

## RHETORICAL ANALYSIS: A BLENDED LEARNING UNIT

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#### Unit Overview

During this blended learning, self-paced unit, students utilize rhetorical analysis to evaluate the effectiveness of speeches and informational texts. Students start the unit by taking a diagnostic test, and, if needed, completing a writing boot camp. Then, students complete several analytical exercises focused on logical fallacies and rhetorical analysis. Throughout the unit, students engage with political cartoons, famous speeches from American history, and popular culture to develop an understanding of rhetorical analysis. The unit concludes with students writing a five-paragraph rhetorical analysis.

#### Standards Addressed

1. **ELA.9-10.L.2:** Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.
  - c. Spell correctly.
  - d. Produces legible work that shows accurate spelling and correct use of the conventions of punctuation and capitalization.
2. **ELA.9-10.L.4.a:** Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grades 9–10 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.
  - a. Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence, paragraph, or text; a word's position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.
3. **ELA.9-10.RI.1:** Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
4. **ELA.9-10.RI.6:** Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how an author uses rhetoric to advance that point of view or purpose.
5. **ELA.9-10.RI.8:** Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; identify false statements and fallacious reasoning.
6. **ELA.9-10.W.1:** Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
  - a. Introduce precise claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that establishes clear relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.

- b. Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly, supplying evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level and concerns.
  - c. Use words, phrases, and clauses to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims.
  - d. Establish and maintain an appropriate style and objective tone.
  - e. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.
7. **ELA.9-10.W.4:** Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
8. **ELA.9-10.W.5:** Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.

## A NOTE FROM THE TEACHER

Dear Teacher,

First and foremost, I would like to state that this unit was created to serve as part of a blended classroom to meet the needs of at risk learners. It can be adapted for gifted or on-grade level learners, and I will detail that in the paragraphs below. There are also some more advanced speeches and texts included throughout the posted unit to help you meet the needs of all types of learners. Keep in mind that this entire unit was designed for students to work at their own pace and is best delivered using an online platform such as Edmodo, Schoology, Google Classroom, or iTunes U. If you are a teacher who is looking to dabble in alternative education, or even a teacher who is in gifted education and is struggling to individualize content for your students, I would recommend trying out a blended learning unit plan. In my opinion, blended learning is the best and most thorough way to meet the needs of a wide variety of learners.

Begin the unit by assigning the **Writing Diagnostic Test**. Based on the results of this diagnostic test, assign your students their course content. If a student scores significantly below grade level on the diagnostic, start him or her at the lowest level of the writing boot camp, using the **Writing a Sentence PowerPoint and Exercises**. After that, you can proceed to **Writing a Paragraph PowerPoint and Exercises**, and then to the **Writing Boot Camp PowerPoint and Exercises**. At the end of the boot camp, assign each student an analytical essay topic based their interests. I have found that interest-based essays bring engagement and success and give students the confidence they need to perform well.

For those students who excelled at the diagnostic test, assign the logical fallacies and rhetorical techniques exercises. There are two presentations, the **Rhetorical Techniques PowerPoint** and the **Logical Fallacies PowerPoint**, which students use to complete the **Rhetorical Techniques Exercises** and the **Logical Fallacies Exercises**. Each set of exercises requires students to identify and analyze the text and/or audio or video of speeches from political leaders, movies, and athletes. Once students complete both these modules, assess their knowledge with the **Rhetoric Quiz**.

For more advanced students, consider including additional political speeches or poems, such as this [speech from President Obama](#), which contains rhetorical techniques students can analyze for effectiveness. I have also used Langston Hughes's poem, *A Theme For English B*, as a comparison piece. Advanced students can do a thematic analysis of both works and determine what role rhetorical language plays in each.

For the **Unit Final Assessment**, students write a five-paragraph rhetorical analysis analyzing a speech of their choice (President Obama's 2009 Inaugural Address, Amy Poheler's Commencement Speech at Harvard University, or Coach Gaines' speech from the movie, *Friday Night Lights*). First, students will read and or listen to the speech of their choice, annotate the text by identifying logical

fallacies, rhetorical techniques, and parts they think are effective or ineffective. Then, students will use the brainstorming map and five-paragraph graphic organizer to develop and write a final essay answering the question: *Is this speech effective? Why or Why Not?* To support a wide variety of learners, I have included two copies of this final assessment – one for students that are on grade level and another for students that may need additional support.

If these speeches do not seem of interest to your students, consider substituting speeches or texts that will both interest your students and match their current learning levels. For more advanced learners, consider allowing them to choose their own speech to analyze. Or, you could have them write their own speech about a topic they choose and then self-evaluate the effectiveness of the rhetorical techniques they used.

In summary, remember these key points when implementing this unit plan:

- Use an online delivery platform;
- Allow students to work at their own pace, but be sure to support and scaffold as needed;
- Make sure to differentiate as necessary based on student needs;
- Provide feedback immediately and often; this entire blended unit is designed for the teacher to interact with students frequently. In other words, continually monitor and support your students;
- Be creative! Use videos and ads that you think your students will engage with the most;
- To close each day, make sure students check their mastery checklists to see what progress they have made in class;
- Accept that a blended classroom is different – there isn't a traditional warm up or a traditional closing. It is designed for students to work and progress at their own pace. The sooner you are comfortable with that notion the better things are going to be for you and your class.

Sincerely ,  
Farhat Ahmad