

1.1 Components of the rhetorical situation

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____ **Total: 17 marks****KEY WORDS** message 讯息 • audience 受众 • purpose 目的 • exigence 触发事件 • writer 作者

Objective

Build the skills to answer exam questions on the **rhetorical situation** 修辞情境.**You must be able to:**

- name the components: **exigence** 触发事件, **audience** 受众, **purpose** 目的, **writer** 作者, **context** 语境, **message** 讯息
- identify each component from a short passage or headnote
- explain how a change in one component changes the others
- avoid describing a device without linking it to purpose

1 Worked examples

Study these first. Each one shows the method for a task used later.

■ The six components

Exigence is the situation that makes writing necessary now. **Purpose** is what the writer wants to happen. **Audience** is who is addressed. **Writer** is the persona and standing being projected. **Context** is the surrounding circumstances the reader shares. **Message** is what is actually claimed.

■ Reading a headnote

An AP headnote is not decoration. “Delivered to the graduating class of a medical school in 1974” gives you audience, occasion and probable purpose before you read a word of the passage.

■ Why the components interact

Change the audience and the evidence that will persuade changes with it. A claim addressed to specialists may be stated technically; the same claim for a general audience needs a comparison. So a device is always a choice **for** somebody.

2 Practice

2.1 Name four components of the rhetorical situation. [2]

2.2 Explain the difference between exigence and purpose. [2]

2.3 A letter is written by a hospital director to local residents after a service closure is announced.

(a) State the exigence. [1]

(b) State one way the audience shapes the likely evidence. [1]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 A headnote reading “published in a national newspaper the week after a factory fire” supplies mainly [1]

- **A** the writer’s syntax
- **B** exigence and context
- **C** the thesis
- **D** the line of reasoning

3.2 A device analysis earns credit only when it is linked to [1]

- **A** the length of the sentence
- **B** the writer’s purpose and audience
- **C** the number of examples
- **D** the date of publication

3.3 A speech is rewritten for a specialist conference instead of a public meeting.

- (a) State one change you would expect in the evidence. [1]
- (b) Explain why the change follows from the rhetorical situation. [2]

3.4 Full free-response task. In 1963, the mayor of a mid-sized city wrote an open letter to residents defending a proposal to close two neighbourhood libraries and open one larger central library. The letter appeared on the front page of the local newspaper and opened: *“I know what these buildings mean to you. I grew up in one of them.”*

Read the situation carefully. Then write an essay that analyses the rhetorical choices the mayor makes to advance the argument.

Marked on the AP 6-point rubric: **Row A — Thesis (1), Row B — Evidence and Commentary (4), Row C — Sophistication (1).**

[6]

Solutions

2.1 any four of: exigence, audience, purpose, writer, context, message.

2.2 exigence is the situation that makes writing necessary now; purpose is what the writer wants to happen as a result.

2.3 (a) the announced closure of the service. (b) residents need consequences for their own care explained, so the evidence will be local and concrete rather than statistical.

3.1 B. it supplies the occasion and the surrounding circumstances.

3.2 B. an unlinked device is description, not analysis.

3.3 (a) more technical data and citation, less analogy. (b) specialists share the background knowledge, so evidence that would need translating for a general audience can be stated directly.

3.4 Row A — Thesis (1). One point for a defensible thesis that states an interpretation of the rhetorical situation, not a restatement of it. **Earns the point:** “By opening with his own childhood in the buildings he plans to close, the mayor positions himself as a member of the audience he is about to disappoint, so that the closure reads as a shared loss rather than a decision imposed on them.” **Does not:** “The mayor uses ethos, pathos and logos to persuade the readers” — a list of devices is not an interpretation.

Row B — Evidence and Commentary (0–4). 4 points requires specific evidence for **each** claim and commentary that consistently explains **how** the choice functions. A strong response works the whole situation, not one device: the **exigence** (a decision already taken, announced to people it disadvantages); the **audience** (residents who use those two buildings, addressed as neighbours, not ratepayers); the **purpose** (to convert grief into acceptance, not to inform); the **message** (loss is acknowledged first, benefit second); and the **medium** — a front-page open letter, which reaches the affected residents and the wider city at once, so the mayor is simultaneously consoling one group and justifying himself to another. 3 points: adequate evidence but commentary that explains what the choice *is* rather than what it *does*. 2: evidence that summarises the letter. 1: mostly generalised claims.

Row C — Sophistication (1). Awarded for a genuinely complex reading sustained throughout — for example, recognising that the confession of personal attachment is also a **pre-emption**: by naming the strongest objection first and in his own voice, the mayor leaves his opponents nothing to say that he has not already said more sympathetically. A single perceptive sentence dropped into an otherwise ordinary essay does not earn the point.