



Essays - 6
Ad Analysis

 Each instructor develops her or his own assignments. Your instructor and the assignment sheet s/he has provided are the two best sources for guidance as you work toward a final draft. The handouts/tutorials for the types of essays feature general guidelines to help you write solid essays, but they should be treated only as supplements to your instructor and the assignment sheet.


Purpose

 To argue that a specific ad is persuasive or unpersuasive by evaluating its many features according to the rhetorical appeals (See our handout on the Rhetorical Appeals and the Rhetorical Triangle).


Topic

 A print ad and its effective or ineffective use of rhetorical strategies.


Thesis

 The thesis for this paper is the overall value judgment of the advertisement. You will present an argument to support your claim that the ad is effective or ineffective.


Identification


 Provide information regarding the ad's placement (what magazine?) and attempt to describe it generally, the idea being that your reader could track down that magazine and find the ad you are analyzing.


Audience

 You should, of course, consider the audience for your paper. However, it is crucial for this particular paper that you consider the advertisement's audience, as well. Along with identifying where the ad came from, you should discuss what audience that magazine targets. In order to evaluate the ad, you need to keep in mind who will see it.

Criteria

 Logos – What facts, stats, data, or logical arguments does the ad use to appeal to its audience's ability to reason? Look for numbers, graphs, and questions.

 Ethos – How does the company try to establish that it is reliable, trustworthy, honest, committed, etc.? Be sure to consider non-copy factors. A red, white, and blue color scheme may associate the company with patriotism; a sepia look might associate the company with tradition.

 Pathos – What emotions does the ad attempt to elicit from its audience? Again, look at copy, but also at images—are the models happy, sad? Look for color schemes—are the colors bright, gloomy?

Specifics

- 👉 For each of the rhetorical appeals, you will provide examples to capture the extent to which the ad succeeds in using persuasive strategies. Do not rely overly much on general statements about the ad; use specific phrases, images, and other features to back up your claims.
- 👉 If an ad does not use one of the three appeals, you might mention that as a specific critique, explaining why that appeal could have been useful.
- 👉 Many features of an ad can be interpreted, or “read,” in multiple ways. For each example you use, explain how it works as the kind of appeal you are claiming it is. This “double” meaning for a given image or phrase can be used as a tool for transitioning from one appeal to the next. If an image can be understood as appealing to the audience’s emotions, but also as demonstrating the company’s reliability, use the single image as a way to transition from pathos to ethos.

Structure

- 👉 You may structure the essay according to the rhetorical appeals, taking one at a time and explaining how the ad’s visuals and copy contribute to the ad’s persuasiveness. Or, you could structure your essay according to the ad’s features, discussing the *images* all at once, then the *copy* all at once.