

As you settle in, consider these questions:

- What kinds of writing assignments do you use in your courses?
- What are the most pressing challenges that you face in students' writing?



Structuring Reading and Writing Assignments to Improve Critical Thinking Skills

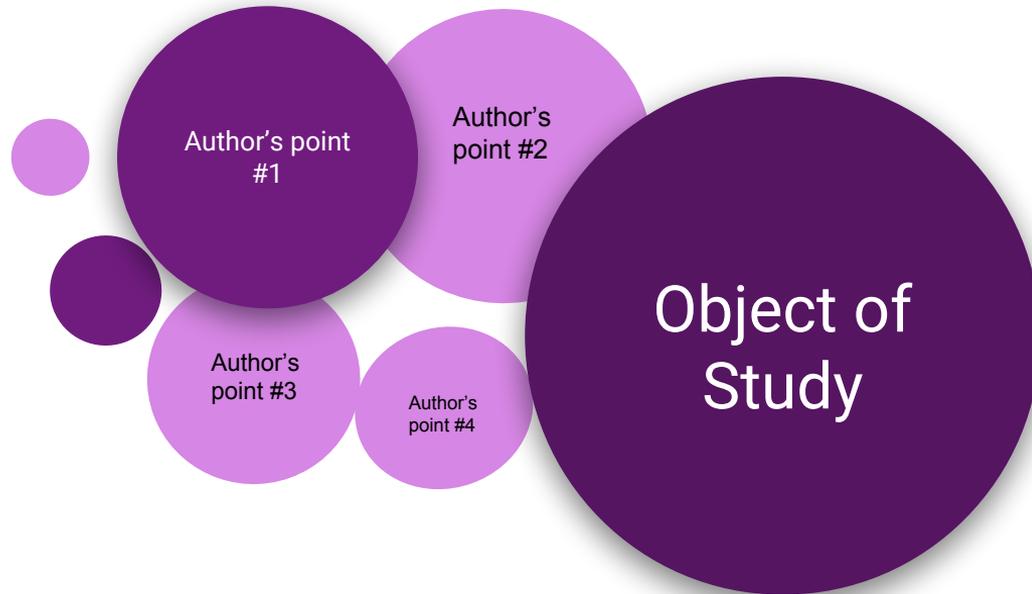
Sharon Doetsch-Kidder, PhD

Laurie Miller, MA

Aimee Weinstein, DA



When Students Summarize



What do we mean by “rhetorical elements”?

- Building blocks of writing
- Common thought-moves that are part of writing
- Usually presented in academic writing
- Often not presented in non-academic writing
- Concepts that help us understand texts as created by a writer for a particular reason for a particular audience

Why Use the Rhetorical Elements Model?

- A focus on Rhetorical Elements allows students to develop a pattern of analysis that is effective and reliable
- They can understand texts as created by a writer for a particular reason for a particular audience
- Then they write a summary that focuses on creation of text not just content - gaining greater insights, so the summary is more interesting and effective

Six Common Rhetorical Elements

<p>*exigence What is the problem, challenge, or issue that started the authors' project? Look for terms of contrast or negation (e.g. <i>however, despite, nevertheless, no, none, not</i>) and terms like <i>problem</i> or <i>concern</i>.</p>	<p>*purpose What is the goal of the text? In other words, what are the authors trying to do with their project? Look for terms such as <i>aim, goal, focus, reason for, or hope</i>.</p>	<p>*object of study What is the subject that the authors are studying? Look for a key concept that shows up in the abstract, the introduction, the conclusion, and maybe the title.</p>
<p>*methodology What research methods were used by the authors to answer their driving questions? Look for a methods section or verbs like <i>conduct, study, gather, select, survey, interview, or observe</i>.</p>	<p>*new offering Where does this source indicate new ideas or conclusions resulting from the project? Look for terms such as <i>This suggests..., These results mean..., One way to interpret these findings...</i></p>	<p>*relevance What do the authors suggest is the significance of their work to the field? Look in the discussion, conclusion, or implications section for terms that indicate future possibility, like <i>can/could, may, should, or will</i>.</p>

Academic Articles: Reading for EAP 508 (max. 2 hours)

1. **What is your purpose?** (annotating for EAP)
2. Read first *without marking anything*: The title, author, publication name, abstract, introduction, and conclusion. (max. 10 min.)
3. Read again *without marking anything*: abstract, introduction, the first (and maybe last) sentence of every paragraph, the discussion, and the conclusion. (max. 30 min.)
4. Read and make a comment where you find the rhetorical elements. (max. 10 min.)
5. Notice and underline language clues for the rhetorical elements in their respective colors. Make specific comments on the language clues helping you notice the elements. (max. 20 min.)
6. Read again, only looking up words that are used frequently. (max. 30 min.)

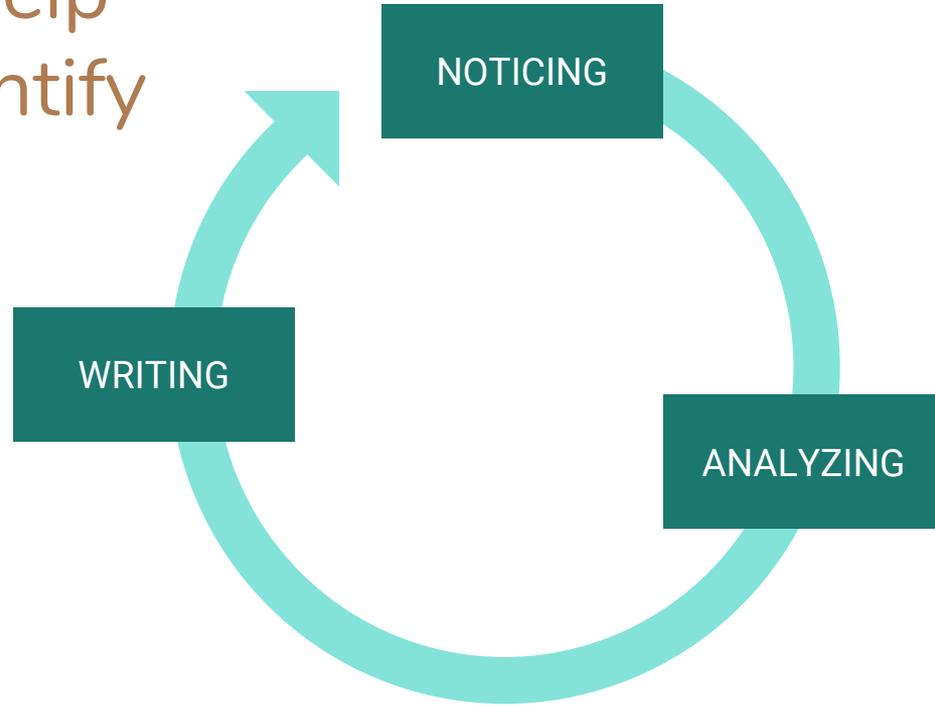
Academic Articles: How do you read them?

1. **What is your purpose?** (preparing for class discussion)
2. Read first *without marking anything*: The title, author, publication name, abstract, introduction, headings, and conclusion. (max. 10 min.)
3. Read again *without marking anything*: abstract, introduction, headings, the first (and maybe last) sentence of every paragraph, the discussion, and the conclusion. (max. 20 min.)
4. Read and make a note where you find the rhetorical elements. (max. 10 min.)
5. Read again, only looking up words that are used frequently. (max. 30 min.)
6. Choose the main key concept(s).
7. Highlight key terms for each concept (skim the article once per concept, so you focus on highlighting one concept at a time). (max. 20 min.)
8. *At the top of the article*: write 1-2 notes summarizing the main points you want to remember from the article AND 1-2 questions about the article that you could ask in class (NOT content-focused questions). (max. 10 min.)
9. *Before class*: review your notes and questions, rhetorical elements, and key concepts. (max. 20 min.)



How Does This Relate to
Critical Thinking???

Scaffold to Help Students Identify Rhetorical Elements



Some approaches to teaching Rhetorical Elements

Questions: What is this text about? What motivated the writer...

Annotate for Rhetorical Elements & their language clues

Show Professor Annotations & Reflect/
self-grade

Send us an email and we can share a folder of materials with you

Now What About Your Assignments and Readings??

Take some time to think about what kind of reading and writing students do in your courses.

- What are the rhetorical elements of the texts that you assign students to read?
- What are the rhetorical elements that you want to see in students' writing?

Reflections

Thank you!

Sharon Doetsch-Kidder - sdoetsch@gmu.edu

Laurie Miller - lmiller@gmu.edu

Aimee Weinstein - aweinste@gmu.edu