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ENG 102

Secs. 041, 082, 201

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Visual Rhetorical Analysis (VRA)

Rhetoric is not just writing

Though ENC courses generally focus on writing argumentative essays, it is important to remember that rhetoric is not concerned only with writing. Rhetoric studies texts that can be verbal, visual, or a combination of both. Persuasion, and the means of observing it in any given situation (Aristotle’s definition of rhetoric), happens also where images, words, and sounds combine, such as in television commercials. Images themselves can also be persuasive and can carry an argument. **Your task is to write a rhetorical analysis of no fewer than 2 visual texts, at least 1 commercial and at least 1 image. You may choose to analyze more than 1 television commercial and more than 1 image if you feel that 2 visual texts do not yield enough analysis. Assuming that your assignment reaches 1500 words, your grade will depend on the quality (not the quantity) of your analyses.**

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| --- | --- |
| Rhetorical terms applicable to each text | Rhetorical terms applicable to some texts |
| Appeals (logos, pathos, ethos)  Purpose  Argument  Audience  Color  Tone (commercials only)  Rule of thirds (images only) | Foregrounding  Syllogism and Enthymeme  Kairos  Representation  Rhetorical Situation (exigence, audience, constraints)  Symbols  Metaphors  Intertextuality |
| Must be mentioned *for each text* in your analysis | Must be mentioned *at least once* in your analysis |

A successful rhetorical analysis will pay attention to the ways that a visual text (an image or commercial) uses the rhetorical appeals to persuade the audience to take action, by buying or subscribing to whatever the commercial promotes. You will definitely have to watch an individual ad multiple times in order to construct its argument, because commercials bombard you with information all at once. You will also have to study an image in detail in order to understand the argument embedded in it.

Criteria for choosing image(s)

You may use any image that conveys an argument but the image cannot be all or mostly text. If you choose an image macro with text it should be complemented by a visual design that incorporates texture, color, foregrounding, the rule of three, etc.

If you choose an image that is selling a product or service you will have to do some light research on the company in order to understand why the ad is or is not persuasive.

You may not choose the image that I analyzed in the Sample Visual Rhetorical Analysis (on Moodle).

You may not use political cartoons or images that rely too much on written language to convey meaning. You may use political images and or commercials regardless of the ideology that they convey (remember that a depiction is not an endorsement).

Always try to find the highest resolution version of an image. You can do this by right clicking on the image in Google Chrome and clicking on “Search Google for image.” If that doesn’t work, try uploading the image or a link to a webpage with the image to the reverse image search website *Tineye* (<http://tineye.com>).

It can be difficult to determine when an image was first uploaded to the internet but you must make a good faith effort to provide some form of citation for each visual text in your analysis.

Sources for visual arguments

One source of interesting images that often convey arguments is the

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Facebook page @ <https://www.facebook.com/closetheinternet/> . This site shares images from artists and graphic designers and the administrator usually credits the creator in the comments on each image. You can view some of these images without being logged into Facebook. Facebook users can see all the images housed at the page. This page also has a private group @ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/vaporwave/>

Another source for interesting images to analyze is the “Humans of Late Capitalism” Tumblr page @ <https://humansoflatecapitalism.tumblr.com/> . There is also a Facebook group that houses the images found on the Tumblr page which can be found at @ <https://www.facebook.com/HumansOfLateCapitalism/>

This Facebook group sometimes has good material for a visual rhetorical analysis @ <https://www.facebook.com/imageswithpowerfulauras/>

One subreddit focuses on photographs that incorporate elements of renaissance painting and archives them @ <https://www.reddit.com/r/AccidentalRenaissance/> . This subreddit also has an equally active Facebook group @ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2139620953034138/?hc_location=ufi>

Jon Rafman’s 9 eyes project (using Google Street View as art) @ <http://9-eyes.com/>

The New York Times annually curates a list of their best photos @ <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/world/year-in-pictures.html>

TIME magazine’s “The Most Influential Images of All Time” @ <http://100photos.time.com/>

This website has about 100 color photographs from around the time of World War I @ <https://www.boredpanda.com/first-color-photos-vintage-old-autochrome-lumiere-auguste-louis/?fbclid=IwAR10qWFVdriIESKpRc02tQYtLslgohiErFRPYVprwSu87Bn0w4GlaRZW2js&utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=organic>

Two Italian fashion brands are particularly known for provocative and controversial ads: Diesel (especially their successful “Be Stupid” campaign) and the United Colors of Benetton.

The following images are good examples for a visual rhetorical analysis:

Tiger Woods meets a fan @ <https://pbs.twimg.com/media/D4JGUAxW4AEq0Tg.jpg:large>.

This infamous 1995 Patagonia ad @ <https://semi-rad.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/greg-epperson-photo.jpg>

Elian Gonzalez @ <https://img.thedailybeast.com/image/upload/c_crop,d_placeholder_euli9k,h_1440,w_2561,x_0,y_0/dpr_1.5/c_limit,w_1044/fl_lossy,q_auto/v1494008894/articles/2017/04/28/the-saga-of-elian-gonzalez-a-lost-boy-who-was-finally-found/170427-zimmerman-tribeca-tease_nx9wef>

A Czech coach of an Italian soccer team meets Disney’s Goofy @ <https://www.corriere.it/methode_image/2021/05/11/Sport/Foto%20Sport%20-%20Trattate/SRT01F11_3125507F1_23830_20121229204053_HE10_20121230-kWTC-U32601178908118oOG-593x443@Corriere-Web-Sezioni.jpg>

Foul bat @

<https://indipest.files.wordpress.com/2020/06/accidental-renessaince-photos-6.jpg>

A late 90s LAN gaming party @ <https://i.kinja-img.com/gawker-media/image/upload/c_fill,f_auto,fl_progressive,g_center,h_675,pg_1,q_80,w_1200/ubkngrbgbh8phpsy3rtf.jpg> and <https://external-preview.redd.it/0gw0H5R4KJtXIXN4xz7B8AldMQ2mEwPe-PSiR84TUbU.jpg?auto=webp&s=62ee6df7b7e672cafcb25da2ab8e22e926e7597e>

Enjoying Southeast Asia @ <https://demotywatory.pl/uploads/201810/1538549135_pqhkaj_fb_plus.jpg>

Internet artist Olaf Breuning’s “Text Butt” (2015) @ <http://www.olafbreuning.com/images/ass%20talking.jpg?crc=518816489>

A kiss during the 1990s war in Yugoslavia @ <https://i.pinimg.com/originals/41/cb/bf/41cbbf0068b3c69e4dd70ffa715ccc66.jpg>  
People who liked this also liked @ <https://cdn.vox-cdn.com/thumbor/eekuom0swguiYLsg0ZoG8gt6ty4=/0x0:1000x670/1400x1400/filters:focal(420x255:580x415):format(jpeg)/cdn.vox-cdn.com/uploads/chorus_image/image/56384717/_DSC0124_MOUNTAIN_29june_alt.0.jpg>

A Russian soldier plays piano in the woods @ <https://external-preview.redd.it/1CnlITkE1Bi85wUINYLdnojjgWLiSM3jJqoUV03Midk.jpg?auto=webp&s=4df62fae3cb7c5e466c42601ef6183a7153aba73>

Thomas E. Franklin’s “Raising the Flag at Ground Zero” (this photo was published in a New Jersey newspaper the day after 9/11 and it was widely circulated) @ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-apps/imrs.php?src=https://arc-anglerfish-washpost-prod-washpost.s3.amazonaws.com/public/5WEEUTUUVAYXNPIVRIUWQICVMI.jpg&w=767>

A heated debate at the National Congress of Brazil @ <https://i.pinimg.com/originals/1a/b6/12/1ab612ca5fadb5d39e17f4c964e7b95c.jpg>

A fight in the Ukrainian Parliament @ <https://media2.s-nbcnews.com/j/newscms/2014_15/309306/pc-140408-kiev-brawl-01_32a65e741b04ae47ad01f398afba427a.nbcnews-ux-2880-1000.jpg>

The infamous “accidental renaissance” photo of Justin Bieber being choked at a party @ <http://i.dailymail.co.uk/i/pix/2016/04/18/20/333796BD00000578-3536935-image-m-9_1461008147516.jpg>

Refugees Enter Lesbos, Greece @ <https://i.imgur.com/prFBoFb.jpg>

Pizza @ <http://i0.kym-cdn.com/photos/images/original/001/263/829/845.jpg>

An arguably racist (but nonetheless rhetorically rich) public service announcement by an Italian government agency @ <http://www.ilpost.it/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/C_17_opuscoliPoster_317_allegato.jpg>

Nike Breakfast @ <http://24.media.tumblr.com/tumblr_m8xiu2zHcF1ran5kqo1_500.jpg>

Pizza loss on subway @ <https://www.reddit.com/media?url=https%3A%2F%2Fi.redd.it%2F11dk4jmb4kuy.jpg>

Russian life @ <https://i.redditmedia.com/I2TnNiQN0Eez_qbh5b4yMZ2Krrw1bo2LKBfXmXmnREw.png?s=5b0295c0fb92ea1742038ca832a44427>

London Stock Exchange @ <https://www.reddit.com/media?url=https%3A%2F%2Fi.redd.it%2Fahcjuf6kuf521.jpg>.

Kanye West concert @ <https://i.pinimg.com/736x/08/1d/ed/081ded3dc094990749f2fe53926a47dd--snapchat-renaissance.jpg>

“The Storyteller” @ <http://i0.kym-cdn.com/photos/images/original/001/263/834/c04.jpg>

Ducks steal from woman @ <https://2.bp.blogspot.com/_aeGD64IM57o/S9gu8CVnGQI/AAAAAAAAAuc/2v8hHcw2uWo/s1600/Duck,+steal+money+from+girl,+operate+as+family+gang.jpg>

Robert Downey Jr.’s dog @ <https://i.redd.it/b8n95p73ild01.jpg>

James Harden’s fall @ <https://i.redd.it/pxnk7mfvbit01.jpg>

Black Friday @ <https://www.reddit.com/media?url=https%3A%2F%2Fi.redd.it%2Fnz56qb8ki7001.jpg>

Laughing man on subway @ <https://external-preview.redd.it/yVErA04FP3lGxk2c0zT2hFs_OotTk3vJpRbz-v3MpFA.jpg?auto=webp&s=4507589bd13d60f3724c75fc69068941afbb7080>

Palestine slingshot activist @ [https://miro.medium.com/max/4000/0\*TE0w6RBRZDUUq6bJ.jpg](https://miro.medium.com/max/4000/0*TE0w6RBRZDUUq6bJ.jpg)

“The Petulant Donald” @ <https://preview.redd.it/lfpd5s13y0311.jpg?width=1024&auto=webp&s=22ab4bbea416a995539dc51029a0253024dc02b8>

Running with the bulls in Pamplona, Spain @ <https://i.redd.it/i0x3q5quz5gz.jpg>

Horse in crowd @ <https://i.redd.it/c0nz99cez2e11.jpg>

Tiananmen Square (China) Tank Man from 1989 @ <https://cdn.cnn.com/cnn/interactive/2019/05/world/tiananmen-square-tank-man-cnnphotos/media/01.jpg>. (related videos @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YeFzeNAHEhU> and @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qq8zFLIftGk>.)

Mom catches foul ball @ <https://preview.redd.it/k8ag96py34531.jpg?width=1000&auto=webp&s=4bb85216de0fd5e7df51562c2d3a232cd60244cb>

Hurricane Harvey rescue @ <https://www.gannett-cdn.com/-mm-/39fb1da027d767ff7a9b06cdad69f2620754d258/c=0-229-3785-2368/local/-/media/2017/08/30/USATODAY/USATODAY/636397148514541237-A05-MAIN-0828-93329703.JPG>

Luxury shopping in flooded Venice @ <https://preview.redd.it/wybu99hyquy31.png?width=786&auto=webp&s=b277ed9d11668cf83307a3b8c09e7e31f93a87a2>

Festival crowdsurfing @ <https://i.dailymail.co.uk/1s/2019/07/09/13/15817418-7228243-image-a-4_1562676417058.jpg>

Runway models from Gucci’s fall 2018 fashion show @ <https://pyxis.nymag.com/v1/imgs/e68/f3c/0632f212580e04adeb3ed757950ae57961-21-gucci-model-head.2x.w710.jpg> and @ <https://www.thesun.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/nintchdbpict000387008389.jpg>.

Prada Marfa art installation in Valentine, TX @ <https://www.pradagroup.com/content/dam/pradagroup/immagini/prosepettive/storie/excursus-pagine-dettaglio/prada-marfa/immagine_singola_marfa_2.jpg/_jcr_content/renditions/cq5dam.web.1920.1920.jpeg>

Maurizio Cattelan’s controversial “Comedian” from Art Basel 2019 in Miami Beach, FL @ <https://news.artnet.com/app/news-upload/2019/12/maurizio-cattelan-banana.jpg>.

Damien Hirst’s “The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living” (1991) @ <https://www.pakocampo.com/wp-content/uploads/pakocampo/2019/01/blog_2019_01_13_a_damien_hirst_shark_pako_campo.jpg>

The player @ <https://i1.wp.com/mississippiscoreboard.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/2021-JP-vs-PA-147.jpg?fit=1445%2C1024&ssl=1>

In the train, India @ <https://i.imgur.com/voa42Q2.jpg>

Hurricane Teddy, Cape Hatteras, NC @ <https://i.redd.it/vilrm92g7xo51.jpg>

90s Eminem kissing a fan @ <https://i.redd.it/6eo5jlw40dl51.jpg>

The Piercing @ <https://i.redd.it/6r1h2qtgja061.jpg>

Love blooms @ <https://www.reddit.com/media?url=https%3A%2F%2Fexternal-preview.redd.it%2F_abmPHO6jHN34P-N8jsZ0eOggl68m0kgS10lTwsMTTA.jpg%3Fwidth%3D640%26crop%3Dsmart%26auto%3Dwebp%26s%3D6b069bc8e600d5ed5d82d6b1e90ba6cb8624183f>

Kuwaiti girl, Gulf War @ <https://i.redd.it/1sshmio0smd51.jpg>

Dr. Phil’s “BIG KNIFE! SMALL WIFE!” tweet @ <https://twitter.com/drphil/status/1242993092459806720?lang=en>

Dutch athletes wait for their score @ <https://i.redd.it/si06zifwuyf71.jpg>

“Adbraking” of UK car ads @ <http://brandalism.ch/projects/adbrake-car-subvertising/>

Kim Kardashian’s breathtaking Balenciaga outfit at the 2021 Met Gala @ <https://media.glamour.com/photos/6140b4d31334980a19d19a89/master/w_2560%2Cc_limit/GettyImages-1340149038.jpg>

Balenciaga’s potato chip handbag @ <https://ucarecdn.com/d716bb60-5a23-4211-a627-6f6680da37c5/-/crop/1024x577/0,55/-/preview/-/quality/lighter/-/format/auto/-/scale_crop/1920x1080/center/>

Pedestrians @ <https://cdn.vox-cdn.com/thumbor/qXSnf8F9wKylVQogVBEYE0Ok3D0=/1400x1400/filters:format(jpeg)/cdn.vox-cdn.com/uploads/chorus_asset/file/15068296/3206.0.0.1487920003.jpg>

Brandi Chastain celebrates winning the 1999 FIFA Women’s World Cup @ <https://www.usatoday.com/gcdn/presto/2020/07/10/USAT/c4f1d9ec-690c-4937-a6fc-2c2143f1587e-AP_WCup_US_Legacy_Soccer.JPG>

Steven Meisel for MaxMara Fall-Winter 2019 campaign @ <https://theimpression.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Max-mara-fall-2019-ad-campaign-The-Impression-003.jpg>

Margaret Bourke-White’s “At the Time of the Louisville Flood” (1937) @ <https://static.life.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/14153406/05562885-e1571067245149.jpg>

Kevin Carter’s “The Vulture and the Little Girl” (1993) @ [https://miro.medium.com/v2/resize:fit:800/0\*bxl9lsv5VG6MpbBs.jpg](https://miro.medium.com/v2/resize:fit:800/0*bxl9lsv5VG6MpbBs.jpg)

The Dust Lady (2001) @ <https://cloudfront-us-east-1.images.arcpublishing.com/artear/5Z7O46P2IJA5PBWWCDUQL4S57M.jpg>

Child confronts virtual reality @ <https://www.reddit.com/media?url=https%3A%2F%2Fi.redd.it%2F53zj7vdaj8jd1.jpeg>

Maradona fails 1994 drug test @ <https://www.reddit.com/r/pics/comments/1dq67sr/argentine_footballer_maradona_at_the_1994/#lightbox>

1994 FIFA World Cup final @ <https://www.worldsport.ge/img/articles/c_05cafce66720357775e0240cb3c3d039_1437111392744148_0.jpg>

Criteria for choosing commercial(s)

You may use any commercial that is available online for free (such as at *YouTube* or *iSpot.tv*) and sells a product or service or charity, but *not* an event. Please do not analyze ads that promote a TV event like a movie or basketball game. For example, an ad for a DVD release of a movie would be OK because that is a tangible product that you can own, but an ad promoting seeing a movie in theatres would not be OK because in that case an event is being sold and not a product.

You should choose commercials that you understand in terms of how they structure their argument, even if you are not persuaded by the visual text as a whole.

When choosing a commercial remember that a short text is not necessarily a less sophisticated argument than a longer text. Length of a commercial is not substantially related to argument because longer commercials often repeat their argument(s).

You may not choose the commercial that I analyzed in the Sample Visual Rhetorical Analysis (on Moodle).

List of commercials to be analyzed in class

Oatmeal Crisp @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F9zYwwB0txA> 6:30

Mennen Speed Stick @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-fYJvX2cvgs> 5:13

Polaroid Family @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hLfWget0z94> 7:40

Slimfast Way of Life @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hLfWget0z94> 0:15

Sears Women @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F9zYwwB0txA> 0:00

Walmart Music @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F9zYwwB0txA> 2:16

Betty Crocker Potatoes @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F9zYwwB0txA> 3:05

Burger King @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F9zYwwB0txA> 3:23

Vidal Sassoon hair @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F9zYwwB0txA> 5:00

Taster’s Choice gold blend couple @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hLfWget0z94> 1:40

Sears air conditioner @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EvzHMmDDTBI>

Nike women @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iGyKb2KrU5g>

Alka Seltzer @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H6F3g3gMGAA> 12:55

Motrin for migraines @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x316dmz3iQk> 0:00

Vince with Slap Chop @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rUbWjIKxrrs>

Bubble Tape gum @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xwdBx76LLho> 1:00

Corn Pops brother’s girlfriend @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=luFmdbaglMc>

Starburst graduation @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vjbPo_yLcx8>

Pop Tarts @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sPwgEJ7Kz50> 5:00

Folgers coffee @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F9zYwwB0txA> 1:30

Jaguar game console @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F9zYwwB0txA> 8:00

Nike Michael Jordan and Spike Lee @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Abr_LU822rQ>

McDonald’s steak sandwich @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JHzx_-HA2ts> 9:00

Cam Newton for Gatorade @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LUVMtarnRRQ>

Sizzler 1991 Promo @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E3YGtQ40Qvs>

Hennessy cyclist (long) @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hm7iKIQ9T1A>

Hennessy cyclist (short) @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jMFWKEpcqxg>

Levi’s “America (Go Forth)” @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FdW1CjbCNxw>

Apple “Dead Poets Society” @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ep2_0WHogRQ>

Gillette “We Believe” @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=koPmuEyP3a0>

Egard Watch Company “What is a man?” @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x_HL0wiK4Zc>

Kendall Jenner for Pepsi @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dA5Yq1DLSmQ>

Gatorade Sun @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mwqrq--g9Lw>

Febreze @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0qruYdoo76s>

Chevy “Like a rock” @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IocCC1-jeTY>

Ram “Farmer” @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wnOIrkqmlDk>

Spot Barilla - Fusillo (1988, feat. Vangelis) @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_UHGyBh62R4>

“Barilla fusilli...made to bind with the beautiful flavors of your cooking. Where there’s Barilla, there’s home”

Barilla Spot: Gattino (1986, feat. Vangelis) @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YHn8Zg1XJ74>

“Where there’s Barilla, there’s home”

Spot Barilla - Adozione (1990, feat. Vangelis) @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dNe55c3rbIU>

“Barilla spaghetti...add flavor to your new love story...Where there’s Barilla, there’s home”

Nestle Alpine White (1986) wolf @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lyJ1Ll3apgg>

Nestle Alpine White (1986) “Sweet Dreams” @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5YqXkoRwvwM>

Folgers “Coming Home” (2009) @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uMwFWDIFVCU>

Nike “Dream Crazier” @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zWfX5jeF6k4>

Apple “The Surprise” @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=loB9BiEBxRs>

Sandy Hook Promise (nonprofit, 2019) “Back-To-School Essentials” @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b5ykNZl9mTQ>

Esselunga “The Peach” (2023, subtitled) @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vfLHUt5QkZU>

Butcher Air Conditioning @ <https://www.facebook.com/100063765834248/videos/315536342463966/>

Kohl’s backpack @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2RFJO-bwMms>

Kohl’s backpack @ <https://www.ispot.tv/ad/6UDf/kohls-regreso-a-clases-mochila-spanish> (Spanish)

Sprite Sun Fizz @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jjK1aUU2Dx4>

Nike “I am not a role model” (1993, featuring Charles Barkley) @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4gqk4WPnrpM>

FedEx Snake @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OaSn_UiWtok>

US Department of State: Consular Affairs @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q7YaFnPoEJ8>

Required rhetorical motifs

In your rhetorical analysis you *must* address the following for each visual text:

What **appeals** does the commercial rely on in order to make its argument? Remember that **logos** is an appeal to logic or order, **pathos** is an appeal to emotion (it can be more than one emotion), and **ethos** is an appeal to credibility. Logos can often reflect the actions of the humans represented in the visual text and whether such actions make sense given the context and situation. Credibility can refer to the character of the maker of the product or of the product users. Not all commercials or images make use of all three rhetorical appeals, but every commercial makes use of at least one of them.

What is the text’s argument? Remember that argument is not the same as purpose. The **purpose** of a commercial is to get the viewer to take action by buying something or by getting involved. This is true regardless of the product being promoted. Media scholars Stuart and Elizabeth Ewen claim that “twentieth-century advertising discourse is founded in lack, envy, resentment, and fear” (Fjellman 304).[[1]](#footnote-1) For example, in auto insurance ads, the rhetors cultivate a sense of fear in the viewer in order to persuade the viewer into taking action by buying insurance. The ad’s **argument** comprises the reasons why one should get involved. You do not have to agree with the ad’s reasoning in order to identify what you think the argument is. Once you have identified the argument of the commercial, write about whether you found the commercial effective or persuasive and why. You should also discuss the visual text’s purpose, which is usually either to advertise something in order to earn money or to raise awareness about some issue.

What is the text’s **audience**? While corporations and marketing agencies would love for everyone who sees their ad to buy their product, this never happens. Commercials target a specific type of audience, sometimes based on age, social class, or even the type of activities that the audience may prefer. For example, an ad for athlete’s foot medication does not target people with healthy feet, but rather people that suffer from athlete’s foot. In general, medical commercials tend to have specific types of audience. Where you find an online image says a lot about what kind of audience the creator(s) had in mind in creating it. The things depicted in an image also are linked to the audience.

**Color** is particularly important in images as opposed to commercials, because color does not change in images but it can in a commercial. What do the colors signify? What do they represent? If this document was in hot pink would it be less professional as compared to standard black? Blue usually connotes calmness for example (the ocean, the sky) while red and black can signify aggressiveness (Ferrari Testarossa, the “little black dress”) and green and brown often represent nature (dirt, trees, grass, leaves). Color is particularly important when it is obvious that the image has altered the color from the original photograph. In such cases, you should pay particular attention to why the rhetor (the person making the visual argument) decided to change the colors. Sometimes the creators of a commercial will juxtapose black and white images with color (as in the Gatorade Sun commercial above) for rhetorical affect. The point of this is usually to emphasize the positive (and colorful) elements of the product being advertised while pointing out the negative (and black and white) elements of the comparison product. In some cases, rather than having black and white imagery there will be color imagery that is dark or purposefully ugly (as in the Febreze commercial above).

Rhetorical devices to consider for both kinds of visual texts

Besides the appeals and argument, your rhetorical analysis must discuss other persuasive aspects of the commercial and image. Not every image or commercial will include these so you do not need to discuss them for each text but you must address each of these terms at least once in your analysis.

**Foregrounding** is particularly relevant in images but can also show up in commercials. An object is foregrounded visually when it is clearly shown while the background of the image shows other elements of it less clearly. The foregrounded image appears clearly while the background appears blurred. Why does the rhetor focus on one part of the image at the expense of the other parts? Foregrounding also has to do with how a visual text manages spacing.

**Syllogism** and **Enthymeme**, two types of reasoning that Aristotle mentions in his *Art of Rhetoric*. The former occurs when two premises (statements that are taken to be true) lead to a stated conclusion which draws from the premises. The latter occurs when a single premise leads to a conclusion, meaning that a second premise is implied, but not stated. Enthymemes are generally more common in commercials since they are shorter.

**Kairos** or the opportune moment to construct an argument. Does the commercial mention that you should take action now and not later? Is the image about a topical issue that is being discussed or debated right now, or it was at the time the image was created?

**Representation** refers to the composition and appearance of the people in the ad (assuming that your commercial features people, not all of them do). Does your commercial feature people of different ethnicities or cultures? Obviously noticing people’s ethnicities based only on a short commercial or in one image is not an exact science, but for some visual texts it will be obvious. What does it say about the rhetor that they only include certain types of people in the ad? Representation also has to do with how people are dressed (or undressed) in the image. What does their clothing or nakedness say about the argument embedded in the image?

The **rhetorical situation** refers to the background information surrounding a speech that influences its effectiveness. A rhetorical situation always includes three parts. An **exigence** is a problem that is current or imminent that is the impetus for the rhetor’s speech. The **audience** is the people to be influenced by the speech who have the agency to help resolve the problem in some way. The **constraints** are the factors or subjects that get in the way of resolving the exigence.

Does the ad use **symbols** or **metaphors**? Is the product or service advertised or depicted represented by a different thing; a different person or object? How do the qualities of the product or service compare and contrast with the symbol or metaphor associated with it? What is persuasive about the symbol used and how does that contribute or not contribute to the visual text’s argument? The difference between these two terms is that a symbol makes an association from one thing to another implicitly and visually (that is, without using spoken or written language) while a metaphor makes an association explicitly and linguistically (that is, by using spoken or written language). In some visual texts something can be both a symbol and a metaphor. In the above Chevy ad, a rock is not specifically shown next to the truck (except in the last shot) but the connection is made explicitly through the slogan. In that ad a rock is a metaphor for the durability of Chevy trucks. In general metaphors are more common in commercials whereas symbols are more common in images because metaphors would require printed language but an image may not have enough room to accommodate that into the visual composition.

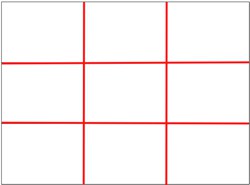
**Intertextuality** refers to when one text makes a reference to another text either overtly or subtly. Does the ad or image make you aware of another ad or image such that if you did not have this awareness you would be unable to understand the ad or image’s argument? Intertextuality can sometimes be about paying homage to an iconic text from the past or it could be about making fun of an older text by parodying it. When a visual text uses intertextuality the rhetor is presuming an awareness by the audience which shows credibility or ethos for both parties.

Required rhetorical motifs for commercials

The **tone** of the ad refers to the ambience of the ad’s message. Tone refers not just to the way that the speakers deliver the lines but also to the music and the font size, color, etc. Some ads will use camera work to enhance the tone for the viewer. Does the commercial use humor, or fear, or patriotism or some other element that influences its argument? Tone is usually related to the rhetorical appeal of pathos. Because tone combines music with visuals it is only concerned with commercials and not with images.

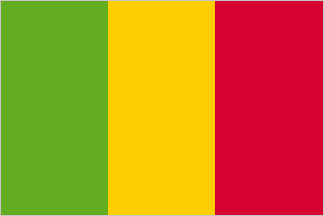
Required rhetorical motifs for images

The **rule of thirds** is a concept from photography and applies only to images and not commercials. The idea is that an image should be divided into 9 sections horizontally and vertically. The image should be read from left to right by moving from one space to another with the eye.



Pretend the above image is superimposed on the image you chose to analyze. Does the left, center, and right columns all contribute to the visual text’s argument? Or is most of the argument found only in one square or column?

The rule of thirds is never exact. This means that the focus of an image should never be exactly in the middle but roughly near the middle. The center focus of an image or commercial should be near the four intersections in the above image. The center focus should not be in the middle square.



If the flag of Mali above was superimposed behind an image and the focus of the image was in the yellow portion, then the rule of thirds would not be respected.



If the flag of Sweden above was superimposed behind an image and the focus of the image was in the vertical yellow portion or in the square intersection between the vertical and horizontal yellow portions, then the rule of thirds would be in effect.

Style and Format

Please follow the format in the Sample Visual Rhetorical Analysis that I wrote which is available on Moodle. If you can’t find a title for the visual text(s) you find then you must make up a title for each of them in your analysis. Please do not include an introduction or conclusion paragraph. Your analysis should only mention rhetorical motifs evident in your visual texts. For example, if neither your commercial nor image has intertextuality then you don’t state that the texts have no intertextuality. Instead, just move on to the next relevant rhetorical motif evident in the visual texts.

For each visual text, include a paragraph on persuasiveness in which you discuss whether the rhetor or creator of the visual text persuaded you to buy the product or contribute to the cause, etc. Your discussion of persuasiveness should discuss precisely what in the visual text did or did not persuade you toward receiving the rhetor’s message.

Your essays should be in 12 pt. type and double spaced and should be in MLA format. Your name should appear on the first page and in the header of every page along with the page number. Please include a Works Cited section at the end of your essay (it does not need to be on a separate piece of paper). You do not need to cite in text references to a specific commercial, unless you are directly quoting from language found in a commercial, in which case you must do so. In other words, you do not need to include a parenthetical citation when you paraphrase something from a commercial. However, you must include the correct MLA citation for each commercial that you analyze in your works cited section. Please include a hyperlink to your commercials and images. If you image comes from a webpage without a direct hyperlink ((<http://9-eyes.com> for example) or from a page that requires the user to login to view it then please include the image in the text of your analysis (you must cite the image as well).

Peer review for this assignment will be done in class and online through the Moodle discussion forums. Please submit your assignments digitally via Moodle.

Due dates

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| SECTION | ROUGH DRAFT | FINAL DRAFT |
| 041 | 25 September 2024 | 2 October 2024 |
| 082 | 25 September 2024 | 2 October 2024 |
| 201 | 26 September 2024 | 3 October 2024 |

1. Fjellman, Stephen M. *Vinyl Leaves: Walt Disney World and America*. Boulder, CO, Westview, 1992. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)