

The California State University  
Task Force on Expository Reading and Writing

EXPOSITORY READING AND WRITING COURSE

The Rhetoric of the Op-Ed Page:  
Ethos, Logos, and Pathos

STUDENT VERSION 1.1

In this assignment sequence you will learn how to use Aristotle's concepts of *ethos*, *logos*, and *pathos* to analyze editorials and opinion pieces. You will read an opinion piece about scientific studies of animal behavior, and learn how to write a letter to the editor of a newspaper.

## Prereading

### *Getting Ready to Read*

This module focuses on ways to persuade. Your teacher will give you an opportunity to define the term "persuade".

Then read "Three Ways to Persuade" by John Edlund. When you finish the article, do the activity below assigned by your teacher.

**Activity 1:** Think of something you tried to persuade a parent, a teacher, or a friend to do or believe. It could be to buy or pay for something, to change a due date or a grade, to change a rule or decision, to go somewhere, or some other issue. What kinds of arguments did you use? Did you use logic? Did you use evidence to support your request? Did you try to present your own character in a way that would make your case more believable? Did you try to engage the emotions of your audience? **Write a short description of your efforts to persuade your audience in this case.**

**Activity 2:** In a small group, discuss the strategies your friends use when they are trying to borrow a car, go to a concert, buy new clothes, or achieve some other desire. Pick a situation and write a short skit showing these persuasive strategies in action. Each skit should employ logical, emotional, and ethical persuasion. Rehearse and perform your skit for the class.

After you have completed one of the activities above, discuss the following questions:

1. Do people use Aristotle's concepts of *ethos*, *logos*, and *pathos* everyday, without thinking about it?

2. Do these concepts apply to politics and advertising, as well as person-to-person persuasion?
3. Are there other means of persuasion that Aristotle didn't discuss?

### ***Surveying the Text***

Look at the article “A Change of Heart about Animals.” Think about the following questions:

1. Where and when was this article published?
2. Who wrote the article? Do you know anything about this writer? (Hint: Look at the end of the article.) How could you find out more?
3. What is the subtitle of the article? What does that tell you about what the article might say?
4. The article was published on the editorial page. What does that mean?

### ***Making Predictions***

As you look at the text of “A Change of Heart about Animals” answer and then discuss the following questions:

1. What does it mean to have “a change of heart”?
2. What are some common ideas or feelings about animals that people have?
3. What kinds of things might cause someone to change his or her ideas or feelings about animals?
4. What are some groups of people who have strong feelings about how animals are treated? What do you know about them? What do they usually believe?
5. What is a vegetarian or a vegan? Do you know anyone who is a vegetarian? What does he or she think about eating animals?

6. What do you know about the author? Do you think he might be a vegetarian?
7. The first paragraph mentions breakthroughs in biotechnology and nanotechnology. Do you think this article is about those things? Why or why not?
8. This article appeared in a newspaper. What does that mean about the audience? Is this an article for scientists?
9. What do you think is the purpose of this article? Does the writer want us to change our minds about something?
10. Will article be negative or positive in relation to the topic? Why so?
11. What argument about the topic might it present? What makes you think that?
12. Turn the title into a question [or questions] to answer after you have read the text.

### ***Introducing Vocabulary***

When you read “A Change of Heart about Animals,” you may need to know the following words and phrases to understand the text:

humane and inhumane

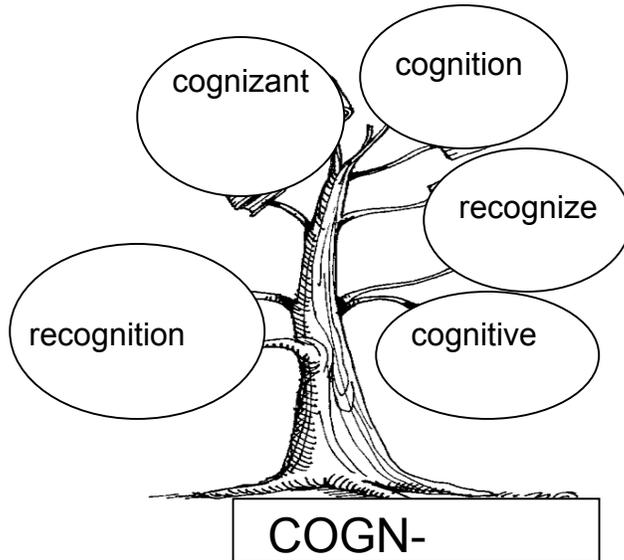
cognitive

genetically wired

empathy

Think about words that you know that sound similar to these and may be related. For example, “humane” is related to “human,” and “empathy” is related to the Greek word *pathos* in “Three Ways to Persuade.”

Create a word tree like this one based upon a root of a word from the text or one listed above.



## Reading

### *First Reading*

Now you are ready to read Jeremy Rifkin’s “A Change of Heart about Animals.” For the first time through, you should read to understand the text. Read as if you trust Rifkin and focus on what he is trying to say. Try to see if the predictions you made about the text are true. Is the article about what you thought it would be about? Does Rifkin say what you thought he would say? When you have finished reading, answer the following questions:

1. What predictions turned out to be true?
2. What surprised you?
3. What does Jeremy Rifkin want us to believe?
4. What are some of the things that people believe humans can do that animals can’t do? How does Rifkin challenge these beliefs?

5. What authorities does Rifkin use to support his case?
6. What action does Rifkin want us to take?
7. How does Rifkin organize his essay? Is it an effective organization?

### ***Looking Closely at Language***

Creating a visual representation of your “word”, study its origin or history and be prepared to share it (and its synonyms, antonyms) with the class. Some ideas may be for you to construct a tree, a chart or table from activity one.

### ***Rereading the Text***

Your second reading should be to question the text, reading against the grain and playing the disbelieving or doubting game. As you read, look for claims and assertions made by Rifkin. Does he back them up? Do you agree with them?

As you read,

- Underline or highlight the thesis and major claims or assertions made in the article in one color (or with a double underline).
- Underline the evidence in support of the claims and assertions in another color (or a single underline).
- Write your comments and questions in the margins.

After reading the article again, answer the following questions:

1. What is the thesis of this article?
2. Are there any claims made by Rifkin that you disagree with? What are they?
3. Are there any claims that lack support?

## Analyzing Stylistic Choices

### Loaded Words: Using Denotation and Connotation

**Denotation:** The basic definition of the word

**Connotation:** The emotional impact of the word. Some words have a positive connotation. They evoke positive emotional responses from the reader. Other words have a negative connotation. They evoke negative emotional responses from the reader.

**Part A Directions:** Read each list of words below. Each word has a different connotation, but has the same general denotation. 1) Label each word as either + (positive connotation), - (negative connotation), or N (neutral connotation). 2) Write the general denotation/neutral definition on the line provided. 3) Then, number the words in each group from most positive connotation to most negative connotation.

<p><b>Example:</b></p> <p>3. thin N            4. bony -            1. slim +            5. anorexic -            2. slender +</p> <p>_____ <u>thin</u> _____ (general denotation/            neutral definition)</p>	<p>___ imprison            ___ restrict            ___ incarcerate            ___ hold            ___ secure            ___ detain            ___ lock-up            ___ confine</p> <p>_____ (general denotation/            neutral definition)</p>
<p>___ exhibition            ___ riot            ___ demonstration            ___ showcase            ___ protest            ___ disturbance</p> <p>_____ (general denotation/            neutral definition)</p>	<p>___ purveyor            ___ merchant            ___ hawker            ___ dealer            ___ salesperson</p> <p>_____ (general denotation/            neutral definition)</p>
<p>___ guerilla            ___ freedom fighter            ___ mercenary            ___ soldier            ___ terrorist</p> <p>_____ (general denotation/            neutral definition)</p>	<p>___ tight-wad            ___ frugal            ___ economical            ___ penny-wise            ___ cheap            ___ thrifty            ___ stingy</p> <p>_____ (general denotation/            neutral definition)</p>

**Part B Directions:** Reread Rifkin’s article looking for “loaded words”— words that Rifkin uses to evoke a positive or negative emotional response from the reader. List *at least five words* and explain whether the word has a positive or negative connotation. What neutral word might Rifkin have used instead that would have the same meaning but not the same emotional impact?

Rifkin’s Word	Positive/Negative Connotation	Neutral Word/General Denotation

**Part C Directions:** Answer these questions based on the Rifkin article:

1. How would you describe the style of this article? Is it formal? Informal? Academic? Scientific? Conversational?
  
2. What is the effect of giving the names of most of the animals involved in the experiments, but not the names of the scientists?
  
3. Throughout most of the article Rifkin refers to “researchers,” and “scientists,” but in paragraph 13 he directly quotes Stephen M. Sivy, “a behavioral scientist at Gettysburg College in Pennsylvania.” What is the effect of this sudden specificity?
  
4. What is the effect of all of the rhetorical questions in paragraph 15, followed by “Such questions are being raised” in the next paragraph?

## ***Considering the Structure of the Text***

Now that you have read and discussed the content of the Rifkin essay, you are ready to begin analyzing the organizational structure. First, divide the text into sections:

- Draw a line where the introduction ends. Is it after the first paragraph, or are there more introductory paragraphs?
- Divide the body of the essay into sections based on topics.
- Draw a line where the conclusion begins. Is it the last paragraph, or does it begin before that?

Now you are ready to begin a process called “Descriptive Outlining.”

- Write brief statements describing the rhetorical function and content of each paragraph or section.
  - What does each section do for the reader? What is the writer trying to accomplish?
  - What does each section say? What is the content?
- After making the descriptive outline, ask questions about organizational structure:
  - Which section is most developed?
  - Which section is least developed? Does it need more development?
  - Which section is most persuasive? Least?

From your work charting the text, what do you think is the essay’s main argument? Is it explicit, or is it implicit?

## ***Summarizing and Responding***

Use the marginal comments you made in the “Descriptive Outlining” activity to write a concise summary of the Rifkin article.

## ***Thinking Critically***

At this point the concepts of ethos, logos, and pathos come back into play. From the analysis you have done so far, you should be well-prepared to analyze the logic and support of the arguments, the character and intentions of the author, and the emotional effects of the language and the details on the reader.

### **Logical questions**

1. Locate major claims and assertions you have identified in your previous analysis and ask, “Do I agree with Rifkin’s claim that . . .?”

2. Look at support for major claims and ask “Is there any claim that appears to be weak or unsupported? Which one and why?”
3. Can you think of counter-arguments that the author doesn’t deal with?
4. Do you think Rifkin has left something out on purpose? Why or why not?

### **Ethical questions**

1. Who is Jeremy Rifkin? If you haven’t already, do an internet search to find out something about him. What is his profession? What does he usually write about? Does everybody agree with him? Do the facts about his life, his credentials, and his interests that you find make him more credible to you, or less?
2. Pick one of the studies that Rifkin mentions and try to find out more. Is Rifkin’s description of the study accurate?
3. Does Rifkin have the right background to speak with authority on this subject?
4. What does the author’s style and language tell you about him or her?
5. Do you trust this author? Do you think this author is deceptive? Why or why not?

### **Questions about emotional effects**

1. Rifkin says that Germany is encouraging farmers to give pigs human contact and toys. Does this fact have an emotional impact on the reader? If so, what triggers it? What are some other passages that have an emotional effect?
2. Rifkin calls his essay “A Change of Heart about Animals.” Does this imply that the scientific discoveries that he summarizes here should change how we *feel* about animals?
3. Does this piece affect you emotionally? What parts?

4. Do you think Rifkin is trying to manipulate your emotions? How?
  
5. Do your emotions conflict with your logical interpretation of the arguments? In what ways?

### ***Using the Words of Others***

One of the most important features of academic writing is the use of the words and ideas from written sources to support the writer’s own points. There are essentially three ways to incorporate words and ideas from sources.

- **Direct quotation:** Jeremy Rifkin says, “Studies on pigs' social behavior funded by McDonald's at Purdue University, for example, have found that they crave affection and are easily depressed if isolated or denied playtime with each other” (15).
  
- **Paraphrase:** In “A Change of Heart about Animals,” Jeremy Rifkin notes that McDonald’s has funded studies on pigs that show that they need affection and playtime with one another (15).
  
- **Summary:** In “A Change of Heart about Animals,” Jeremy Rifkin cites study after study to show that animals and humans are more alike than we think. He shows that animals feel emotions, reason, make and use tools, learn and use language, and mourn their dead. One study even shows that pigs need affection and playtime with one another, and enjoy playing with toys (15).

You also need to learn to take notes with full citation information. For print material, at a minimum you need to record the author, title, city of publication, publisher, date, and page number. The two most common documentation formats used are Modern Language Association (MLA), which is used mainly by English Departments, and the American Psychological Association format (APA). Here is the “Works Cited” format for a typical book in MLA style:

Bean, John C., Virginia A. Chappell, and Alice M. Gilliam. *Reading Rhetorically: A Reader for Writers*. New York: Longman, 2002.

Here is the bibliographic information for the article quoted above, in MLA format. The fact that it was published in a newspaper changes the format and the information a bit:

Rifkin, Jeremy. “A Change of Heart about Animals.” Editorial. *Los Angeles Times*. 1 Sept. 2003: B15.

To document a website, you need to give the author (if known), the title of the site (or a description like “Homepage” if no title is available), the date of publication or update (if known), the name of the organization that sponsors the site, the date of access, and the web address (URL) in angle brackets. For example:

*University Writing Center*. 26 June 2003. University Writing Center, Cal Poly Pomona. 26 May 2004 <<http://www.csupomona.edu/uwc/>>.

The author is unknown for the above site, and so is left out. This entry would appear in the “Works Cited” section alphabetized by “University.”

MLA style also requires “in text” documentation for every direct quotation, indirect quotation, paraphrase or summary. Many students are confused about this, believing that documentation is only necessary for direct quotations. If the author is given in the text, the page number should be given in parentheses at the end of the sentence containing the material. For example, here is a paraphrase of material from the Rifkin article. Because the author is not named in the text, the last name goes in the parentheses:

It is well established that animals can learn to use sign language. A long-term study at the Gorilla Foundation in Northern California shows that Koko, a 300-pound gorilla, can use more than 1,000 signs to communicate with her keepers and can understand several thousand English words. She also scores between 70 and 95 on human IQ tests (Rifkin 15).

An academic paper is most often a dialogue between the writer and his or her sources. If students learn to quote, paraphrase, summarize and document sources correctly, they are well on their way to becoming college students.

This short introduction presents only the basic concepts of MLA documentation. You will also need access to some kind of handbook that covers the system in more detail.

**Writing Exercise: “Quote, Paraphrase, Respond.”** Choose three passages from the Rifkin article that you might be able to use in an essay. You may want to choose passages that you strongly agree or disagree with.

- First, write each passage down as a correctly punctuated and cited direct quotation.
- Second, they paraphrase the material in their own words with the correct citation.
- Third, respond to the idea expressed in the passage by agreeing or disagreeing with it and explaining why, again with the correct citation.

## ***Reading the Assignment***

A common way to respond to an editorial is to write a letter to the editor. After all of your work with this text, you are ready to write a well-informed response to Rifkin’s ideas. Here is a preview of your writing assignment.

### **The Writing Assignment (Preview)**

After thinking about your reading, discussion and analysis of Rifkin’s article and the letters in response to it, what do you personally think about Rifkin’s point? Do you think it is true, as Rifkin says, that “many of our fellow creatures are more like us than we had ever imagined”? Do you think that we need to change the way we treat the animals around us? Or do you think that Rifkin is wrong?

**Write a letter to the editor of the newspaper expressing your viewpoint.**

## ***Getting Ready to Write***

Before you write your own letter in response to Rifkin, look at two sample letters to the editor written in response to “A Change of Heart about Animals.”

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. Bob Stevens disagrees with Jeremy Rifkin, and makes several points. Does Stevens refute Rifkin’s arguments?
2. In his first paragraph, Stevens argues that because a predator like a hawk does not feel empathy for its prey, humans should not need to feel empathy for the animals they eat, and that such feelings would be unnatural. Do you agree?
3. Stevens notes that some animals can mimic human speech, but argues that they do not understand what they are saying. What would Rifkin say to this?
4. Stevens implies that it would be a waste of resources to give toys to pigs, especially when some human children don’t have them. Do we respond logically or emotionally to this argument? Is this argument fair to Rifkin?
5. Is it true, as Stevens argues, that Rifkin wants animals to have more rights than humans?

6. Lois Frazier says that pet owners know that animals have feelings and abilities not too different from humans. Do some pet owners treat their pets like people? Is this a good thing? Why or why not?
7. Lois Frazier argues that Rifkin needs to take his argument farther and promote a vegetarian lifestyle with no animal products. Is this a reasonable conclusion to draw from Rifkin’s arguments? Do you agree with her?

Some things to note:

- A good letter to the editor is focused and concise. It should make your point, but no words should be wasted. It is sometimes best to write a longer draft and then cut out everything that is not essential.
- Newspaper editors often cut letters to fit the available space, or to make the letter more focused. You are very lucky if they publish an unedited letter.
- Some letters respond to the thesis of the editorial, either in support or disagreement, and provide further arguments or further evidence. Other letters focus on one point made by the original author and support it, question it, or refute it.
- These days most letters are emailed to the newspaper. To get a letter published in a major newspaper you have to write it very quickly and send it within a day or two of the publication date of the editorial to which you are responding.
- If the newspaper wants to publish your letter, they will normally call to get permission. They also want to know that you really are who you say you are.
- Newspapers are interested in a wide range of viewpoints from different types of citizens. If your letter is a good expression of a particular viewpoint, brings up new information or arguments, or has some particularly good phrases, you have a good chance of being published.

## ***Composing a Draft***

### **The Writing Assignment**

After thinking about your reading, discussion and analysis of Rifkin’s article and the letters in response to it, what do you personally think about Rifkin’s point? Do you think it is true, as Rifkin says, that “many of our fellow creatures are more like us than we had ever imagined”? Do you think that we need to change the way we treat the animals around us? Or do you think that Rifkin is wrong? **Write a letter to the editor of the newspaper expressing your viewpoint.**

If you like, you can start out with “Dear Editor:”

## ***Revising the Draft***

The most natural way to improve a letter to the editor is to share it with others before you send it. In partners or groups, share the drafts and give each other feedback. Listen to what others say, even people who disagree with you.

The following questions may help you think about revision:

### **Revision Guidelines for Individual Work:**

- Have I responded to the assignment?
- What is my purpose for this essay?
- What should I keep? What is most effective?
- What should I add? Where do I need more details, examples, and other evidence to support my point?
- What could I get rid of? Did I use irrelevant details? Was I repetitive?
- What should I change? Are parts of my essay confusing or contradictory? Do I need to explain my ideas more fully?
- What should I rethink? Was my position clear? Did I provide enough analysis to convince my readers?
- How is my tone? Was I too overbearing, too firm? Do I need qualifiers?
- Have I addressed differing points of view?
- Does my conclusion show the significance of my essay?

## ***Editing the Draft***

Once you are satisfied with the tone and the content, you should proofread your letter for spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors.

### **Editing Guidelines for Individual Work:**

- If possible, set your essay aside for 24 hours before rereading to find errors.
- If possible, read your essay out loud to a friend so you can hear your errors.
- Focus on individual words and sentences rather than overall meaning. Take a sheet of paper and cover everything except the line you are reading. Then touch your pencil to each word as you read.
- With the help of your teacher, figure out your own pattern of errors—the most serious and frequent errors you make.
- Only look for one type of error at a time. Then go back and look for a second type, and if necessary, a third.
- Use the dictionary to check spelling and confirm that you've chosen the right word for the context.

## ***Evaluating the Letter***

Finally, here is a scoring guide for evaluating the final product.

### **Scoring Guide for Letters to the Editor**

Four categories:

- Focus
- Word choice including use of text from the article
- Argument and support, including the use of logical, emotional and/or ethical appeals.
- Grammar and mechanics

#### 4—Superior

- The letter is tightly focused on the issue or issues raised in the editorial, article or opinion piece it responds to.
- The letter uses words effectively and efficiently and quotes key words and phrases from the article.
- The letter makes a clear point or points and provides convincing support, including logical, emotional, and/or ethical appeals.
- There are no grammatical or mechanical errors.

#### 3—Good

- The letter focuses on an issue or issues raised in the editorial, article or opinion piece it responds to.
- The letter uses words accurately and effectively.
- The letter makes a clear point or points and provides support.
- Grammatical or mechanical errors, if present, are minor and easily corrected.

#### 2—Fair

- The letter discusses an issue or issues raised in the editorial, article or opinion piece it responds to, but may be unclear or vague in focus.
- The letter is sometimes repetitive or vague in language.
- The letter does not make a clear point or does not provide support.
- Grammatical or mechanical errors inhibit communication.

#### 1—Poor

- The letter fails to clearly address an issue raised in the article.
- The letter is vague, repetitive, and/or confusing in language.
- The letter fails to make a clear point.
- Grammatical and mechanical errors confuse and distract the reader.