

AP English Language and Composition Summer Reading Assignment

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Understanding Rhetorical Choice

In English classes thus far, you have undoubtedly studied choices that writers make. Your teachers might have called them stylistic choices, or literary devices, but when an author uses these tools to persuade his audience of something, they are called rhetorical choices. Writers employ these choices to heighten the effectiveness of the messages. This summer you will be studying the argumentative tips, tricks, terms, and techniques (like alliteration!) of rhetorical masters through your reading of Jay Heinrichs's *Thank You for Arguing: What Aristotle, Lincoln, and Homer Simpson Can Teach Us About the Art of Persuasion*.

Jay Heinrichs's *Thank You for Arguing* is your master class in the art of persuasion, taught by professors ranging from Bart Simpson to Winston Churchill. The time-tested secrets the book discloses include Cicero's three-step strategy for moving an audience to action as well as Honest Abe's Shameless Trick of lowering an audience's expectations by pretending to be unpolished. But it's also replete with contemporary techniques such as politicians' use of "code" language to appeal to specific groups and an eye-opening assortment of popular-culture dodges.

You may use the PDF version of the text or purchase your own copy.

***Thank You for Arguing: What Aristotle, Lincoln, and Homer Simpson Can Teach Us About the Art of Persuasion*. Fourth Edition by Jay Heinrichs (ISBN-13: 978-0593237380)**

Once you have finished reading the book you are to apply your newfound knowledge to the following assignments:

A. Personal Acts of Persuasion

1. Pick a one- to three-day time span when you are around other people. (This can be members of your own family, your friends, co-workers, etc. It can also encompass any conversations or texting that you do through any social media site.) In this time, make informal notes about all the persuading you DO plus all the persuading that is done TO you.
2. Create a table or spreadsheet of these acts of persuasion. If you are lost, use the appendices of *Thank You for Arguing* to assist you in the proper terminology for the persuasion technique. You should pick a time span that affords many examples. **I will not give you a minimum number of chart entries because I do not want to encourage you to do the bare minimum.** I will say that you should be very thorough and detailed. If you only have one page with a few entries, you are not paying enough attention to the language in your life.

Chart Requirements:

- I. The specific situation (who, what, where, when, and why).
- II. The type of persuasion—use the correct terms from *Thank You for Arguing*.
- III. Explain the rhetoric using evidence from *Thank You for Arguing*. If you paraphrase *Thank You for Arguing*, you should include an in-text citation. If you directly quote a piece of *Thank You for Arguing*, you should introduce the quote and also add an in-text citation on the end.

Example Chart Entry:

Situation	Type of Persuasion	Explanation and Analysis of Persuasive Technique
While I was at CVS in Holbrook, the cashier asked me, “Would you like to donate a dollar to starving children?”	Pathos—guilt; Commonplace; Deduction	The idea of donating to a specific organization depends on the person donating having beliefs and values relating to personal responsibility to help starving kids, which is a commonplace (Heinrichs 107). This cashier used deductive logic to reach the conclusion that I should help feed children because I share common beliefs and values about the well-being of children in our community (Heinrichs 140). The cashier was appealing to my sense of pathos by subtly making me feel guilty if I did not recognize our shared values and beliefs and act on them (Heinrichs 40).

B. Argument Construction

Select **THREE** of the following scenarios and write a short (250-300 word) argument, using the tools found in *Thank You for Arguing*. Use of the tools provided in the specific chapters given in each scenario should be evident in your argument. *Fair Warning*: You may be asked to present one of these arguments to the class, and/or to write an essay explaining and justifying the tools you chose and how you used them.

This assignment is an opportunity to have fun with language. You should, of course, take the assignment seriously and tailor your writing to each situation, but don’t be afraid to try something new or interesting. These aren’t essays. In *Thank You for Arguing*, Jay Heinrichs is clearly enjoying himself as he explores and explains the basics of argument. As you construct your arguments, try to enjoy yourself. You’ll probably be more persuasive.

Choose THREE to write about:

Scenario 1. Your parents forbade you from attending a party. They then saw photos on Instagram proving that you lied to them and attended the party anyway. Using the tools presented in Chapters 2 and 3, minimize your culpability and the punishment which you receive (in other words, make it less your fault and try for as small a punishment as possible). You will need to consider the mood, mind, and willingness of your audience, and will need to move the argument from blame to choice.

Scenario 2. You would like to have a pet (dog or cat—a real pet, not some nonsense), but your parents are reluctant to entrust you with this responsibility. Using Chapters 5 and 6, construct an ethos-based argument that will persuade your parents to give you a pet. You will need to consider how to build the proper decorum for your audience, and ensure that you build your virtue in their eyes.

Scenario 3. You wish to start a new club at Sachem East (you may choose its focus), but are having trouble finding a faculty sponsor—nobody wants to put in the extra work sponsoring a club. Using the tools found in Chapters 7 and 8, construct an argument which will convince a teacher to sponsor you. Demonstrate your practical wisdom, and convince your audience of your disinterest in the matter.

Scenario 4. For some reason, you are volunteering for a hamster rescue, which takes in unwanted or abused hamsters, or hamsters which have been victims of hamster trafficking, and finds loving homes for them. Using the tools in Chapter 9, construct a pathos-based argument that will effectively solicit donations from your classmates. Consider which emotions will most effectively persuade your audience to act, then choose the appropriate tools to create them.

Scenario 5. You have borrowed your parents' car to take a date to the drive in movie theater in Stony Brook, NY. On the way back, your date asks to test-drive the car, and, wanting to please them, you switch seats. Your date then immediately jumps a curb and hits a mailbox, damaging the car. Your parents are furious. Using the tools in Chapter 10, calm them down and get both of you out of trouble. Don't overplay your hand—too much humor or the wrong use of the passive voice or the wrong backfire might land you in even worse trouble.

Scenario 6. A good friend lends you \$50, with the expectation that you will pay back the loan with money from your summer job. However, you never get the job and have no money to pay him back. Your friend completely refuses to budge and demands the money. Using the tools of Chapters 11 and 12, identify a commonplace shared with your friend, then redefine the issue and/or terms in such a way that your friend will be persuaded to no longer wish to be repaid. You AREN'T convincing your friend that you don't owe him money--you're convincing him that he doesn't want to be paid back.

C. Rhetorical Vocabulary Terms

For each rhetorical term in **Sets 2 and 3**, you should make a flashcard. You may also choose to make flashcards for Set 1 if you are not able to define the terms easily. These cards should be studied throughout the year in preparation for the AP English Language and Composition exam.

On the unlined side of the index card you should have the word and a visual to help you remember the definition. The lined side should have a definition and an example.

Set 1. You should be able to define the following vocabulary terms without the help of *Thank You For Arguing* or a dictionary. If you are unfamiliar with any of these terms you will want to study them until you are able to define (and identify) them on the spot.

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| 1. alliteration | 5. diction | 9. personification |
| 2. allusion | 6. figure of speech | 10. syntax |
| 3. clause | 7. genre | 11. simile |
| 4. connotation | 8. mood | |

Set 2. The following vocabulary terms can be defined as you read *Thank You for Arguing*.

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|--------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. ambiguity | 9. hyperbole | 17. pun |
| 2. analogy | 10. image | 18. rebuttal |
| 3. anaphora | 11. inductive logic | 19. rhetoric |
| 4. anecdote | 12. Irony | 20. rhetoric question |
| 5. antithesis | 13. metaphor | 21. tone |
| 6. deductive logic | 14. metonymy | 22. voice |
| 7. denotation | 15. narrative | |
| 8. fallacy | 16. oxymoron | |

Set 3. Define the following vocabulary terms with the help of a dictionary (use the rhetorical definition). Many terms will be addressed as you read *Thank You for Arguing*, but they may not be explicitly defined.

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| 1. antecedent | 7. exposition | 13. rhetorical mode |
| 2. antimetabole | 8. explication | 14. satire |
| 3. assonance | 9. parallel structure | 15. style |
| 4. conceit | 10. parody | |
| 5. consonance | 11. persona | |
| 6. euphemism | 12. prose | |

Some teacherly advice:

*Responses should be typed or neatly handwritten; flashcards should be legible.

*The summer assignment will help you to complete additional assignments in class, including **writing for rhetorical analysis**, which is a significant part of the curriculum. Be prepared and be *thorough*.

*This is a lengthy assignment. Doing it the week before school starts will not only be difficult and stressful for you, but it will also drastically lower the quality of your work. Read or write a little bit every week, and you will produce much better work.

*REVISE. Your first draft is just that—a first draft. It is not and should never be your finished product. Put your work aside for a few days, then return to it with fresh eyes and look for places that could be improved.

*Although I believe that “sharing is caring,” the summer assignment is not the place for this. You cannot use materials from other students or from other sources. **You will not receive credit for plagiarized work or for work done “collaboratively.”** This includes: outright copying, slightly altering language in responses, and using past students’ assignments. (Yes, there’s software that detects this.) **You will not be allowed to make-up this assignment.**