep reading” are examples of phrases that you should never use in your essays. ←- **DON’T DO THIS** The goal of all writing is to captivate an audience. You need to say something more insightful about the specific purpose of the piece you’re analyzing.
- Avoid listing rhetorical devices in your intro paragraph (“uses irony, hyperbole” etc.) Instead, focus on referring to the speaker’s choices with rhetorically accurate verbs: (Highlights the irony [of a situation], exaggerates a quality [of a person or a place or a situation])
- Make sure that you reference SPECIFIC parts of the text as you work through your analysis, but avoid including lengthy quotes. Do directly quote the text, but it’s best to blend in direct quotes of important words and phrases with your own paraphrasing of the text.
- **EXAMPLES:**
 - Additionally, when Banneker asks Jefferson to reminisce on America’s fight for freedom, he notes that “the present freedom and tranquility which [he] enjoy[s] [he has] mercifully received, and that it is the peculiar blessing of Heaven.”
 - Towards the end of the letter, Banneker offers advice to Jefferson by including a direct quote from the Bible. He explains to Jefferson that he must “Put [his] Souls in their Souls stead” in order to understand why slaves view slavery as immoral and cruel.
- The “connection to audience/purpose” should take up the bulk of your essay. Say more than you think might be necessary. Think about layering your analysis. Be sure to link rhetorical choices to the purpose of smaller parts of the text you’re analyzing, but also be able to link those choices to the broader purpose of the entire text.
- **EXAMPLE:**
 - Banneker begins his letter by addressing Thomas Jefferson as “Sir.” Throughout the letter, he repeatedly refers to Jefferson as such, especially when he brings up a challenging point. This creates a very professional tone, and shows that Banneker has great respect for Jefferson, even though they have varying viewpoints. Using this terminology also keeps Banneker from going off the rails,

it keeps him in check in spots of his argument where he could have become very argumentative and difficult to deal with. Meanwhile, it is playing into Jefferson's ego, making him feel like he is above Banneker in some way. This will make Jefferson increasingly likely to be receptive to the argument Banneker is trying to make and inflate the chances that Jefferson changes his mind and elects to attempt to increase the quality of life for African Americans in The United States. Banneker hopes that the respect he shows for Jefferson will be reciprocated in the response he receives.

- Discuss relationships among ideas. How does a choice you see the speaker making in the beginning of the text help set up for a choice the speaker makes later in the text? How do choices made later on remind audience members of choices made earlier on and why is the relationship among these ideas important? **For example, if you see a speaker establishing a sense of trust from the audience in the beginning of a text, and then calling them to action later in the text, the trust is an important first step to calling individuals to action. Audience members will be more likely to act for someone they trust because they know the speaker has their best interest at heart.**

SAMPLE STUDENT ESSAYS

I selected each of the following essays not necessarily because each one is perfect, but because each of them does at least one thing very well. Please read my annotations in addition to reading the essays.

SAMPLE I:

Selected because of its thorough analysis and commentary of the entire text.

In 1776, the original thirteen American colonies severed their political connections to Great Britain and declared their independence. However, not everyone in America had gained their freedom. When the Bill of Rights was adopted in 1791, it was meant to provide more liberties for African Americans who were enslaved. However, these liberties were once again withheld from the hundreds of thousands of Africans in slavery living in the United States. That same year, the son of former slaves and a highly educated African American, Benjamin Banneker, challenged the way blacks were seen and treated by whites in America in a public letter to Thomas Jefferson, one of the framers of the Declaration of Independence and secretary of state to President George Washington. In this letter, Banneker argues against the continuance of slavery by urging Jefferson to sympathize with slaves by remembering the pain of British rule, pointing to the contradictions between the principles laid out in the Declaration of Independence, and urging him to act to end slavery.

In order to conjure a sense of sympathy and guilt from Jefferson, Banneker begins his argument by asking Jefferson to look back on when the British oppressed their colonies and notice the parallel between the British oppression of the colonies and the white oppression of African American slaves. He implores Jefferson to look back and consider "that time in which every human aid appeared unavailable" to the colonies "and in which even hope and fortitude wore the aspect of inability to the conflict" (Lines 6-8). Banneker reminds Jefferson of his own helplessness and how it felt to somehow attain freedom. Logically, Jefferson and other white men should understand the injustice of tyranny. So,

through this allusion to a time of oppression for Americans, Banneker elicits Jefferson's pity and effectively puts him in the shoes of every slave. Banneker also invokes a sense of guilt since the African Americans remained enslaved and oppressed even after their nation was freed from England.

In the next paragraph, Banneker contrasts the darkness of slavery with Jefferson's words in the Declaration of Independence. Strong nouns emphasize the awful state of slavery, as Banneker emphasizes the "injustice" and the "horrors of its condition," and reminds Jefferson of "[his] abhorrence" to this state. The connotation of "abhorrence" as a feeling of strong disgust is intended to get Jefferson to go back and relive the pain. Moreover, it highlights the insufferable actions of whites toward African Americans. Banneker follows this by reminding Jefferson that he was moved to write the words that show his belief in the equality of all men: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal." The passage from the Declaration represents the ideal of establishing a government that realized God's intent to give all men rights. This affirms Jefferson's hypocrisy of his position on slavery in a government intended to, as he himself stated, guarantee liberty. Moreover, Banneker pointing out that Jefferson wrote these words as a "slave" to the Crown, but is now master to his own slaves makes the hypocrisy of Jefferson's actions that much more clear. This example of the hypocrisy of the whites appeals logically to Jefferson the reader because a nation that stands for freedom, liberty and bravery is oppressing thousands of its own people.

Banneker continues by asserting that Jefferson should be grateful to God for his own freedom. He writes, "you cannot but acknowledge that the present freedom and tranquility which you enjoy you have mercifully received and that it is the peculiar blessing of Heaven" (Lines 11-14). Later in the letter, Banneker, in order to emphasize the sad irony of the situation, criticizes how Jefferson himself attained freedom while leaving slaves the property of whites. Banneker reminds Jefferson of his hypocrisy by saying "how pitiable it is to reflect that although you were so fully convinced of the benevolence of the Father of mankind and of his equal and impartial distribution of those rights and

privileges . . . that you should at the same time counteract his mercies" (Lines 31-36). The numerous religious references help Banneker establish a common ground with Jefferson. He displays that he too is a believer in God and that he is devoutly religious. Moreover, this attack on Jefferson's actions is effective because it isn't just an African American man who is denouncing his actions; it is one of God's pious followers who is criticizing his actions. This adds more significance and magnitude to the claims being made by Banneker since God is someone whose opinions he values. This is meant to motivate Jefferson to, logically, see the error in his thinking.

Throughout Banneker's letter, he asks Jefferson to reflect on the past and shows him the error of his ways to convince him that slavery is unjust. Banneker's argument is both emotional, by evoking guilt, and logical, by proving the discrepancies in Jefferson's actions. Banneker's letter ultimately hopes to convince Jefferson of the wrongdoings and hypocrisy present in the institution of slavery.

SAMPLE 2:

Selected because of its concise writing and its simple transitions; the writer effectively transitions from discussing one choice to another, indicating the link between choices.

In his letter to US Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Banneker attempts to convince him to oppose the institution of slavery in America. By appealing to United States history, referring to Jefferson's own reasoning, and by making moral appeals, Banneker is able to effectively characterize Jefferson as a hypocrite, so that he may reconsider his stance. Being that Jefferson was Secretary of State at the time, Banneker hopes that by convincing Jefferson, he may bring about action through the government.

Banneker attempts several appeals to Jefferson's own logic to illustrate Jefferson's hypocrisy in his stance on slavery. He begins his letter by characterizing the struggle for American independence as a fight against a "State of Servitude", and directly quotes the declaration of independence where Jefferson states the self-evident reasons for why independence is justified. In doing so, Banneker

characterizes the fight against slavery, to be very much the same as the fight for American independence against the British. Being that Jefferson believes in the struggle for American independence, but not the struggle against slavery, the author is able to characterize Jefferson as a hypocrite for ignoring this issue. Being that Jefferson is the Secretary of State, he would have the power to attempt to end slavery in America, thus, Banneker hopes that by illustrating the holes in Jefferson's beliefs, he may reconsider his stance and take meaningful action against slavery.

In addition to using Jefferson's political beliefs against himself, Banneker also makes a religious appeal to attack Jefferson's position on maintaining slavery. Banneker notes that while Jefferson is "fully convinced of the benevolence of the Father of mankind", he is counteracting "his mercies in detaining by fraud and violence" a large number of African Americans. Thus, by juxtaposing Jefferson's religious beliefs with his own actions, he depicts him as someone who is uncommitted to his own faith, challenging him to improve his own commitment to his faith by reconsidering his stance and taking action against slavery.

Knowing that his arguments against Jefferson are harsh criticism of his character, yet intended to convince him to change his mind, Banneker makes use of polite diction so that Jefferson may be more receptive to his letter. Notably, Banneker addresses Jefferson as "sir", signalling his respect to Jefferson, despite his grievances; Moreover, Banneker characterizes himself as a modest, and not cynical critic towards Jefferson in doing so. By presenting himself as a respectable person, and elevating Jefferson's own ego through language such as "sir", Jefferson is placed in a position where he is brought to rationally address Banneker's argument, as an outraged response would reveal Jefferson's own failures in logic by providing an inflammatory response relative to the one sent by Banneker. Therefore, by forcing Jefferson to thoroughly reconsider his stance, he provides an opportunity for his mind to be changed, and thus potentially take a stand against slavery.

SAMPLE 3:

Selected because of its sophisticated writing, layered analysis, and awareness of the rhetorical situation

The letter was written by Benjamin Banneker in 1791 during the height of slavery in America. Banneker, who was not only an author, astronomer, and surveyor but also the son of former slaves, wrote to Thomas Jefferson, a prominent leader in revolutionary America and owner of slaves. Because Jefferson was so prominent, Banneker hopes to use his example in order to convince slave owners and America at large to abolish the practice of slavery. Throughout the letter, Banneker maintains a professional tone even when condemning the hypocritical actions of Jefferson. In the Banneker's letter, Banneker by repeating "sir," using references to God, and juxtaposition. argues that slavery should be abolished because slaves are equal to white men by repeating "sir," using references to God, and juxtaposition.

First of all, Banneker creates a professional and humble tone using repetition of the word "sir." Banneker chooses to refer to Jefferson as "sir" throughout the piece au lieu of Thomas or Mr. Jefferson. Banneker could have even chosen a far more derogatory term, which would condemn Jefferson because he kept slaves. Instead, Banneker uses "sir," a word that implies respect and humility. Even though Banneker is speaking to a man who believes his people are worthy of *slavery*, Banneker uses "sir," establishing a humble and professional tone. Banneker does so for two reasons. Firstly, he does so in order to put Jefferson at ease; when a person feels threatened, they are less willing to listen to opposing arguments. Therefore, Banneker defers to Jefferson using "sir" in order to make him more willing to listen and be convinced by Banneker's argument. But secondly, Banneker uses "sir" to disprove one of the arguments against slavery—that slaves are uncivilized and disrespectful. By using "sir," Banneker disproves the idea that black culture is uncivilized by his own example, poking holes in the foundation of slavery justification. Doing so furthers his argument that black people are equal to white people and

thus deserving of freedom. All in all, Banneker's use of "sir" is meant to act as a gateway to convincing Jefferson of Banneker's point.

In addition, Banneker uses a variety of allusions to the Bible and God to establish the equality between the white and black man. Banneker does so in a multitude of ways: for example, he calls freedom a "peculiar blessing of Heaven" and quotes Job, a popular biblical figure who endured much suffering at the hand of Satan before earning many blessings (a figure he connects to the trials of slaves themselves). Banneker is appealing to Jefferson's religious tendencies: in revolutionary America, the Protestant sect of Christianity was prominent among intellectuals such as Jefferson. By using references to these biblical principles, Banneker proves his knowledge of the bible, therefore asserting that he is not beneath Jefferson. Furthermore, since Banneker, the son of former slaves, can call upon these biblical principles, Banneker attempts to draw the conclusion that other members of the black community can do the same. By asserting this principle, Banneker shows through example that slaves are equal to their matters in religious matters, which logically supports his conclusion that slaves are equal to white men. In summation, Banneker shows the equality in religiosity between him and Jefferson to show that black men are equal to white men.

Finally, Banneker juxtaposes Jefferson's views of equality for all men with the plight of black slaves to finalize the argument against slavery. Banneker states Jefferson's views regarding the "equal and impartial distribution of rights" with the "groaning captivity" of the slaves Jefferson keeps. Doing so emphasizes the difference between these two realities: Jefferson's lofty ideals of freedom distributed to *everywhere* versus the captivity of slaves perfectly able to respect and reason as established by Banneker's previous argument of equality. This emphasis attempts to underline the hypocrisy that Jefferson commits using logic. If the letter has already established the respectability of slaves, if the letter has shown the equality of slaves in terms of religiosity, if Jefferson himself professes to the ideals of "equal and impartial distribution of rights," then why does he still argue for slavery? The comparison

acts as the final nail in the coffin for the opposing arguments. By showing Jefferson's logical fallacy, Banneker attempts to logically convince Jefferson that slavery is ultimately wrong according to his own views. All in all, Banneker juxtaposes Jefferson's views of freedom with his own actions in slavery to assert that slavery is wrong.

SAMPLE 4:

Selected because of its ability to discuss in great detail the relationship among choices and the layers of meaning evident throughout the text

Benjamin Banneker was a son of a slave. His motive in writing to Jefferson in 1791 is to attempt to lead Jefferson on a path to abolishing slavery. In his letter, he reminds Jefferson of the values he communicated uses the values Jefferson communicates in his Declaration of independence, written a good few years prior. Banneker uses Jefferson's words in the Declaration of Independence to both appeal to him as a person and to throw Jefferson's words back in his face as an accusation of hypocrisy. With his Biblical references and comparisons to the British rule fought by Jefferson, Banneker uses Jefferson's own values and successes against him as an argument of freedom and equal rights for African American slaves. His respectful diction makes him throw back Jefferson's ideas all the more powerfully, because they come from a place of respect towards Jefferson.

Banneker addresses Jefferson as "sir" for the entirety of the letter. At the start of the letter, this communicates respect, because he's talking about Jefferson's great deeds. His respect for Jefferson sets up nicely for the compliments given. Banneker praises Jefferson's work on the Declaration of Independence and gaining freedom from Britain. His praise is intended to feed Jefferson's ego a bit. It has the added effect of setting up for his later accusations, because the thing that Banneker praises Jefferson about is in direct alignment with Banneker. Banneker calls on Jefferson to recall his "Conflict" with the british, to remember the fight he fought against them for America's rights, for those inalienable rights.

Benneker's praising perfectly sets up for the next part in Benneker's argument. From a position of giving respect, Benneker then attacks Jefferson with criticism. He starts this off fairly innocent, praising Jefferson at a time when he fought for and valued liberty. This quickly turns into a transition of Benneker lamenting how Jefferson has changed. Benneker says that even though Jefferson was a great fighting for freedom, now he has gone back on his ideology of equal rights. Benneker informs Jefferson of his betrayal and denial of God's benevolence towards mankind, describing that Jefferson has held captive Benneker's people. This turnaround is quite impactful on its own, but Benneker took certain steps to increase its effect. One of these was to continue to use "sir". When Benneker was singing Jefferson's praises it was a symbol of respect, but now that Benneker has accused Jefferson of hypocrisy, it has taken on a mocking tone. The "sir" that Benneker uses now only furthers his point, because of the change in attitude. Benneker also set up a comparison to Jefferson's fight to the British crown. This further proves Benneker's point, because he points to a specific conflict, a conflict that Jefferson is known for his success in, to show how much of a hypocrite Jefferson was being. Had Benneker just hurled accusations of hypocrisy, it would not have been as impactful, but since Benneker connected the hypocrisy to Jefferson's greatest success, it's importance increased.

Finally, Benneker ends the letter with advice. He begins this by saying that he doesn't need to restate the situation of his people, the African Americans, because it's far too long, and he implies that Jefferson should already know. He goes on to say that all Jefferson needs to do is "Put your Souls in their Souls stead", which is a Biblical reference. Benneker's use of Biblical references, not only here but in the rest of the letter, are intended to speak to Jefferson on a personal level. Jefferson is a man of some level of religious faith. We know this because Jefferson references the Creator in the Declaration of Independence, and uses it as the basis for his "inalienable rights". Benneker's attitude shift here works to his point that he cannot help Jefferson "wean [himself] from these narrow prejudices", only Jefferson can do that. This primarily indicates Benneker's feelings that Jefferson is prejudiced, more

subtly than before, and adds the aforementioned effect of bringing God into it with the Biblical reference. It's as if he's saying "Only God can help you now".