



### Sample Midterm Essay #4: Rhetorical Analysis of Two Texts

Kristine Rodriguez's assignment was to analyze two documents representing different (not necessarily opposing) opinions on an important controversy. Kristine chose to explore the ethics of using animals in medical research; to do so, she examined the writing techniques of two pamphlets on animal research, one from People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and one from the Association of Professors of Medicine. By performing this detailed analysis, Kristine got a head start on her Persuasive Essay by identifying the major issues presented by two players in the debate. In addition, writing the Rhetorical Analysis helped her identify which techniques were most persuasive for the different audiences; in her next essay, she will know which rhetorical strategies to use to persuade her chosen readers. Following the essay are comments by the writer and her instructor. As is often the case, the instructor's comments are themselves a mini-rhetorical analysis: she explains why Kristine's writing choices are effective.

#### KRISTINE RODRIGUEZ

#### Life, Liberty, and Due Process?

The ethics of advancing our medical expertise by performing research on animals has long been debated. Animal rights activists and health professionals each have struggled to gain support for their perspectives. While it is difficult to distinguish whether the use of animals is in fact necessary and ethical in the research conducted by professors, scientists, and researchers, we can better understand the complexity of the debate by analyzing brochures produced by each side. By studying how each group attempts to persuade us, we can better evaluate the strengths of each position. The People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) are animal activists dedicated to preserving the rights of animals. The group has formulated the pamphlet "ANIMAL RIGHTS—Why should it concern me?" **aimed at the adult reading and voting population.** They hope to persuade readers that animal research is not only unethical, but also unnecessary, and a direct violation of animals' rights. The

brochure **claims** that denying animals their basic rights is what many activist groups term species-ism, a bias toward one's own species to the disadvantage of other species. The **purpose** of PETA's circular is to recruit supporters to join the organization and defend the belief that animal research should be stopped entirely.

PETA introduces the brochure by asking readers to look back to a time in which prejudice was a way of life and rights were denied to people who were seen as "different." Then they put animals in this category of the misunderstood minority. When PETA states that we don't actually need "animals' fur, skin, or flesh to survive," and questions whether animal research is actually necessary, the readers are primed to be sympathetic. And these readers, now worried about repeating unfair discriminatory practices against almost sentient beings, are bound to feel compassion once they hear that behind all the words you find flesh and blood beings capable of confusion, pain, loneliness, distress, and love." The **word choice** and **line of argument** play on the **readers' emotions and values.**

In case readers aren't yet drawn in, PETA targets another value: money. PETA tries to convey that animal research (AR) is unreliable and costly. They attempt to prove this with an extreme example. They explain that while researchers waited for test results of animal tests, twenty million children's sleeping garments treated with Tris, a fire retardant, remained on the market one and a half years after modern non-animal methods identified Tris as a cancer-causing agent. This is a good example of unreliability. However, PETA fails to mention the source of its information, which damages its **credibility.** A second fault in PETA's argument comes from their **sweeping generalizations.** To prove that AR is costly, PETA states that two billion tax dollars and thirty years have been spent on animal tests that show "no progress toward a cure for cancer nor [for] any other major disease we know of today." Since many readers know that the polio vaccine was produced through the help of AR, this statement is very damaging to PETA's

**credibility.** They would have been better off leaving this sentence out, as it is inaccurate and shows PETA to be **unknowledgeable** and **irrational**.

PETA mentions alternatives that are available for use in place of animals for research. They suggest such alternatives as computers, mathematical models, and cell and tissue cultures. PETA uses this preface to address its **secondary audience**—voters—and requests the readers' support of a bill before Congress to emphasize perfecting these alternatives.

PETA uses the **logical appeal** to accent the risk of eating meat. Here they bring a few **facts and statistics** into play, stating that "1.2 million Americans died last year from diseases related to meat consumption; meat is high in saturated fats and in cholesterol that accumulate on arterial walls and are a major factor in heart attacks." These strong statements are important to the health-conscious reader. They state that chemicals and growth stimulants are fed to animals now reared in crowded indoor environments and that the chemicals are passed on to meat eaters, weakening their defenses and rendering "once helpful drugs useless." Here, PETA uses a cunning **strategy**, suggesting that eating these animals nullifies the very benefits sought through animal-based research.

The **wording** that is used in the next several paragraphs is key to successfully triggering readers' **emotional responses**. The text covers abject conditions in raising animals for research and the killing of animals. It uses such **words** as "hunted," "trapped," "clubbed," "harpooned," "shocked," "poisoned," and "unnecessary, frequent, repetitious killing," "overcrowding," "deprivation," "confinement," "mutilation," and "stress" to describe the living conditions of the animals. All these words paint a picture of brutality and draw on **readers' empathy**. These words make the readers pity the animals, question the treatment of the animals, and eventually question the ethics of animal research. Thus, the effective use of **pathos** here is important for PETA to gain credibility and support. They close this paragraph by playing on the readers' guilt:

"Truly, history will judge the worth of our 'civilization,' less by our technological accomplishments than by the way we treat our fellow beings." By describing the results of animal research in terms of "technological advances," PETA links their cause with a more commonly held **value**: humanity is more important than machines.

PETA takes this value one step further, however. Since many would argue that the "technological advances" actually benefit human life, PETA **questions the assumption** that human life is more important than all other life. They ask, "How can one species, ours, consider it has the right to deny others their basic interests of liberty and life?" Then the audience is given a link so that they will empathize with the animal species: "All species fear species injury and death, and all species fight for life and freedom." As most individuals have experienced fear of possible injury, the phrase forces readers to feel compassion.

The final message addressed by PETA aims to get readers involved by telling them how they can help the animal rights movement. PETA asks readers to become informed, speak out, and make people aware that "The exploitation of others demeans us all." An address is provided so that one may either join the organization by donating money or request more information on animal rights. This last message is important in strengthening the PETA movement, both individually and monetarily.

The PETA organization has put together an easy-to-read leaflet that successfully draws on the **emotions** of its readers; however, it loses **authority** when it fails to state the sources from which its statistics come. As a result, readers are left only partially convinced, and the issue still seems obscure.

Representing the opposing side of this issue is the Association of Professors of Medicine (APM), an organization designed to represent chairpersons of departments of internal medicine in medical schools around the nation. This organization has generated a pamphlet, "Must Animals be Used Biomedical Research?" that is directed toward the **general public** and writ-

ten in **lay terms** so that it is more easily understood by the non-science population. The **purpose** of this brochure is to convince readers of APM's belief that animals do indeed play an essential role in the advancement of medical technology.

APM opens by stating that almost every medical advance in science has been predicated on knowledge gained through research involving animals. This contradicts PETA's statement that AR has not contributed to medical cures. However, APM names the developments, offers the dates of the discoveries, and provides the names of the involved scientists—all valued sources of **credibility**. For example, APM explains that insulin was developed using AR, and it provides details to make its point **credible**: The Professors of Medicine tell us insulin was discovered by Drs. Frederick Banting and John Macleod in 1923. Further examples, accompanied by pertinent names and dates, provide readers with a sense of how animal research is beneficial.

APM also effectively **counters** PETA's **assertion** that there are alternatives to animal research by describing how supplementation or non-animal methods are in fact being used whenever possible not only for humanitarian reasons but also because the upkeep of the laboratory animals is costly. However, they tell us there are certain instances in which the human organs and functions "cannot be replicated solely in non-animal models." Again, the **detailed examples** APM provides will convince readers that its **assertions** are more viable than PETA'S. They explain that the flow of blood, the digestive process, the function of the brain, and the nervous system cannot be duplicated through non-animal methods. In particular, APM explains, the human cardiovascular system is best replicated in the dog, whereas the human ear is similar to that of a monkey or chinchilla. The viewpoint here is that improvements in medical care will continue to rely, at least in part, on the use of animals. By using these previous examples and showing readers that alternatives are used whenever possible, **APM successfully convinces its audience** that animals are not utilized unnecessarily.

APM, knowing that the majority of the public is concerned with the humane treatment of animals, addresses this point next. It claims that biomedical scientists are "appalled by any abuse of animals, whether in scientific, industrial, or sporting environments" and "researchers themselves are committed to assuring that laboratory animals receive proper care for humanitarian reasons as well as the interest of scientific quality." They proceed to mention that the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture inspects animal care facilities and upholds standards at universities and medical schools to ensure clean cages and adequate care of the animals. They mention that many facilities are also accredited by the American Association for the Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care. The naming of such organizations gives a sense of **authority, believability, and reassurance** that agencies oversee animal care. When APM appears to share the public's concern for animal welfare, the audience is more likely to view APM from a compassionate standpoint.

APM sends readers an important message in its final four paragraphs in which they make a distinction between those organizations dedicated to "the provision of shelter for homeless animals and the preservation of endangered species" and those who seek to limit or totally eliminate the use of animals in research. They state that they find it difficult to understand how some would oppose research using animals that might lead to "a vaccine or cure for a disease such as muscular dystrophy, which strikes about 4000 children each year." They close by stating, "It is important to recognize that the use of animals will remain essential to the search for new medical knowledge that ultimately will save lives and help relieve human suffering." This strong statement contains APM's **thesis**. It indicates to the reader APM's priorities in this controversy, which successfully adds to their **ethos**.

Both of these brochures are successful in conveying the organizations' ideas to their intended **audiences**. Both groups share a common interest, which is

to get support for their cause. Since their primary audience is the same, they must effectively cover the same key points that their adversary will cover. Each organization does a sufficient job in doing this; however, the different tactics greatly affect their **credibility** in convincing their readers.

For example, PETA use **weak logos** and **sensational pathetic appeals** to substantiate its position. It uses pictures of animals in upsetting circumstances and plays on the **appeal to emotion** to gain sympathetic support. This is somewhat effective, but there is a gamble in relying on the compassion of humanity. PETA use **few statistics** and **no documentation** to direct readers to their sources. Its choice to focus on the **emotional** and **weak logical appeals** suggests that it is less **credible** than APM.

APM, on the other hand, utilizes **logos** and **ethos** as its basis of persuasion. Since the members are professionals, their viewpoint has more influence. Along with their **claims**, they present **statistics**, including dates, names and examples; as a result, their delivery is more **believable**. They also claim to share the public's concerns for the humane treatment of animals, making their **persona** less cold and more humane. All in all, both pieces were effective, but the article written by APM was much more plausible.

#### Works Cited

- Association of Professors of Medicine. "Must Animals Be Used in Biomedical Research?" Washington, DC: APM, 1985.
- People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals. "Animal Rights—Why Should It Concern Me?" Washington, DC: PETA, 1993.

#### Advice from the Writer

I was apprehensive and confused when our teacher first gave us the assignment. I didn't know how to begin. I found that it was easy to

choose a topic that I was familiar with and interested in. Since I work in a research hospital, I chose the controversy of animal research. After I got my two articles, I had a difficult time organizing my paper and my thoughts. Again, I didn't know where to start! I couldn't decide whether I wanted to evaluate one article entirely, then the other, or if I should evaluate them integrally (point/counterpoint). I met with my teacher several times and finally decided that it would be more effective to give each side's argument for each issue. I focused mainly on the credibility of each article—were their viewpoints backed up by credible sources or were their arguments based solely on opinions? I looked at the language used to persuade the audience. I also concentrated on the structure of the sentences to see if there were patterns or significance in their structures. As you work on this essay, the main thing is to allow yourself enough time to read the articles several times, see what effects they had on you, and figure out why they had this effect.

#### Comments from the Instructor

There is much that I like about Kristine's essay, which fulfilled the assignment admirably. She was able to stay out of the debate herself and focus on evaluating the effectiveness of the rhetoric in her documents.

Kristine organizes her essay logically, addressing the less convincing PETA argument first and then addressing the stronger case that the APM put together. Within these two main sections, Kristine addresses in parallel fashion the same features of each case. The order she sets up for each section is to address first the identity of the **speakers**; second, their **purpose**; third, their **audience**; fourth, their use of **statistics**; fifth, their use of various other **appeals**. This balance is almost set up like a ratio in mathematics. It makes it easier for her audience to process the details as she evaluates the rhetoric of the complex debate.

I particularly like the way Kristine looks at the **several target audiences** for each document: animal lovers, voters, potential money donors, and the health-conscious reader. By identifying audience members so precisely, she is able to assess with greater precision the effectiveness of the different appeals. One of the strongest features of Kristine's analysis is her evaluation of each group's **ethical appeal**. She looks closely at the way each document presents **statistics** in order to make a statement about the group's **credibility**. For example, note that PETA neglects to inform their audience about the sources of facts, and this in turn "dam-