

Analyzing and Synthesizing Ideas

Deadlines:

Wednesday, November 12: thesis statement and rough draft due for conferences

Wednesday, November 19: Full draft due for peer review

Monday, November 24: Final draft due

Length: 1750-2000 words

Value: 25% of final grade

Throughout this semester, you've done several different types of analysis. We started by analyzing advertisements in order to explore the rhetorical strategies they used to persuade specific audiences to buy their products. We then moved on to a more subtle analysis of several persuasive texts. In both cases, you were trying to explain how these images/texts worked (or didn't work) by analyzing the authors' rhetorical strategies. In your textual analysis, your purpose was to analyze the rhetorical strategies the author used to support his or her point, but you were not supposed to say whether you agreed or disagreed with the author's opinions.

In this final project, you will choose two of the texts that we've been working with this semester, **analyze** them, and then **synthesize** and argue **your own opinion** on their topic. As it says on page 217 of your *A & B* text, synthesis involves "[d]istilling main points from more than one text, seeing connections among texts, commenting on meaningful relationships, and showing how the texts have influenced your own thinking on a question."

To start, you'll summarize, analyze and form judgments about the strengths and weaknesses of the texts that you're analyzing. Once you fully understand the authors' opinions, you can begin to form your own. Your job is not to find the middle ground between the two sources, but to argue for your own reasoned position on the issue, thus adding a new voice to the conversation. (If you find that you're in strong agreement with one of the texts, ask yourself how you can develop that line of thought to make it more your own.) As it says in your *A & B* text, this **synthesis** "should be the fruit of your intellectual work, a perspective that you have come to after reading the ideas of other writers" (233). Ask yourself what "risky, surprising, or new views...can [I] bring to [my] readers" (233)? In this case, your readers are your classmates, professor, and those who are interested in the same problem that your texts are exploring.

Also, as your *A & B* text says, the synthesis of ideas or texts often begins with a question (221-222). While you may come up with your own specific synthesis question, the following series of questions will be a good starting point for your essay: What ideas do these two texts share? Where do their authors' ideas clash? What is my position on the issue that the two texts address?

Here are the potential texts that you can pair up for your analysis and synthesis essay*:

- "Buy This 24-Year-Old And Get All His Friends Absolutely Free: We Are The Product" from Jean Kilbourne's *Can't Buy My Love*
- "Please, Please, You're Driving Me Wild: Falling In Love With Food" from Jean Kilbourne's *Can't Buy My Love*
- *A & B* Chapter 6, "Analyzing Images"

- “How To Read Like A Writer” by Mike Bunn
- “Reading, Stealing, and Writing Like a Writer” by Wendy Bishop
- *A & B* Chapter 4 “Thinking Rhetorically about Style and Document Design”
- “How Language Transformed Humanity” by Mark Pagel
- “American ‘multilingualism’: A national tragedy” by Franklin Raff
- “‘English Only’ Laws Divide and Demean” by Warren J. Blumenfeld
- “The Right to Understand” by Sandra Fisher-Martins
- “Why This Bilingual Education Ban Should Have Repealed Long Ago” by Phillip Carter

As you can see, there are some texts in this list that might naturally complement one another, such as the opinion pieces on language by Raff and Blumenfeld, or the essays on style by Bunn and Bishop. However, you might also consider a more experimental pairing if you see interesting connections between any two texts above. For example, what would advertising expert Jean Kilbourne say about Franklin Raff’s analysis of the bilingual Toyota ad? What’s your opinion of advertising that uses more than one language to appeal to its target audience?

*Likewise, if you can think of interesting connections between one of the texts above and another text that we’ve used this semester (or even an ad) that isn’t on this list, feel free to ask if you can use it. The goal here is to take two examples of rhetoric, put them into conversation with one another, and then form your own opinions about their topic.

Grading Criteria:

- Does your introduction present the main idea or question you plan to focus on?
- Do you effectively summarize the texts?
- Is your thesis clear, specific, and easily identifiable?
- Analytical Section:
 - Is your analysis clear?
 - Does it show that you have walled in the complexity of your texts?
 - Does it map out and explain a number of important similarities and differences in your texts?
 - Does it include relevant points about the rhetorical features of the text?
- Synthesis Section:
 - Is it clear how the texts and their authors have influenced your own thinking on the problem?
 - Does your synthesis show your informed, independent thinking?
 - Do you convey something that is new, surprising, or somehow risky/arguable?
 - Is your style and tone appropriate for your purpose? Is the essay well-written, grammatically and mechanically?
- Do you show an understanding of paraphrasing, quoting, and summarizing?
- Have you cited sources appropriately using MLA style?