Model Informative Essays

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☰ WHAT'S COVERED

This tutorial examines two informative essays — one analytical essay and one definition essay:

1. Model Essay #1: Analytical Essay
2. Model Essay #2: Definition Essay

1. Model Essay #1: Analytical Essay

In an analytical essay titled, "Breaking Down an Image," the writer (Jenna Pack) analyzes the following image of a sports watch superimposed on a blurred male figure:

To evaluate this advertisement, Pack focuses on the elements of the image, including the placement of the watch in a bottom corner of the ad, which compels viewers to focus their vision there instead of on the indistinct male figure. Pack notes that although the male figure is not in focus, it is meant to convey a message to readers. She concludes that the intended audience for the ad is men, particularly male sports enthusiasts.

Pack uses a number of criteria to analyze the ad, including the following:

- Audience
- Context
- Purpose
- Tone

- Arrangement
- Location
- Scale
- Text
- Typography
- Font size and type
- Color
- Connotations
- Readability

By breaking down the advertisement into its component parts, Pack was able to make conclusions about it — not only regarding the intended audience and purpose (i.e., to sell watches), but also about less-obvious aspects of the image's rhetorical situation.

⤳ EXAMPLE While analyzing color and connotation, Pack writes that the red hues, particularly at the bottom of the image "...could connote warmth, raising the heart beat, getting the blood pumping, which all symbolize that the watch is effective for athletes."

As she evaluates the components of the ad, Pack questions everything — from the colors used in it to why the artist made the time display on the watch larger than the watchmaker's logo (an odd strategy for an advertisement).

It is recommended that you read Pack's essay (a PDF copy is attached below). Although its focus is only an advertisement, it demonstrates that understanding can be increased through careful analysis of any subject.

[✎] TRY IT

The next time you view an advertisement, analyze it. See what kind of conclusions you can make about it. As Pack writes in the introduction to her essay, "images have power, which is why we need to understand how to analyze them."

2. Model Essay #2: Definition Essay

In an essay titled "Digital Ethics," the writer (Dan Richards) defines a new word: "netiquette." It is a hybrid word that combines "network" and "etiquette." Richards defines netiquette as the social code of the internet. In addition to providing the meaning of the word, his essay explains why it is needed. To do so, he introduces the concept of digital ethics:

> "Because ethics refers to the way groups and individuals relate to, treat, and resolve issues with each other, digital ethics then encompasses how users and participants in online environments interact with each other and the technologies and platforms used to engage."
>
> He continues that, "one of the most immediate reasons why digital ethics are important is because how we present, indeed construct our persona(s) affects the way in which our communication and intentions will be received. The notion that individual ethics impact our arguments is nothing new.

Much of how we understand and categorize argumentation today stems from Aristotle's 'appeals,' which are generally understood as the means of persuasion--how we support our arguments for specific audiences."

Note: A PDF copy of Richards' entire essay is attached below.

Richards applies terms from Aristotelian ethics (logos, pathos, and ethos) to the concept of online persona. He asks what it means to consider pictures posted on Facebook (for example) as part of persona (regulated by ethos) in the online world. Richards asserts that an online persona's conduct is bounded by "netiquette," the code of online behavior.

In addition to defining a word, Richards considers the ways in which it may impact readers' behavior. He sets parameters to limit "netiquette," and asserts that all systems of etiquette, online or otherwise, cannot be strictly enforced. He demonstrates that online interaction is a reflection of real world interaction, regulated by the same kinds of codes. Penalties are applied when codes are violated.

Richards concludes his definition essay by discussing online ethos, and the persona-building process of social media users. He explains how construction of an online persona impacts a person's ability to make arguments — in job applications (for example), and in less-formal settings. He asks readers to consider the following question: "Social media sites often reveal meaningful insights into a person's character; and, if online self-presentation is a core component to rhetoric, then how well will your arguments stand?"

☑	SUMMARY

> This tutorial examined the extent (in terms of depth and detail) to which writers of informative essays engage with subjects, whether the subject is the analysis of an image or the definition of a new term.

Source: Adapted from Sophia Instructor Gavin McCall