

RHETORIC
FOR
ACADEMIC
REASONING


L. BENSEL-MEYERS

Rhetoric for Academic Reasoning

L. Bensel-Meyers

University of Tennessee

 **HarperCollins***Publishers*

Executive Editor: Constance A. Rajala
Project Editor: Steven Pisano
Design Supervisor: Heather A. Ziegler
Text Design: N.S.G. Design
Cover Design: Jaye Zimet Design
Director of Production: Jeanie Berke
Production Assistant: Linda Murray
Compositor: ComCom Division of Haddon Craftsmen, Inc.
Printer and Binder: R.R. Donnelley and Sons Co.
Cover Printer: The Lehigh Press, Inc.

3022/12

For permission to use copyrighted material, grateful acknowledgment is made to the copyright holders on pp. 357–358, which are hereby made part of this copyright page.

Rhetoric for Academic Reasoning

Copyright © 1992 by HarperCollins Publishers Inc.

All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews. For information address HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 10 East 53rd Street, New York, NY 10022.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Bensel-Meyers, L.

Rhetoric for academic reasoning / L. Bensel-Meyers.

p. cm.

Includes index.

ISBN 0-06-040627-5 (student edition)

ISBN 0-06-500403-5 (instructor edition)

1. English language—Rhetoric. 2. College readers. 3. Reasoning.

I. Title.

PE1408.B4758 1991

808'.0427—dc20

91-23725
CIP

91 92 93 94 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Rhetoric for Academic Reasoning

*To the four men in my life,
Michael, Timothy, Joshua, and Nicholas,
and to Cindy Owenby,
for helping mother them when writing called me away.*

Preface

The more our students are asked to use writing to learn in all their courses, the more we, as the instructors of freshman composition, must concern ourselves with training these students to use written language responsibly. As English teachers, we are aware of the immense power the written word has, how one word alone can evoke ideas, arouse emotions, and pass value judgements. Confronted with deconstructionist theories, we are aware of how slippery the word can be, how it can escape the writer's control and reshape how a reader interprets the work. How then can we prepare our students, in one or two short courses, to recognize both how the written word shapes their learning and how they can master its power to communicate responsibly?

Creating a responsible citizen-orator for modern times is the goal of this book. It is predicated on how the new rhetoricians have adapted Aristotle's enthymeme as a way to lead students to see how writers make knowledge in collaboration with their readers. By leading the students through the process by which we make meaning, this book helps students identify the rhetorical situation that has shaped their thoughts and that will be ultimately affected by their words.

There are two dimensions to this book: the first addresses what is common to all rhetorical situations; the second explores what is discipline-specific about the rhetorical situations students will confront in different courses. The text begins by introducing what is common about how we use writing to reason at all stages of the learning process: reading critically; keeping a reading notebook; testing ideas in oral discussion; identifying issues, logical assumptions, and stances; writing critical responses to others' drafts; and revising to accommodate a reader's response. As the students encounter readings in specific subject areas, they are led to recognize how each step in the learning process is merely a way of becoming initiated into the types of conversations specialists have about their subjects.

At the center of this learning process is the enthymeme, introduced as a way of objectifying how specialists reason about their subject. Drawing from classical stasis theory, this text shows students how they can use the enthymeme to identify what is discipline-specific about the questions specialists ask about their subject and how these questions control the type of reasoning the specialists use to arrive at answers. However, because the enthymeme is a difficult concept for students to grasp all at once, the text is structured so that the enthymeme is not introduced until after they have discovered the rhetorical problems it can help them solve.

Each unit is divided into two parts: the first chapter devoted to discussion about the reading-writing process, the second to investigating the particular type of writing required to reason well about a specific subject. Although you may wish to use the chapters in a different sequence, the text is currently structured to carefully lead

students, chapter by chapter, from fundamentals about reading and writing through progressively more complex rhetorical situations. For this reason, even a new instructor of composition, less aware of current rhetorical theories, should find it easy to use.

The selected readings have been chosen to represent both the specific issues involved in each field of study and the common issues about language and learning that echo throughout the book. There are no more than three readings per each unit, giving you the opportunity, if you wish, to supplement the readings with favorites of your own. Certainly the text could stand alone as the rhetoric/reader for the course. The material contained here is sufficient to lead a student who begins the book as a novice writer to become confident of his or her ability to argue with the specialist's best rhetoric. Ideally, students will exit the course empowered with the rhetorical skills that will lead to a unified philosophy of life, producing responsible citizen-orators for tomorrow.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To give proper credit, I probably should acknowledge my debt to almost everyone I have read or worked with. However, two valuable influences on my work (their combined presence is felt in these pages almost more than mine) are John Gage and Lawrence Green. I hope my adaptations of their valuable insights have not misrepresented their intentions. I am also deeply grateful for the support and advice of my colleagues: Janet Atwill, Ann Dobyns, Michael Keene, and Don Cox come immediately to mind. Their encouragement was a constant inspiration to me. I also must thank my editors: Lucy Rosendahl, who was willing to take a chance on a different kind of text; Linda Buchanan Allen, who helped me revise this text for a broader audience; Constance Rajala, who picked up the gauntlet at a crucial time; and Steven Pisano, who guided the book through production. I am also deeply indebted to my reviewers, Chris Anson, University of Minnesota; Lester Faigley, University of Texas at Austin; Ruth Greenberg, Jefferson County Community College; Janice Hays, University of Colorado; David Lindstrom, Colorado State University; Susan Peck McDonald, University of California at San Diego; Kim Moreland, The George Washington University; Joan Mullin, University of Toledo; Christina Murphy, Texas Christian University; Mary Murray, Hobart and William Smith College; Jeff Schiff, Columbia College; Marie Secor, Penn State; John Shea, Loyola University; Dene Kay Thomas, University of Idaho; and Edward White, California State University at San Bernadino. Their insightful readings, suggestions, and encouragement inspired me to follow through with a disciplined eye.

I also must acknowledge the help of several graduate students and instructors who have taught parts of this book to their classes and offered valuable suggestions. It is due to teachers as bright, dedicated, and enthusiastic as they that this book came into being.

L. Bensel-Meyers

Contents

Preface xiii

UNIT ONE

CHAPTER 1	Introduction to College Writing	3
Writing as Reasoning	4	
<i>Discovering What Others Think</i>	5	
<i>The Rhetorical Situation</i>	7	
The Composing Process	8	
<i>Knowing When to Write</i>	11	
<i>Invention: Reading and Listening</i>	12	
<i>Drafting: Arranging Ideas into a Thesis Statement</i>	14	
<i>Revision: Shifting to Reader-Based Prose</i>	15	
<i>Editing: Delivering Your Argument</i>	16	
Writing in the Different Disciplines	16	
 CHAPTER 2	 Reasoning with Language	 19
Critical Reading: Evaluating Reasons	21	
<i>Reading with a Pencil</i>	23	
<i>The Reading Notebook</i>	24	
Analyze: Take Notes, Paraphrase, Summarize	24	
Critical Discussion: Synthesis and Evaluation	26	
"Examsmanship and the Liberal Arts: A Study in Educational Epistemology," William Perry, Jr	28	
<i>Questions for a Critical Rereading</i>	37	
<i>Possible Issues for Writing</i>	37	
"Concepts We Live By," George Lakoff and Mark Johnson	39	
<i>Questions for a Critical Rereading</i>	43	
<i>Possible Issues for Writing</i>	44	
"Sexism in English: A 1990s Update," Alleen Pace Nilsen	46	
<i>Questions for a Critical Rereading</i>	55	
<i>Possible Issues for Writing</i>	56	
<i>Writing Your Essay</i>	57	
The Working Sentence Outline	58	

UNIT TWO

CHAPTER 3	Discovering Your Argument	63
Recognizing Your Audience	68	
<i>Persuasive Writing</i>	68	
<i>Expository Writing</i>	69	
Recognizing the Issues	70	
Discovering Your Stance	73	
 CHAPTER 4	 Reasoning About Political Science	 75
"On Things for Which Princes Are Praised or Blamed," Niccolo Machiavelli	80	
<i>Questions for a Critical Rereading</i>	86	
<i>Possible Issues for Writing</i>	87	
"Letter from Birmingham Jail," Martin Luther King, Jr.	88	
<i>Questions for a Critical Rereading</i>	101	
<i>Possible Issues for Writing</i>	101	
"University of California Regents v. Bakke," Associate Justice Lewis F. Powell, Jr.	103	
<i>Questions for a Critical Rereading</i>	108	
<i>Possible Issues for Writing</i>	109	
<i>Writing Your Essay</i>	110	
Review: Writing to Audience and Issue	110	
Using Your Draft to Discover Your Stance	111	
Revising Your Draft: Critical Reading and Peer Response	112	
Revision Checklist	113	

UNIT THREE

CHAPTER 5	Creating a Logical Thesis Statement	117
Review: The Reasoning Process of Political Science	117	
Creating Thesis Statements from Your Reading	118	
Examining the Argument Behind the Logical Thesis	119	
Testing the Logic Behind Your Thesis	120	
<i>Inductive Reasoning</i>	121	
<i>Deductive Reasoning</i>	122	
<i>Rhetorical Syllogisms and Enthymemes</i>	124	
<i>Testing Assumptions</i>	125	
Creating Your Own Logical Thesis Statement	127	

CHAPTER 6	Reasoning About Science	129
How the Questions Differ from Discipline to Discipline		129
How the Information Differs from Discipline to Discipline		131
Scientific Reasoning		133
“A Study in Human Ecology: The Conflict Between the California Indian and White Civilization,” Sherburne F. Cook		135
<i>Questions for a Critical Rereading</i>		138
<i>Possible Issues for Writing</i>		139
“Nonmoral Nature,” Stephen Jay Gould		140
<i>Questions for a Critical Rereading</i>		148
<i>Possible Issues for Writing</i>		149
“The Essential Tension: Tradition and Innovation in Scientific Research,” Thomas S. Kuhn		150
<i>Questions for a Critical Rereading</i>		161
<i>Possible Issues for Writing</i>		161
<i>Writing Your Essay</i>		162
Recognizing Assumptions in Class Discussion		162
When “Winning an Argument” Is Losing		163

UNIT FOUR

CHAPTER 7	The Thesis and Logical Structure	167
How the Enthymemic Thesis Predicts Logical Structure		167
Introductions: Starting on a Point of Agreement		171
Conclusions: Asserting Your Thesis		172
The Body: “Earning” the Right to Assert Yourself		173
 CHAPTER 8	 Reasoning About Psychology	 175
Using Questions and Information in Psychology		175
Using Sentence Outlines to Read		177
“ <i>What Is Man?</i> ” B. F. Skinner		179
<i>Questions for a Critical Rereading</i>		196
<i>Possible Issues for Writing</i>		198
“ <i>Silence</i> ,” Mary F. Belenky, Blythe DeVicker Clinchy, Nancy Rule Goldberger, and Jill Mattuck Tarrule		199
<i>Questions for a Critical Rereading</i>		208
<i>Possible Issues for Writing</i>		209
<i>Writing Your Essay</i>		209
Using the Enthymeme and Logical Outline to Write		210

UNIT FIVE

CHAPTER 9 Revising the Structure of Your Essay 213

- Arrangement: The Ordering of Your Evidence 213
- Writing an Exploratory Draft 213
- Revising the Logical Structure 217
- Revising to Accommodate Your Audience 217

CHAPTER 10 Reasoning About History and Economics 221

- Separating the Historian from the Economist 222
- Nonhistorical Economics 223
- Implications for Policy 223
- Reading Consequence Arguments Critically 224
- "The Trojans Take the Wooden Horse Within Their Walls," Barbara W. Tuchman 225**
 - Questions for a Critical Rereading 236*
 - Possible Issues for Writing 237*
- "Economic Possibilities for Our Grandchildren," John Maynard Keynes 238**
 - Questions for a Critical Rereading 246*
 - Possible Issues for Writing 246*
- "What Economics Can Do for You," Leonard Silk 248**
 - Questions for a Critical Rereading 254*
 - Possible Issues for Writing 255*
 - Writing Your Essay 255*
- Recognizing Your Real Issue 256
- Revising to Address Different Audiences 258

UNIT SIX

CHAPTER 11 Communicating Abstract Ideas Clearly 263

- Deduction and Abstract Reasoning 263
- Denotation and Connotation 265
 - Denotation 265*
 - Connotation 266*
- Examples and Hidden Assumptions 267
- Metaphors, Analogies, and Allegories 268
 - Metaphor 269*
 - Analogy 270*
 - Allegory 270*

CHAPTER 12	Reasoning About Philosophy	273
Reasoning About Questions of Value	274	
Issues and Definitions of Value	274	
“The Allegory of the Cave,” Plato	276	
<i>Questions for a Critical Rereading</i>	282	
<i>Possible Issues for Writing</i>	282	
“The Myth of Sisyphus,” Albert Camus	284	
<i>Questions for a Critical Rereading</i>	287	
<i>Possible Issues for Writing</i>	287	
“Expressiveness,” Susanne K. Langer	289	
<i>Questions for a Critical Rereading</i>	296	
<i>Possible Issues for Writing</i>	297	
<i>Writing Your Essay</i>	298	
When the Style Is the Argument	299	
Revising Your Style to Discover Your Stance	300	

UNIT SEVEN

CHAPTER 13	Finding a Style with Voice, Tone, and Meaning	303
Style and Meaning	304	
<i>Word Choice</i>	304	
<i>Word Order</i>	305	
<i>Sentence Rhythm</i>	307	
Audience and Voice	308	
Subject and Tone	310	
<i>Sincere Emotional Appeals</i>	311	
<i>Irony and Satire</i>	312	
“A Modest Proposal,” Jonathan Swift	313	
CHAPTER 14	Reasoning About Literature	321
Literary Voices	322	
<i>The Voice of Characters, Speakers, and Narrators</i>	323	
<i>The Voice of the Author</i>	326	
<i>The Voice of the Critic</i>	327	
“To His Coy Mistress,” Andrew Marvell	329	
<i>Questions for a Critical Rereading</i>	330	
<i>Possible Issues for Writing</i>	331	
“A Good Man Is Hard to Find,” Flannery O'Connor	332	
<i>Questions for a Critical Rereading</i>	344	
<i>Possible Issues for Writing</i>	344	

"Riders to the Sea," John Millington Synge	346
<i>Questions for a Critical Rereading</i>	355
<i>Possible Issues for Writing</i>	355
<i>Writing Your Essay</i>	356

Acknowledgments	357
Index	359

Unit One

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction to College Writing

When there is much desire to learn, there of necessity will be much arguing, much writing, many opinions; for opinion in good [people] is but knowledge in the making.

—John Milton

Writing is an act of conversation, either with others or just yourself. It is also an act of learning. Whenever you write, you discover more about what you think. Whenever you consider how others will read what you write, you learn how your opinion compares with theirs. You also discover how you can make a difference in what others think and say. Good writers don't know everything about their subject, but they have listened well enough to enter into conversation with others about it. And their comments can make a difference in where the discussion will go.

All of the subjects you write about in college are matters for discussion. When you read, you learn how some authors have thought about those subjects. When you write, you make sense of what you have heard and offer your own interpretations and opinions. Everyone has a right to make his or her opinions known, even when the subject is new, for there is no one on earth who has heard or read everything that has been said about a subject. A modern rhetorician, Kenneth Burke, has well described this act of entering the conversation. Let's consider what he has to say:

You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone before. You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you, to either the embarrassment or gratification of your opponent, depending upon the quality of your ally's assistance. However, the discussion is intermina-

ble. The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress.

—*Kenneth Burke, The Philosophy of Literary Form*

The scene above may be familiar to you. If it isn't, it soon will be, for Burke describes what college writing is all about. You come late to the discussion; there is no authority to tell you what went on before you arrived; you listen until you get a sense of what the argument is about. The discussion could be about science, literature, or politics, and it has been going on as long as there have been people to listen, think, and talk. Each field of college study can be defined by the nature of its conversation. No one remembers when we began talking about the world around us, but we continue to do so. We all have “come late” and none of us has all the answers, but we still put in our oar to help move the discussion along.

In college, you put in your oar when you write essays to make sense of the textbooks you read and the classes you attend, for these are where academic discussions take place. But most importantly, you write essays to evaluate what others have said, to contribute your opinions to the discussion. College writing is rhetoric: the use of words to reason persuasively about something we are investigating, perhaps even disputing. The subjects you study in college are all founded on rhetoric. They are the result of what has gone on in the discussion before you arrived.

Consider how historians have developed what we know about World War II. Although we look to them as the experts, they, like us, have arrived after the discussion has begun of what happened and why. Even those who were in the war cannot know all the decisions that were made or what precipitated them. The knowledge they have is based on multiple, often contradictory, personal accounts and partially recovered political documents. Even if they had all the documentation they needed, they would have to do something with it, reason about it in some way. So, they develop theories—some more plausible than others—which help us interpret what went on. What we need to learn from these historians is not when the war occurred or even who fought whom; we can find this information easily on our own. What the historians can teach us is how they have reasoned about the “when” and “who” to explain “why” the war happened at all.

If we listen in on the discussions historians (or philosophers or scientists) have, we will recognize how their disputes (sometimes friendly, sometimes not) result from different ways of reasoning about incomplete evidence. Understanding the nature of their conversations—the questions asked, the examples given, the answers proposed—helps us to stay afloat in the linguistic confusion. Once we have observed the currents of their arguments, we can plunge our oar in and direct our own course to wherever we want this knowledge to take us.

WRITING AS REASONING

Rhetoric—that in the texts we read, in the classes we attend, and in the essays we write—dictates what we know. Concrete evidence, facts, accepted beliefs, mean nothing unless we can do something with them. A gap in the fossil record may mean we know nothing or it may mean a natural disaster had extinguished all life for a