

WGS.101. RUBRIC FOR REVISIONS OF ESSAY 1

I. CONTENT

Thesis statement(s)

Superior: Two theses precisely identify four key rhetorical strategies for each text in a logical order, usually starting with the chronologically earlier text. The order of the strategies forecasts the order in which the essay discusses them. Thesis statements appear at the end of the first paragraph.

Adequate: The theses identify four distinct rhetorical strategies for each text, describing the kind of diction, tone, figurative language, syntax, or other. The theses appear at the end of the first paragraph; the order of strategies forecasts the order of their appearance in the essay.

Needs work: The theses identify strategies without accuracy, identify strategies not supported later in the text, or identify fewer than four strategies. General statements give little sense of the strategies or forecast a different order than the one the essay follows.

Rhetorical strategies

Superior: The essay identifies significant strategies in the texts. Several examples of each strategy support the claim that they hold significance. The sentences quoted for separate strategies draw on a range of material, representing many sections of the texts.

Adequate: The essay discusses strategies that appear mainly in one part of the text, without acknowledging variation in other parts. Several examples of each strategy appear.

Needs work: The essay forces a comparison or contrast by focusing on the same strategies in two texts, not strategies that better characterize each text. The essay uses incorrect terms, (“parody” vs. “imitate”) or terms that do not match the later discussion.

“Unpacking” quotations

Superior: Essay re-quotes the key words or phrases from quotations exemplifying strategies, explicitly naming the words’ significance (e.g., their connotations) to strengthen the analysis.

Adequate: Essay explicitly identifies the significant sections of quotations, often re-quoting them parenthetically.

Needs work: Essay quotes long sections without identifying key words or phrases and their significance.

II. STRUCTURE

Title

Superior: The title captures the main ideas of the analysis; a reader could identify the essay that belongs with the title if the two were separated.

Adequate: The title includes the names of the authors and either the titles of the texts or other important elements. A subtitle may appear after a colon.

Needs work: The title fails to specify the activists and texts; the title might fit many essays.

Introduction

Superior: The first paragraph engages readers by providing context, including relevant information in introducing the activists, naming their texts with dates and locations, and ending with two thesis statements. The paragraph clearly and concisely announces the focus of the essay.

Adequate: The first paragraph provides context, introduces the activists and their texts with dates and locations, and ends with two thesis statements. This paragraph appears on the first page. No extraneous material appears.

Needs work: The paragraph provides only some of these elements: context (U.S. women's movement), names of two activists, titles of texts, dates and locations for delivery or publication, and two thesis statements. The paragraph includes information that stays undeveloped, seems secondary to the main focus, or remains general.

Topic sentences

Superior: The first sentence of each body paragraph names the rhetorical device discussed in that paragraph, putting the main idea in the main clause vs. in a dependent clause or prepositional phrase. The topic sentence does not claim any effect on an audience.

Adequate: The first sentence of each body paragraph names the rhetorical device discussed in the paragraph.

Needs work: The first sentence fails to clearly specify a rhetorical device or names more than one, leaving readers uncertain about the main idea of the paragraph.

Order of strategies

Superior: More general strategies (elevated diction or serious tone) appear before more specific features, such as repetition, parallel structure, or figurative language. Analysis of the strategies conveys an accurate, fairly complete characterization of the text and its appeals.

Adequate: The analysis covers strategies for one text before a later text (unless a reason explains the departure from chronological order). Discussions of related strategies (diction and tone or repetition) appear in sequence, building on the previous analysis.

Needs work: Strategies present throughout a text (diction, tone) receive attention after those that occur in only one or a few spots. Strategies that seem less significant appear, but major ones (repetition of key terms or phrases) do not appear.

Transition between texts

Superior: A phrase highlighting a similar or different strategy or the time between texts (or other relevant point) signals a switch between texts. This phrase works smoothly at the start of the topic sentence.

Adequate: A long or less graceful transition signals the change to the second text.

Needs work: No transition appears, or one takes the place of a topic sentence. In the former case, the two discussions of texts appear “stacked,” without relation to each other. In the latter case, the main topic of the paragraph stays unclear.

Conclusion

Superior: The last paragraph gracefully summarizes the key rhetorical strategies discussed earlier and synthesizes them, considering whether they might work well today OR why the authors/speakers might have used them for the occasion, purpose, audience, or other.

Adequate: The last paragraph reminds readers of the key rhetorical strategies discussed, summarizing them and aiming to synthesize them with a point about relevance of the strategies today or for the occasion, purpose, audience, or other factors in the text’s early appearance.

Needs work: The last paragraph either fails to name all the key strategies, adds new ones, or changes the strategies’ names. Instead of synthesizing the points in the essay, the paragraph may praise the texts or their authors.

III. DISCOURSE

Syntax

Superior: Sentences present key ideas clearly, often moving from familiar to new information. Main ideas appear in main clauses (see below). Sentences vary in length and structure (see below).

Adequate: Key ideas appear in main clauses (subject-verb-object) vs. dependent clauses. Sentences vary in length from short to long and in structure from simple to complex (with a dependent clause), compound (more than one independent clause), and complex-compound.

Needs work: Long sentences “bury” key ideas in dependent clauses; meanings seem unclear; repetition of ideas occurs with minimal new content.

Active verbs vs. “to be” or passive voice

Superior: Precise active verbs appear with little, if any, repetition.

Adequate: Most verbs appear in the active voice; few “is verb-ing” phrases appear.

Needs work: The same or similar verbs appear multiple times; awkward or “to be” verbs appear frequently.

Precise terms

Superior: Exact names identify strategies, such as “elevated, political and philosophical diction” or “creative and apt metaphors.”

Adequate: Clear terms appear: “colloquial diction,” metaphor,” “rhetorical question,” “philosophical tone,” etc. Discussion acknowledges shifts in tone, diction, references, etc.

Needs work: Word choice is imprecise, incorrect, or too informal (i.e., “parody” for “imitate,” made-up words, words with “-ize” or “-ate” added to nouns when simpler verbs exist, slang).

Varied vocabulary

Superior: Exact terms express nuanced ideas; “serious tone” could mean “philosophical” or “existential” one.

Adequate: Terminology introduced in class appears in essay (“reciprocity argument,” “leveling,” “women’s rights,” etc.) Some variation occurs (vs. using “serious tone” four times).

Needs work: Repetition of word choice or limited vocabulary (e.g., “deal with” to mean multiple verbs, such as “anticipate opposition” or “refute”). Contractions appear.

*In addition, avoid claiming that rhetorical strategies or texts “persuaded,” “made the audience agree,” “forced the audience to [verb],” etc.

**We expect correct mechanics (capitalization, grammar, and punctuation). Please proofread.

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WGS.101 Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies
Spring 2023

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