

4.1 Components of the rhetorical situation

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____ **Total: 11 marks**

Objective

Build the skills to use the **rhetorical situation** to explain a writer's **structural** choices.

You must be able to:

- explain how audience shapes where an argument begins
- explain how purpose shapes what is emphasised at the end
- link a structural choice to a component of the situation
- avoid explaining structure by the subject alone

1 Worked examples

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

■ Where an argument begins

A hostile audience is met on common ground; a sympathetic one can be addressed directly. Opening choice is therefore evidence about audience, and can be cited as such.

■ What the ending emphasises

Purpose decides the last thing a reader is left with. An argument for action ends on what to do; one for a change of view ends on the view.

■ Linking structure to situation

“He opens with the objection because his audience holds it” is analysis. “He opens with the objection because objections are important” is not: the second explains nothing about this text.

2 Practice

2.1 State what an opening on common ground suggests about the audience. [2]

2.2 State what the ending of an argument is shaped by. [2]

2.3 A speech ends with a specific instruction rather than a reflection.

(a) State what this suggests about purpose. [1]

(b) State how you would cite it as evidence. [1]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 A writer who opens by stating the opposing view most likely faces [1]

- **A** a sympathetic audience
- **B** an audience that holds that view
- **C** no audience
- **D** a specialist audience

3.2 Which is analysis rather than description? [1]

- **A** He ends with a call to action.
- **B** Endings are important in speeches.
- **C** He ends with a call to action because his purpose is to produce a decision, not a change of mind.
- **D** The final paragraph is short.

3.3 A letter to a professional body begins with technical detail; a letter to the public on the same issue begins with a case.

- (a) State the component of the situation that explains the difference. [1]
(b) Explain the reasoning. [2]

Solutions

2.1 that they may be resistant, so agreement must be secured before the difficult claim.

2.2 purpose: it decides what the reader is left with — an action or a view.

2.3 (a) the purpose is to produce a decision or action. (b) quote the closing sentence and state the inference it supports.

3.1 B. the opposing view is met first because the audience holds it.

3.2 C. it links the choice to this writer's purpose.

3.3 (a) audience. (b) the professional body shares the technical background so detail persuades directly, while the public needs a concrete case before any detail can mean anything.