

Questions to ask about Rhetorical Strategies

1. What is the **tone** of the text? Do you react at an emotional level as you read? Does this reaction change at all throughout the text?
2. In what **mode** does the writer develop his/her ideas? Narration? Description? Definition? Comparison? Analogy? Cause and Effect? Example? Why does the writer use these methods of development?
3. Does the author consider ideas that are **opposed** to his or her own? How does s/he present them—as legitimate? Absurd? Partially correct? Utterly false?
4. How does the writer arrange his/her ideas? What are the patterns of **organization**? Particular to general? Broad to specific? Spatial? Chronological? Alternating? Block?
5. Does the text flow from one idea to the next? Or are **transitions** intentionally jarring? How do the transitions work?
6. What is the **sentence structure** like in the text? Does the writer use fragments or run-ons? Declarative? Imperative? Interrogative? Exclamatory? Are they simple? Compound? Complex? Compound-complex? Short? Long? Loose? Periodic? Balanced? Parallel? Are there any patterns in the sentence structure? Can you make any connections between the patterns and the writers' purpose?
7. Does the writer use **quotations**? Who is quoted? Is it a widely-recognized authority? A group of “average citizens”?
8. Does the text appeal to **logic, authority, or emotion**—or some combination of the three? Which does it use most? Is there a pattern in the appeals? Are there any flaws in the logic?
9. How does the writer use **diction**? Is it formal? Informal? Technical? Jargon? Slang? Is the language connotative? Denotative? Is the language emotionally evocative? Does the language change throughout the piece? How does the language contribute to the writers' aim?
10. Is there anything unusual in the writers' use of **punctuation**? What punctuation or other techniques of emphasis (italics, capitals, underlining, ellipses, parentheses) does the writer use? Is punctuation over- or under used? Which marks does the writer use when, and for what effects? Dashes to create a hasty breathlessness? Semi-colons for balance or contrast?
11. Are important terms **repeated** throughout the text? Why?
12. Are there any particularly vivid **images** that stand out? What effect do these images have on the writers' purpose?

13. Are devices of **comparison** used to convey or enhance meaning? Which tropes--similes, metaphors, personification, hyperbole, etc. does the writer use? When does he/she use them? Why?

14. Does the writer use devices of **humour**? Puns? Irony? Sarcasm? Understatement? Parody? Is the effect comic relief? Pleasure? Hysteria? Ridicule?

These questions are a modified form of those that originally appeared at
<http://www.writingcentre.ubc.ca/workshop/tools/rhet1.htm>