

## Rhetorical Analysis How-To

### Rhetoric Is

- *the faculty (Aristotle calls it a dynamis—an improvable art)*
- *of finding (not necessarily using, but certainly finding—Aristotle uses the term heuresis)*
- *all the available means (everything a writer or speaker might do with language)*
- *of persuasion (writers and speakers aim to shape people's thoughts and actions)*
- *in a particular case (rhetoric capitalizes on specific situations).*

### 1. Arrangement, organization, and structure

- a. Look at how the text can be divided into parts and what the function of each of these parts is—
  - i. to introduce a central idea,
  - ii. to narrow the text's focus,
  - iii. to divide the text into smaller parts,
  - iv. to compare or contrast material that has come before with what will come after,
  - v. to address possible objections to what has been said so far,
  - vi. to promote the author's credentials,
  - vii. to add a piece of emotionally evocative material, and so on.
- b. Ask the big “so what?” questions about organization, structure, and arrangement:  
So what difference does the structure of the text make?

### 2. Diction, syntax, imagery, and figurative language

- a. Diction: Is the diction formal or informal? Does the writer use *I* or *you* or *we*? Are there any contractions? Does the text use any specialized jargon?
- b. Syntax: Are the sentences long, short, varied? Are they primarily in active voice? If there are any passive voice sentences, how do they function? Interesting punctuation? Does the writer attempt to provide parallel balance, or provide antithetical balance?
- c. Imagery: Are there any visual, auditory, or tactile images?
- d. Figurative Language: Are there metaphors? What's being compared? Do you detect any irony or sarcasm?
- e. Ask So what?

So how do the diction, syntax, imagery, and figurative language, mediated through the organization of the whole text, create meaning?