

Using the rhetorical modes to write an introduction for The Tragedy of Julius Caesar Exercise 1, version 4

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ # \_\_\_\_\_

How do we build a paragraph or an essay? Let's look to the physical world to open our minds to some of the ways people have created buildings.

Think about how many different kinds of tools, buildings materials, and architectural strategies there are, and how they affect the final outcome. The Romans built massive arenas and public buildings with stone and columns, and we can still see them today, thousands of years later. To make an igloo, you can use your hands and mittens, an ice saw, and packed snow to create a small temporary dwelling for cold climates. With an axe and trees, early settlers in America built log cabins. An airplane hangar is made of steel beams and large pieces of sheet metal. Each building serves its own purpose, and each is constructed in a unique way. Its cost, function, style, form, and function serve the people who built it or the people who use it.

What kind of paragraph or essay do you want to create? Like a builder, you can use different language and different structures to create a variety of kinds of writing—each of them expressing many of the same ideas and having a similar function, but each unique because of the language and the way that you have written or structured it.

The Greeks and Romans defined many of the basic kinds of writing that we still use today. They gave us the idea that each kind of writing had a different form, or was used for a different purpose or occasion. Today, we use the term “rhetorical modes” to identify a number of different writing styles.

For this discussion, we will focus on several rhetorical modes: persuasion, argument, comparison/contrast, process analysis, narration, and description.

In simple terms:

Persuasion is used to convince people, often through an appeal to their emotions. The goal is to convince them that your opinion or idea is correct.

Argument is a form used to prove a point. It has evidence and relies on logic, among other things. It has a claim, reason, support, and warrant. We will talk about all of these in detail later.

Comparison/Contrast allows the writer to compare and/or to contrast the similarities and/or differences. This is usually done with two people, two ideas, two concepts, etc.

Process analysis is commonly known as a “how to” essay. The writer can focus on something that is ordinary or something that is complex. It could be as simple as how to cook an egg, or it could explain a long chain of events. Putting the ideas in sequence and explaining each step well is the goal.

Narration is the telling of a story. It can be used to relate an idea, tell a story, or to entertain.

Description is used to explain the many details of one or more particular thing, place, or concept.

Let's look at how these rhetorical modes can be utilized in the service of creating an opening paragraph for The Tragedy of Julius Caesar. Here are some short opening selections that serve as good examples as to how to write in each rhetorical mode.



#### Persuasion:

While some critics would try to convince the contemporary audience that William Shakespeare's The Tragedy of Julius Caesar was also in a tragedy in historical terms, that idea is a false one that appeals only to the emotions of our present society. Assassination for political purposes was common and an accepted practice in the ancient world and the Roman world. Likewise, the suicides of the characters in the play simply represent a common way for Romans to end their lives honorably and quickly. There was no tragedy in the historical facts of the real Julius Caesar and those around him. [Consider adding some quotations to prove these assertions here. Create a transition to your body paragraphs with another idea? Or, simply leave this introduction, and add any additional ideas once you have finished writing the full paper.]

#### Argument:

In William Shakespeare's drama The Tragedy of Julius Caesar, there are no true villains except Cassius. He is a man driven out of personal revenge, jealousy, and a desire to use his powers to deceive others. These three elements are his alone, and they make him a person to be despised. [Extend this with more material that can be examined in more detail later in the body paragraphs.]

#### Comparison/Contrast:

William Shakespeare's drama The Tragedy of Julius Caesar is a complex play that gives the audience characters of many kinds, and among them are two whose lives and fates are intertwined. They are more unlike than similar, though their actions in some respect are the same. While many would fault Brutus for his actions, he stands in contrast to Cassius, who is driven by personal gain rather than a love for the Roman republic. On one hand, we have Brutus, an honorable man who is entrusted with a decision of great magnitude: to save Rome by allowing Caesar to live, or to save Rome by killing him. On the other hand is Cassius, whose greatest impetus has its roots in his personal jealousy and who revels in the thought of being the person to be responsible for orchestrating the death of a great leader. A proper study to compare and to contrast the motives, words, and actions of these two characters will show them in a true light, one that shines upon their souls.

#### Process analysis:

As Aristotle mentions in Poetics, the sequence of events is critical to creating tragedy. He indicates "that the sequence of events, according to the law of probability or necessity, will admit of a change from bad fortune to good, or from good fortune to bad" (<http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/poetics.mb.txt>).

That could not be truer than in the drama The Tragedy of Julius Caesar by Elizabethan playwright William Shakespeare who wrote his work in 1599. The elements of tragedy explored by Shakespeare start much earlier in history, and they are rooted in the writings of the Greek thinker Aristotle (384–322 B.C.E.) . . . [who is] among the greatest philosophers of all time"

(<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle/>). By studying and analyzing Poetics, and the elements of tragedy, the reader can better understand the writing process involved in creating a tragic piece, and how it is that Shakespeare's play written nearly two thousand years later is an excellent example of such a work.

#### Narration:

As a person born roughly two thousand years after the life and death of Julius Caesar, I too have been witness to the assassination of a modern leader, and others. I remember very clearly the day that Osama bin Laden, the figurehead of Al Qaeda, was shot and killed by American forces. That ended more than ten years of searching for him by the Americans and its allies. My family and I cheered when we first saw the footage on the news. I also remember hearing about President Obama's decision to assassinate an American citizen who had sided with the enemy overseas. The Americans used a missile to kill him. These assassinations by our government were necessary to preserve our country's freedom, and I am personally proud of the way our military forces acted. Although it meant the taking of a lives of others, these actions were justified.

When I heard from my English teacher that we were going to be reading about Roman times in the form of a play, I was not excited. After all, I don't really like to read history or old books, and I don't care much about literature. However, William Shakespeare's The Tragedy of Julius Caesar seems to have some elements in common with our current society and times, and it has lessons about real life that we can learn from.

#### Description:

The authorship of William Shakespeare's The Tragedy of Julius is not in question, but Shakespeare does draw upon many sources for his play. Understanding and describing in detail the elements in each of his sources used in creating the play can help the audience understand what the historical facts are as well as those added for dramatic effect by Shakespeare. First, one must look at what, in fact, the sources are. [List the sources here and describe them very briefly before proceeding with the body paragraphs.]

Think about what point you want to make. Consider how you might use these different rhetorical modes in your writing. For the most part, we have been using the framework of the PEAS format to create argument paragraphs. However, you may find that you can use these other rhetorical modes to write your essay. Doing so will give it more variety of style and form, and it might be a way for you to write either more material or to make connections in the literature, or to connect it to the outside world.

Continue to write fairly formal language when you write an academic paper, but you can still vary your rhetorical mode and keep within the general guidelines for writing.

Consider your audience, the kind of writing you need to do, and the assignment when you make your choices.

For now, experiment with three rhetorical modes of your own choosing. Fill out the questions at the end of this packet, too.

Rhetorical Mode:

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1. In your previous writing in school, do you remember reviewing the rhetorical modes? Please list the ones that you can remember that you have used. Tell how you used them, and in what classes.
2. How do you find your writing changes while using these rhetorical modes?
3. Which rhetorical mode changes your writing the most, and why?
4. Explain how you think that one or more of these modes of writing will be used in your paper?