CHAPTER 1

Analyzing Texts

The Lessons of Chapter 1

Chapter 1 aims to develop students’ visual literacy and teach them how to “read,” analyze, and write about visual texts, such as political cartoons, comic strips, and editorial pictures. The purpose of Chapter 1 is to walk students through the steps of recognizing visuals as argumentative texts, to develop their strengths as writers or thesis statements and rhetorical analysis essays, and to help students begin to develop strong critical perspectives on words and images. At the same time, the chapter offers a solid foundation in rhetoric as a field of study dating back to 300 B.C.E., and stresses the importance of understanding the relationship between writer, audience, and text. The pedagogical work of Chapter 1 establishes a strong foundation for the rest of the book and can be applied to any visual or written medium.

To achieve the most learning in your classroom, we recommend you start with the Chapter Preview questions and then work your way through the chapter using the advice and guidelines provided below as well as the support offered through the Envision Website (http://www.pearsonhighered.com/envision) and MyCompLab (www.mycomplab.com).

USING THE CHAPTER LESSONS FOR DIFFERENT TEXTS

We hope you will find that the skills in this chapter (particularly visual rhetoric analysis and thesis development) are directly applicable to many different types of texts. For example, the same classroom exercises that apply to a rhetorical analysis thesis building exercise can be used to explore the theses of political speeches, just
as image analysis exercises can be used to explore photographs and films and just as they are used in this chapter to interpret the visual rhetoric of political and editorial cartoons. Sometimes, the topic of a cartoon analysis will lead to a research paper topic or generate ideas for interesting research. Even if it does not, the skills used to craft a thesis and carry out an analysis will become relevant to later argumentative writing. Thus, you can reassure students that analyzing images in political and editorial cartoons offers them a way into complex political debate.

PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICE: BEGIN WITH THE CHAPTER PREVIEW QUESTIONS

You might begin class by asking students to read each of the chapter preview questions out loud. Build on the knowledge they already have to make them feel confident as writers and to give you an understanding of what skills they bring to your course. Here are some discussion starters for working with the questions.

- **How do we read and analyze texts rhetorically?**
  - What texts do students like to read? How do we “read” cartoons, video games, ads, and film? Have students ever studied rhetoric? What preconceptions do they have about “empty rhetoric”?

- **How do we write about visual texts?**
  - What do students think about the academic study of visual texts, such as ads, cartoons, posters, and visual art? Have they written about paintings or photographs in previous classes or high school? (Many AP and ACT exams now have a visual analysis essay, so it is good for you to know what experiences students bring to the course.)

- **How can we generate thesis statements for arguments?**
  - What experience do students have crafting arguments with overt thesis statements? How does a thesis distinguish between a report and an argument? Where have they been told to put the thesis—at the beginning or at the end of an essay?

- **How can we draft rhetorical analysis essays?**
  - What experiences do they have with rhetorical analysis essays in particular? Again, this might be in high school or on essay exams. How
will your course build on that knowledge and give them new tools and strengths they can use in the future?

TEACHING THE CHAPTER’S OPENING IMAGE: THE POLITICAL CARTOON

We open Chapter 1 with a political cartoon by Nate Beeler from the 2008 presidential election. Discuss with your students how the cartoon evokes the common assumption that “rhetoric” refers strictly to “political rhetoric” and is often considered a negative discourse: think of empty rhetoric or mere rhetoric (as opposed to action). Ask students to identify all the different visual elements and tiny arguments made by aspects of the cartoon: the strategically classical columns that are collapsing, the Twin Towers exploding, and the expression on the candidates’ faces, to name a few. While this figure is about politics, how does it use visual and verbal argumentation to make a larger social argument? What other visual texts make similar arguments about non-political subjects?

Website Resource for Teaching the Image
Using the Envision Website, have your class visit Daryl Cagle’s Cartoon Index (see Student Resources/Chapter 1/Resources and Readings/Comics and Political Cartoon Archives and Websites at http://www.pearsonhighered.com/envision) and locate additional political cartoons—as well as other cartoons of the day that make a statement about issues other than politics. In this way, you can begin to teach students that rhetoric is a field of study and practical art that encompasses all aspects of culture, not politics alone. In this way, you can debunk any stereotypes that students might bring to the class about rhetoric or persuasive argumentation being an act of speaking or writing that is strictly confined to the debate team or law courts. You are then prepared to lead students in Understanding Texts Rhetorically.

Writing Activity for Understanding Texts Rhetorically

Visual Rhetoric Narrative: Ask students to emulate Alex’s walk in Chapter 1 and observe all the visual rhetoric they encounter during one walk across campus or commute to school. Your students can create a multimedia journal, either collecting or taking photos of any persuasive texts (visual and print texts) that they find over the course of one week or even one day, such as those shown in Figure 1.2 to 1.5. Ask students to write a short description for each text: who is the writer, who is the
intended audience, and what is the argumentative message? When we teach this activity in our classes, we often ask students to compose a concluding paragraph regarding what the texts combined together suggest about their community or culture, and we ask them to write one final sentence about how they this activity might have changed their awareness of how rhetoric is all around them.

**WEBSITE RESOURCES FOR UNDERSTANDING TEXTS RHETORICALLY**

When asking our students to compose a visual rhetoric narrative, we usually assign students to read the model visual rhetoric narratives posted on the Envision Website. The narratives by Esmeralda Fuentes, Austin Rachlin, Kimberley Chu, and Nicholas Giacomini offer a lens into life at Stanford; your students can build off these models and make their own arguments. As a teacher, use the worksheet called Visual Rhetoric Narrative Writing Activity (see Student Resources/Chapter 1/Handouts, Exercises, and Assignments found at http://www.pearsonhighered.com/envision).

**Pedagogical Practice: Understanding Rhetoric**

If your students are resisting the notion that rhetoric is all around us and works as a form of cultural persuasion, then return to the quotation by Victor Villanueva on the Part Opener preceding Chapter 1. We often place this quote on a PPT slide the first day of class and then show a short video from YouTube (such as the one called “Onslaught” by the Dove Campaign for Real Beauty) to show how, indeed, rhetorical texts are powerful influences on what we do, buy, think, feel, and believe.

**WRITING ACTIVITY FOR UNDERSTANDING RHETORIC**

As an exercise, have students compose their own written statements or cartoon arguments about “rhetoric’s classical definition as the art of persuasion” (Villanueva) or “the ability to discern the available means of persuasion in any given situation” (Aristotle). What have they learned from conducting visual rhetoric narratives? How might they be empowered to recognize texts, choose what they wish to accept, and craft their own persuasive pieces?
**Teaching the Rhetorical Situation and Figure 1.6**

When teaching Chapter 1, we often ask students to open their books to Figure 1.6, the drawing of the Rhetorical Situation. You, too, can jump to this Figure as a shortcut for imparting the key concept of the chapter. As a class, discuss the elements of the rhetorical situation and offer an example from political rhetoric; for instance, Obama the President (writer), the American Public asking questions by video-conference (audience), and his answers after the State of the Union speech (text). Then, ask students to review the bullet list of examples on page 6 under the line “In constructing your own arguments every day, you also need to evaluate your rhetorical situation.” They might make up funny scenarios where a rhetorical situation went very wrong as a way to come to understand the importance of this key concept.

**Pedagogical Practice: Strategies for Analyzing Texts Rhetorically**

This section of Chapter 1 takes students through critical analysis of different visual texts: comics, editorial cartoons, Scott McCloud’s cartoon animation of a lesson in art, two pages from the graphic novel Cancer Vixen by *New Yorker* cartoonist Marisa Acocella Marchetto, and a creative practice based on the comic strip Penny Arcade. These texts function as short, but complex, visual arguments. You might assign this section for reading and discussion in small groups in class; have students identify which examples moved or interested them most and then present a statement about what they have learned about cartoonists as writers who are making powerful arguments through visual texts. When we teach these pages of *Envision*, we often ask students to suggest what alternative examples they would publish in the book as a way to get them thinking about the way visual rhetoric works all around them. You could even have students bring in potential replacement images and run each one through the Prewriting Checklist on Comics and Cartoons found at the end of the chapter.

**Writing Activity on Analyzing Texts Rhetorically:**

*Diagnostic Essay:* Ask students to write down a few thoughts about what they think of a particular cartoon as a short diagnostic writing assignment. Students might begin with these questions: 1) who is its audience? 2) what can you learn
about the context? and 3) what is the text’s argument? But then, have the students include points raised by the examples presented in this section to show reading comprehension and depth of critical analysis. You can also ask students to study the sample essays on the Envision Website (http://www.pearsonhighered.com/envision/27).

**WORKING WITH THE CREATIVE PRACTICE**

The pedagogical purpose of this chapter’s Creative Practice is to help students develop visual literacy—understanding the comic as an argument, and compare the visual text to the verbal piece by Jerry Holkins. You can use this exercise as a precursor to having students compose a full-length rhetorical analysis essay, as delineated in the last part of Chapter 1. If your school allows for multimedia composition, you can also have students work in a high-technology classroom or at home to take a news headline and work in their groups to design a political or editorial cartoon to present to the rest of the class.

**TEACHING THE CHAPTER READING: “I WAS A TOOL OF SATAN” BY DOUG MARLETTE**

You can use the chapter reading as both a model essay and a springboard for discussion about the persuasive power of visual texts such as political cartoons. We often explain to students the context for this essay, as well as the cartoon itself, since many students may be too young to remember the actual events. Specifically, Marlette responded to the discrimination against Arab-Americans in the wake of 9/11 through drawing his cartoon. Then, when his cartoon caused a public outcry, he wrote an essay as a serious defense of his purpose as a cartoonist. You can point out to students that in “I Was a Tool of Satan,” Marlette argues that visual texts are meant to challenge cultural ideas, to “poke and prod.” Moreover, his article demonstrates his expertise in using not just visuals but in using words, or the tools of written argument, to persuade his audience. Marlette argues that his cartoon relies on humor to challenge stereotypes about many groups in society: stereotyped Middle Eastern terrorists, Christian and Muslim religious fundamentalists, U.S. politicians, and American terrorists such as Timothy McVeigh.
To teach this reading effectively, ask students to read passages out loud and point out where Marlette uses concrete evidence to support his claims. Have other students read the annotations in blue to develop their critical understanding of how an argument about visual rhetoric works. Discuss how Marlette uses the rhetorical tropes of religion to structure his article, from the title to the thesis to the conclusion. Or, you can stage a debate, with one side of the class arguing that the article is a successful defense of the cartoon and the other side taking the con view.

Recognize that some students may be offended by the cartoon—some might be upset since it is against Islamic law to create any visual depiction of the prophet Mohammed, while others might be upset that the cartoon mocks 9/11 security measures and makes fun of the line “What would Jesus do?” You can use strong reactions to open a discussion of the ethics of visual rhetoric and what it means to reflect and challenge social norms.

Teaching with Technology: On Practicing Rhetorical Analysis

This section of Chapter 1 asks students to begin writing their own rhetorical analysis essays. If you have access to the Internet in your classroom you can have students select material from the comics and political cartoons archive on the Envision Website (see Student Resources/Chapter 1/Resources and Readings/Comics and Political Cartoon Archives and Websites at http://www.pearsonhighered.com/envision). In a low-technology classroom students could bring in photocopies of visual rhetoric, magazines, objects, or rely on their own written journal entries. Depending on their levels of technological sophistication, students might use programs like Photoshop or PowerPoint to create their cartoon images. In a low-technology classroom, you could offer students samples from magazines or newspapers to work with, as well as drawing materials. No matter your method, ask students to use the At a Glance Box on page 23 to make sure they have selected an image complex and argumentative enough to sustain a robust rhetorical analysis essay. For example, a magazine image of a model cannot be said to be rhetorical simply because the model is beautiful. One of our students once brought in a photo of actress Catherine Zeta-Jones and claimed, “This is my visual rhetoric.” Sadly, we had to tell him that the photo alone would be hard to write a complete essay on, and we encouraged him to think of the advertisements for products or for causes such
as AIDS awareness that feature well-known models in their efforts to persuade. Fortunately, he found a T-Mobile ad with Catherine Zeta-Jones her and was able to use that for his essay.

**TEACHING DEVELOPING A THESIS STATEMENT**

The most important part of the rhetorical analysis essay is the thesis statement. We’ve included instruction on developing a thesis statement in Chapter 1 so your students can learn this important skill. When we teach this chapter, we have students work through the questions on page 24–25 with regard to their selected visual rhetoric texts. They can learn from the writing about Figures 1.12 and 1.13, but they really develop their expertise as writers by working with their own chosen texts. In fact, we often return to these pages when teaching Chapter 6, since students can lose sight of their own arguments when immersed in the research process.

Use the assessments of various thesis statements about Mike Thompson’s cartoon as talking points in class. These statements provide much needed models for successful and unsuccessful thesis statements. It is often easier for students to identify broad generalizations and claims in a sample piece of writing than to imagine what they might look like or to identify them in their own work. You can extend the classroom discussion further by asking students to revise problematic thesis statements in small groups or by having students return to the student model essays to assess the thesis statements and to generate a list of components that make an effective thesis.

**WORKING WITH THE AT A GLANCE BOX ON TESTING YOUR THESIS**

A strategy for collaborative work on thesis development is to have students practice writing thesis statements in small groups around cartoon images that they select from the *Envision* Website’s comics and political cartoon archives (see Student Resources/Chapter 1/Resources and Readings/Comics and Political Cartoon Archives and Websites at http://www.pearsonhighered.com/envision). Often, we find that when students work together, they learn from each other’s strengths and can help each other develop techniques for approaching all aspects of the thesis: the observation, the evidence, and the significance. During this collective process,
students should be encouraged to discuss the merits of the work of their peers and to mentor each other in the thesis building process.

**TEACHING THE STUDENT WRITING: “DRUGS TO DEATH IN A POLITICAL CARTOON”**

We know from pedagogical research that students learn best from examining models and then teaching each other what they have learned. You can use the student essay on pages 27–33 for class discussion of what makes for an effective rhetorical analysis essay. Our own students have told us that they appreciate the blue annotations in terms of what works best for such an essay. Have your students read the essay and its annotations, then create new annotations in the left margin to complement the annotations in the right margins. They could also make a paragraph-by-paragraph imitation (using the classical rhetoric technique of *imitatio*) by swapping what they wrote about their own text with an emulation of each of Cyana Chilton’s paragraphs. However, do emphasize that this essay is only one way of approaching the rhetorical analysis assignment. Be sure to go online to the *Envision* Website and assign several model analysis papers to your students for comparison. They can report out to each other on the annotations they create for any of those essays.

**Teaching Referring to Images in Your Writing**

Go over this carefully with your students since the proper reference, insertion, and documentation of students is not familiar to them, even if they have had writing activities focused on visual texts in the past. We like to point to the way images are inserted in *Envision* as a model for how to refer to images strategically and correctly.

**WRITING ACTIVITY FOR THE AT A GLANCE BOX ON VISUAL RHETORIC ANALYSIS**

When teaching this chapter, we use the questions in the At a Glance box on page 34 as peer review prompts for the first draft of the rhetorical analysis. We allow time in class for students to write comments on drafts (either on a print-out or using the comment feature in Word if working on laptops). Peer review sessions can also take place in class or outside of class. You can supplement the At a Glance questions with more detailed peer review guidelines on the *Envision* Website (see Student
Teaching the Writer’s Process

As you reach the end of Chapter 1, you will have worked through many of the activities with your students and gotten to know them as learners. We recognize that different students have different needs (students with disabilities, international students, first-generation college students, student-athletes). You may want to explore the resources available to you on the Envision Website to help you teach these students. For instance, alternate versions of Envision are available in Braille or as an audio textbook. There is also a student resource guide on the Envision Website (see Student/Resources/Chapter 1/Resources and Readings at http://www.pearsonhighered.com/envision) that provides a “roadmap” for students transitioning to college life, which offers valuable information about their rights to resources on campus and general advice. Under Instructor Resources, the Envision Website offers an extensive reading list for students with disabilities, as well as many useful Web links (including the Society for Disability Studies, Faculty Resources: Disability Support Services, Interdisciplinary Bibliography on Disability in the Humanities, and more).

Working with Student Writing on the Envision Website

Ask students to choose an essay from the Envision Website and analyze its key components paragraph by paragraph. By simply jotting down a few comments in the margins of each paragraph (even if this consists of simply describing what each paragraph does), students can prepare themselves for the writing process. Have students read particular paragraphs out loud and share their findings with the rest of the class.

As a springboard to research projects, we often have students analyze some of the shorter rhetorical analysis papers with an eye for turning them into longer research projects. We ask students to generate ideas in groups about how they might expand these short papers into longer ones. This exercise will help students to understand how the work they do with political cartoon analysis, say, is relevant to the longer research paper.
BREAKING THE CHAPTER INTO DAYS OF THE WEEK

DAY ONE (PAGES 2–7)
Introduce students to the basic concepts of rhetoric and visual persuasion. Answer the Chapter Preview questions, freewrite about a persuasive visual text or the students’ experience of the visual rhetoric in their daily lives. Have students visit the resources on the Envision Website to see how rhetoric is found in all different kinds of media and complete the Visual Rhetoric Narrative in emulation of Alex’s walk. Study Figure 1.6 and discuss visual literacy.

DAY TWO (PAGES 7–22)
Turn to close analysis of visual texts, including comics, cartoons, and animations. Students can complete the Creative Practice by analyzing the comics and political cartoons in the book and on the Envision Website. Doug Marlette’s essay can be used to talk about argument, context, and audience. You can also use Marlette’s essay at any point during the week if you need to model a particular aspect of persuasive argumentation for students (such as claims, evidence, description, transitions, comparison, tone, style, etc.). For example, Marlette claims that his cartoon was misinterpreted and describes his critics as failing to realize that his strategy is to offend all groups equally. He insinuates that his critics are not very intelligent for failing to realize this. Marlette’s tone can be described as humorous and provocative. He provokes his critics by describing in detail the cartoon, thus reopening old wounds, and ends the piece on a funny note by comparing himself to televangelists, Jim and Tammy Bakker.

DAY THREE (PAGES 23–37)
The final third of Chapter 1 gets students into the writing process and sets them up to write a rhetorical analysis of a text of their choice. Study the student writing by Cyana Chilton, complete the At a Glance boxes for selecting images, and work on developing a thesis statement. Use the resources on the Web if you would like a diverse range of persuasive essays. Derek Huang, Jonathan Hwang, Joseph Yoon and others offer additional rhetorical analyses and longer research papers on the Envision Website. You create a comparative exercise in which students, having analyzed Cyana Chilton’s essay, are then asked to compare it with Jeff Enquist’s
essay from the Student Writing section of the Envision Website (http://www.pearsonhighered.com/envision/15).

ONLINE RESOURCES FOR CHAPTER 1

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MyCompLab Resources for Chapter 1

1. **Art Spiegelman and September 11**: exercise on words and images. Find at Resources > Writing > Writing and Visuals > Exercises > Words and Images: Art Spiegelman and September 11

2. **Venezuelan mural**: interactive viewer of analyzing an image. Find at Resources > Writing > Writing and Visuals > Multimedia > Venezuelan Mural

http://www.pearsonhighered.com/envision for expanded assignment guidelines and student projects.

http://www.mycomplab.com for additional general writing and research resources.