

Core Value #3

Writing is shaped by audience, purpose, genre, and context.



Summary

Writing is an act of communication that involves an author writing for a purpose and using a genre to reach an audience in a specific context--these elements constitute the **rhetorical situation** (see explanation below).

Taking the rhetorical situation into account helps you to analyze the choices and strategies of other authors, as well as to create effective texts of your own.

Real World Example



When writing an email to a professor, you need to think about your audience and what their expectations are. In general, we know that formal emails are preferred, which means a salutation, a closing and leaving out slang (no "Yo, teach..."). It's also important to understand why you are writing to them (your purpose) and how your writing can influence that. Asking for help while also insulting the class or sounding angry at the professor probably won't get the best result. Also consider context: is the assignment due this week? Yesterday? 3 weeks ago? Your email probably will (and should) sound different based on your answer.

Further Explanation



Effective writers assess audience expectations and the textual conventions associated with a genre or situation as they create a text for a specific purpose.

They then make strategic decisions about how they want to meet or challenge those expectations in terms of:

- content
- structure
- rhetorical appeals
- presentation/design
- language
- style

Explaining the Rhetorical Situation

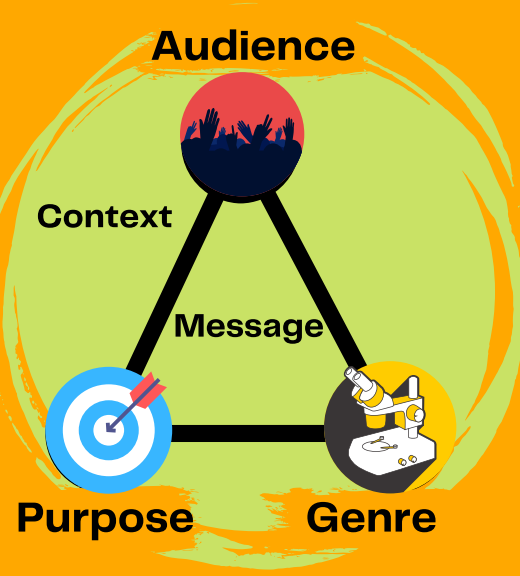
Audience – a recipient of communication and/or who the author is addressing their message to.

Purpose – the varied reasons both authors and audiences communicate with each other.

Context – the time; place; and the social, cultural, political, etc. situations surrounding a moment of communication.

Message – an actual instance or piece of communication (sometimes referred to as "the text")

Genre – refers to recognizable and recurring patterns of form and content that audiences come to expect from genres (like resumes or argumentative papers or children's books). Each genre of writing has these patterns that audiences expect to see when you are writing one of your own.



Some Ways to Demonstrate Your Understanding

- Demonstrates familiarity with the rhetorical elements (purpose, audience, context, genre) and concepts in formal/informal argumentation across a variety of texts--alphabetic, visual, print, and digital.
- Demonstrates flexibility and adaptability in creating arguments.
- Attempts to understand genre conventions you're reading and writing in.
- Can make purposeful decisions to meet, adapt, or push against those conventions in your own writing.
- Recognizes that language and linguistic diversity are assets that can be used rhetorically and powerfully.

Self Reflective Questions

- What goal did you have for your essay? Were you trying to educate, promote action, to persuade, etc?
 - How successful have you been in achieving that purpose?
- How has writing for a specific audience affected/changed what and how you wrote your essay?
- How did learning about the conventions of the genres you were reading and writing in help you better understand and write them?
- Were you able to situate your topic and writing within existing conversations and situations?