

HiIT Activity for Business Writing Unit (Website Rhetorical Analysis and Recommendation Report)

Materials: Printed station descriptions, taped around the classroom

Tech: Google Docs

Time: 50 minutes

Objectives:

- Students will **create** sample sentences for each main section in a recommendation report
- Students will **apply** evidence from a rhetorical analysis to given recommendations
- Students will **compare** others' sample sentences and **describe** their effectiveness
- Students will **collaborate** with each other in teams

Directions:

Divide students into 6 teams. Create and share a Google Doc containing the scenario below and that team's rotation schedule. Instruct students to read the scenario and the sample rhetorical analysis before class.

In class, instruct each team to go to their starting location. Give them 1 minute to read the directions, and 4-5 minutes to complete the task at that station. Give them 1 minute to rotate to the next station and read the directions. Repeat this process until each team has completed 4 rotations.

While students are rotating, retrieve their responses for each station and paste them into a master Google Doc to be shared with the class at the end. In this document, students can see different approaches to the tasks side by side and determine which sentences are functioning most effectively.

With about 15-20 minutes left in class, discuss the sentences completed at each station. Ask students which stations were most challenging and how their teams approached the task differently. Emphasize the importance of using strong evidence from the rhetorical analysis for recommendations.

Modifications:

This scenario is specific to a website we had been using in class as a case study for rhetorical analysis, so students were already familiar with many of the observations discussed in the analysis, and had also done some group brainstorming about recommendations for this site as they learned about web design. Any text could serve as a basis for the rhetorical analysis students use as evidence.

I teach a 50-minute class, so students only rotate through 4 stations. In longer or shorter class periods, the number of stations completed could be increased or decreased. Additional discussion or workshop time could be included at the end of longer classes.

Rhetorical Analysis Scenario for Activity

You are writing a recommendation report for the Food Bank of Central & Eastern NC. Someone has already conducted the rhetorical analysis and short excerpts are given below. At each station, you and your team will write a piece of the recommendation report and you will finish the circuit with a skeleton of the report, which we will discuss as a class. You will spend 5 minutes at each station. Record your answers on the last page of this Google Doc.

Here is what you know.

Target Audiences:

Volunteers

The “Volunteers” section of the “Get Involved” tab says, “Volunteers are the heart and soul of the Food Bank’s mission” and that the hours the volunteers put in each year are equivalent to 80 full time employees (“Volunteers”). This shows that volunteers are essential to the success of the food bank, and the organization uses the website to recruit new volunteers. However, on the page dedicated to volunteers, there is an abundance of information such as age requirements, dress code, and rules about group size. While the list of rules is helpful because website users can figure out if they are qualified to volunteer before trying to sign up, it is also intimidating to try to figure out what information applies to you. They also include information about court mandated community service on the same volunteer page, which could deter some potential volunteers who might be uncomfortable volunteering alongside those performing restitution hours.

Donors

There is a main tab dedicated to information about donations, with three subsections called “Donate Money,” “Donate Food” and “Other Ways to Give.” Because “Donate” has its own tab, it is clear that the organization wants to target people interested in donating in some way and to make that process easy. There are eleven different ways the organization accepts monetary donations including, cash, check, stock donations, and corporate partnerships, which appeals to all types of donors and implies that a monetary gift of any size is appreciated and worthwhile. However, some of the links to make a donation lead to other areas of the website and it is difficult to navigate among pages quickly. For example, the “Personal Fundraising Campaign” link leads to another page that contains several more links like “Manage your Campaign,” or “Start a Campaign.” If a user were to follow these different links, it would be difficult for them to return to the original donate page, which could deter them from donating because of the confusion.

Speaker/Writer:

The organization builds its ethos by communicating a large amount of information to diverse audiences. Because the food bank is regional, the information has to be applicable to people from 34 counties. The organization attempts to do this through breaking down information by county or smaller region, but occasionally there is overlap between areas served and the user may be unsure where to go to find their county’s information. For example, the “County Profiles” page states that they serve six distinct areas in the region, but the map shown on the page only

indicates four regions. Because the text doesn't match up with the image, it appears that either the map or the list contains false information. Not having consistent, accurate information damages the speaker's ethos and website users will be less likely to trust them with their donations or time because they don't know where those resources will go.

Text/Message:

The website struggles with consistency among pages and the alignment of the information changes frequently and it is difficult to predict. For example, some pages are left aligned while others are centered or right aligned depending on the location of the images. Because people are accustomed to reading from left to right, it can be hard to quickly read pages that are fully written in center alignment. Readers might miss important information because of the confusing alignment.

Many pages are very text heavy, particularly the "Mission and Goals" page. The lack of contrast between text/images and text/white space makes the page look intimidating and readers might not be interested in engaging with a large block of text. Reading on the web should mirror searching on the web; that is, it should be quick and easy.

Purpose

The primary purposes of the website are to recruit volunteers, encourage donations of money and food, and to enable those who are experiencing food insecurity to find help. The three large buttons on the home page with the words "Volunteer," "Donate," and "Find Help" indicate that these are the website's main purposes. The large buttons make it easy for users to engage with the three main purposes; however, the Donate button leads the user to an entirely different page than the Donate tab in the top menu bar does. In order to better achieve the purpose, the two ways to learn more about donating should be the same so the user knows that their donations are consistently applied to the same cause.

Context

According to [NC Cooperative Extension](#), a food desert is defined as an area with low access to affordable and nutritious food, usually composed of low-income individuals (Food). The [US Department of Agriculture](#) states that these areas are often either urban or rural and primarily served by "fast food restaurants and corner stores that offer few healthy, affordable options." Access to transportation also complicates the issue, as the distance marker for food deserts in rural areas is 10 miles from the nearest grocery store. Much of the area served by the food bank is rural, and North Carolina has one of the [largest migrant farmworker](#) populations in the country. These farmworkers often do not have access to personal or public transportation; therefore, travelling up to 10 miles for healthy food is very difficult. Farmworkers often work on farms that grow non-food crops like tobacco or cotton, so eating what they grow is also not an option. Many of these farmworkers don't speak English as their first language and may be undocumented, making applying for food assistance intimidating or impossible.

Printable Station Instructions

Station 1: MLA citations

Follow the hyperlinks in the context section and figure out how to appropriately cite one of the three source websites. Using the Purdue OWL, complete a works cited entry and indicate where the in-text citation belongs in the paragraph. Don't just copy and paste the URL into Easy Bib!

Station 2: Recommendation report introduction

Imagine the food bank has hired you to conduct a website evaluation. Write a strong opening sentence that builds your ethos as a writer and establishes rapport with your target audience.

Next, write the last sentence of the intro that indicates what the report will accomplish for the reader and transitions into the remaining sections of the report.

Station 3: Methodology

Write a sentence clearly and concisely stating your main research questions you sought to answer in your rhetorical analysis.

Then, write another sentence explaining your criteria for “rhetorical effectiveness.”

Station 4: Discussion of findings

Write a strong sentence summarizing one key point from the rhetorical analysis (can come from any section). Include something that the website did well and something that was an issue about the feature you are discussing.

Then, write a sentence transitioning from the findings section into the recommendations section.

Station 5: Recommendations for Organization

Based on the analysis given, come up with one specific, constructive, measurable, and evidenced recommendation. Make sure to include the benefit to the organization and the increase in rhetorical effectiveness.

Station 6: Conclusion

Write two strong concluding sentences reiterating your purpose for writing and the anticipated outcome for the organization if they implement your recommendations.