

Prompt

LESSON RA.1 The Rhetorical Analysis Prompt

Eyes on the Exam

Exam readers will evaluate your rhetorical analysis essays based on how effectively you respond to the specific tasks required in the prompt.

LEARN

The goal of the Rhetorical Analysis Free-Response Question is to demonstrate your understanding of the choices a writer or speaker makes in a given situation and to express that understanding in a well-developed essay.

Following is a rhetorical analysis prompt modeled on the one you will need to respond to in the free-response section of the exam.

The first paragraph of the prompt provides important **background** information. The final sentence of that paragraph also contains **important directions** explaining the task. The **task** (underlined below) contains key words, such as *read*, *analyze*, and *write*. It also provides a focus point, narrowing the subject. The final part of the task will always include one of the following phrases: *convey a message* (as in the prompt below), *develop an argument*, or *achieve a purpose*.

The second paragraph contains more **specific directions** for writing and lets you know what the exam readers will be expecting to see. The passage for analysis follows those bulleted directions. (The parts are labeled in the example below, but they are not labeled on the exam.)

[Background]

The Statue of Liberty was officially unveiled in New York on October 28, 1886, and quickly came to symbolize freedom and the American Dream. In preparation for its centennial (100-year) celebration, the statue underwent a two-year restoration from 1984–1986. On the evening of July 3, 1986, then U.S. President Ronald Reagan delivered remarks at the base of the statue that were broadcast across the nation. At the end of his remarks, he turned on the floodlights that illuminated the statue's golden torch. [Task] After reading President Reagan's speech, write a well-developed essay in which you analyze how President Reagan makes rhetorical choices to convey his message about American values.

The Practice section is based consistently on a second prompt.

Write extends the practice into composition.

KEY POINT: Adding labels or notes can help you remember to connect the rhetorical choices to the rhetorical situation when you begin planning and writing.

PRACTICE

Read the following prompt based on a speech by former President Barack Obama. Note that this prompt uses the phrase *achieve his purpose* rather than *convey his message* as in the Reagan prompt. Label the components of the rhetorical situation: **S** for speaker, **A** for Audience, **C** for Context, **E** for Exigence, and **M** for Message. You will read excerpts from the speech in the next lesson.

On May 19, 2013, then President Barack Obama delivered a commencement speech to the graduating class of Morehouse College, an all-male historically Black college in Atlanta, Georgia, established in 1867. Read the excerpt of the speech carefully and analyze how President Obama makes rhetorical choices to achieve his purpose of inspiring the graduates.

WRITE

Answer the following questions related to the different elements of the rhetorical situation to recall additional background information you already know about Obama.

Eyes on the Exam

ties the lesson to the exam.

The Learn section provides direct, modeled instruction based consistently on one prompt.

The Key Point focuses on the most important takeaway.

Linked resources provide additional information or perspective.

What's the Point? engages student metacognition for enhanced learning.

Frequent Team Up activities encourage collaborative learning.

Watch [this video](http://tinyurl.com/y58midwbd) from the Jamestown University Writing Center. It explains the rhetorical situation from the point of view of the writer instead of the reader and may help you understand rhetorical choices.

What's the Point? In one sentence, explain how this lesson can help you on the AP English Language and Composition exam.

TEAM UP

Work in small groups as your teacher directs. Each group should collect a few text messages (they have sent or received (ensuring privacy and appropriateness)). These messages can be real or created for the purpose of this exercise. Then discuss the following:

- The intended audience of the message.
- The purpose of the message (inform, persuade, entertain, for example).
- The context in which the message was sent (time, location, relationship between sender and receiver).
- How the message might be interpreted differently if any of these elements were changed.

Each group should then present one of their text messages and their analysis to the class, explaining how the rhetorical situation influenced the content and style of the text message.