

In-Class Presentations

Twice this semester, you will give an oral presentation to the class analyzing the rhetoric and style of a short passage of prose. The presentation must last at least 5 minutes and no more than 10 minutes. You may use visual aids such as PowerPoint if you wish.

On the syllabus, you will see essays from *The Presence of Others* listed for each oral presentation day. You do not have to analyze the essays listed on the syllabus; you may substitute any essay from *The Presence of Others* or any of the pieces listed under “The Museum” on the Classic Prose website: <<http://classicprose.com/csguide.html>>.

On each presentation day, four students will present individual analyses. I will provide a sign-up sheet so you can select which day you want to give your presentation: first come, first served. You should consult with the other students presenting the same day as you to see whether you plan to analyze the same text. If so, make sure each of you analyzes a different section of the text or focuses on a different rhetorical or stylistic element. You may, of course, each select different texts if you like.

On the day you give your presentation, you must turn in a brief (one page maximum) outline of your talk to me. You may use any format you find helpful, from an elaborate, formal outline to a simple list of bullet points.

Your presentation should analyze the rhetorical and stylistic strategies of the passage you chose; it should not waste time summarizing or paraphrasing your chosen selection. Don't repeat what the text says, analyze how the text says it.

The following approaches may help you focus your analysis. You can work from a single approach, or use one or more elements of it, or combine elements from several approaches.

The Conceptual Stand

Motive: Why is the writer addressing the reader? (to persuade, to inform, to analyze, to entertain, and so on)

Cast: What are the implied roles assumed by writer and reader? (a friend to a friend, an orator to a crowd, a lawyer to a jury, a teacher to a student, and so on)

Scene: What is the implied environment in which the writer and reader interact? (in a casual conversation, in a courtroom, in a public lecture, at a town meeting, and so on)

Method: What language strategies does the writer employ? (downshifting, hedging, active subjects, metadiscourse, and so on)

The Prose Style

Consider how the vocabulary, sentence structure, voice, and tone work together to create a distinctive prose style. It may help to think about each of these categories as a range of specific stylistic options.

Vocabulary

abstract/concrete
formal/colloquial
unusual/ordinary
specialized/general
metaphorical/literal
scientific/literary

Sentence Structure

long/short
simple/complex
many modifiers/few modifiers
mostly main clauses/many subordinate clauses and embedded phrases
normal word order/frequent interruptions or inversions

Voice

expert/amateur
scholar/student
outsider/insider
liberal/conservative
neutral observer/active participant

Tone

intimate/distant
personal/impersonal
angry/calm
informative/entertaining
humorous/serious
ironic/literal
aloof/passionately engaged

The Rhetorical Triangle

LOGOS

How clearly does the essay state its main point or thesis?

What kind of evidence supports each claim the essay makes?

ETHOS

How knowledgeable does the author seem and why?

How does the author treat alternate view points?

PATHOS

How does the essay appeal to the audience's values and beliefs?

How does the essay appeal to the audience's emotions?