

SOAPSTone and Pathos, Logos, Ethos

Critical Reading for Analysis of Non-Fiction



When reading non-fiction materials, such as those which you will be reading for research, it is important that you as a reader have a strategy for analyzing the text, ultimately to make sure that the resource that you are using yourself is valid and effective. You also need to make sure that you know how to refer to the articles which you have read properly, thereby building up your ethos, or your own credibility as a writer. In order to analyze the text you need to read carefully, be able to summarize the content, discuss what you've read, form opinions and develop the ability to argue an issue. Learning to make meaning from what can be confusing material is a skill that can be learned by using a plan called SOAPSTone.

Speaker
Occasion
Audience
Purpose
Subject
Tone

What is the Subject? State the main point or claim made in the text in a few, focused words. Think in terms of how you would summarize the text when a friend asks, "What's it about?" Be careful as some subjects may be hidden, and there may be more than one subject. The true subject may be introduced at the start of the text, or the speaker may choose to delay the revelation of the true subject at a later point. Why would the speaker do so?

What is the Occasion? This is the time and place the text occurs or was originally created for. What prompted the writing of this text? What inspired it to be written? All writers are influenced by a greater occasion: ideas, attitudes, memories, critiques, and emotions that come from interaction with an issue. Try to determine what triggered the writer to produce this response to an event.

Who is the Audience? This is the group of readers for whom the text was originally written. Think about why this group is the intended audience. The audience may be one person, a group, or a nation. The text may even have been written to or for a specific person or a certain people. Look for clues in the text of where the speaker identifies an audience. What assumptions can you make about the intended audience? Use Historical knowledge if necessary to infer who the audience would be for the text.

What is the Purpose? Think about why the text was written. Ask yourself, “What does the speaker want the audience to think or do as a result of reading this text?” Is the speaker trying to spark a reaction in the audience? It’s important to identify the purpose in order to examine an argument and its line of appeals: Ethos, Logos, and Pathos. Remember PIE when discussing purpose: Persuade, Inform, and Entertain.

Who is the Speaker? Determine the voice that tells the story of the subject. Remember, the author and the speaker are NOT necessarily the same. An author may choose to express the subject from a number of different points of view. If a speaker is identified for you, think about his/her age, gender, class, emotional state, education, etc. How does the speaker’s background shape his/her point of view on the subject?

What is the Tone? When listening to a televised speech or a friend speak aloud it is easy to determine the tone through his/her attitude, body language, pitch and volume of voice, and emphasis. It is a bit trickier with the written word. A tone extends the meaning of a text beyond what is literally said or on the page. Notice the diction, imagery, figurative language, sentence structure (syntax), and word choice used in the text; they point towards a specific tone.

SOAPSTone Plan Critical Reading for Analysis

Article/ Speech Title: _____

<p>Speaker(s) Who is the speaker? What kind of persona do they take? (peer, professional, young adult, child, student, etc.)</p>	
<p>Occasion What is the event/situation?</p>	
<p>Audience Who is the speaker writing to?</p>	
<p>Purpose What does the speaker want the audience to think?</p>	

<p>Subject What is the topic of the article?</p>	
<p>Tone What is the attitude of the speaker(s)?</p>	