

# *Rhetoric of the Op Ed Page*

*Module 1: Expository Reading and Writing Course*



## Rhetoric of the Op-Ed Page – Student Packet

In this module you will learn about the art of persuasion.

### Items needed to complete the module:

- Articles: “Hooked on a Myth: Do Fish Feel Pain?” by Victoria Braithwaite  
“A Change of Heart About Animals” by Jeremy Rifkin  
“Three Ways to Persuade” by John Edlund  
Letters to the Editor about “A Change of Heart About Animals”  
“Of Primates and Personhood: Will According Rights and  
‘Dignity’ to Nonhuman Organisms Halt Research?” by Ed Yong
- Internet access
- Handouts:
  - Activity 7: Descriptive Outline
  - Activity 8: Annotations
  - Activity 9: Analyzing Stylistic Choices
  - Activity 10: Thinking Critically Questions
  - Letter Scoring Guide

**Instructions:** Complete all of the activities on a separate piece of paper unless space is provided on the handout. Label each activity so that it is easy for your teacher to check your work.

### **Activity 1: Getting Ready to Read**

Skim the title and subheads in the article “Three Ways to Persuade” by John Edlund. Then complete the quickwrite below.

#### **Quickwrite:**

Think of something you tried to persuade a parent, teacher or friend to do or believe. It might have been to buy or pay for something, to change a due date or a grade, to change a rule or decision, to go somewhere, or some other issue. What kinds of arguments did you use? Did you use logic? Did you use evidence to support your request? Did you try to present your own character in a way that would make your case more believable? Did you try to engage the emotions of your audience? Write a short description of your efforts to persuade your audience in this case.

<b>Read “Three Ways to Persuade” by John Edlund</b>
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**Activity 2: Key Concepts**

For each term (Ethos, Logos, Pathos), think about how you would answer the following questions:

1. What does this term mean to you?
2. Should we use the Greek word, or is there an English word that means exactly the same thing?
3. Look at the discussion questions for each section. Are Aristotle's three terms relevant to your own writing?

Complete the boxes below:

<b>Term:</b>	<b>Synonyms:</b>	<b>Antonyms:</b>
<i>Persuasion</i>		
<i>Knowledge</i>		
<i>Belief</i>		

**Activity 3: Surveying the Text**

Look at the article "A Change of Heart About Animals" by Jeremy Rifkin. Think about the following questions:

1. Where and when was this article published?
2. Who wrote the article? Do you know anything about this writer? (Hint: Look at the end of the article.) How could you find out more?
3. What is the subtitle of the article? What does that tell you about what the article might say?
4. The article was published on the editorial page. What does that mean?

**Activity 4: Making Predictions and Asking Questions**

As you look over at the text of “A Change of Heart About Animals,” answer the following questions:

1. What does it mean to have “a change of heart”?
2. What are some common ideas or feelings people have about animals?
3. What kinds of things might cause someone to change his or her ideas or feelings about animals?
4. What are some groups of people who have strong feelings about how animals are treated? What do you know about them? What do they usually believe?
5. What is a vegetarian or a vegan? Do you know anyone who is a vegetarian? What does he or she think about eating animals?
6. What do you know about the author? Do you think he might be a vegetarian?
7. The first paragraph mentions breakthroughs in biotechnology and nanotechnology. Do you think this article is about those things? Why or why not?
8. This article appeared in a newspaper. What does that mean about the audience? Is this an article for scientists?
9. What do you think is the purpose of this article? Does the writer want readers to change their minds about something?
10. Will the article be negative or positive in relation to the topic? Why?
11. What argument about the topic might it present? What makes you think so?
12. Turn the title into a question (or questions) to answer after you have read the text.
13. Preview key vocabulary in the chart below.

**Activity 5: Key Vocabulary**

<b>Vocabulary Words</b>	<b>Root or Base Word &amp; its other associations</b>	<b>Define by example, comparison or contrast</b>
<i>humane</i> <i>inhumane</i>		
<i>cognitive</i>		
<i>genetically wired</i>		
<i>empathy</i>		

**Read “A Change of Heart About Animals” by Jeremy Rifkin****Activity 6: First Reading Questions**

Answer the questions below.

1. Which predictions turned out to be true?
2. What surprised you?
3. What does Rifkin want readers to believe?
4. What are some of the things people believe humans can do that animals cannot? How does Rifkin challenge those beliefs?
5. What authorities does Rifkin use to support his case?
6. What action does Rifkin want readers to take?
7. How does Rifkin organize his essay? Is it an effective organization?

**Activity 7: Descriptive Outline**

See handout

**Activity 8: Annotations**

See handout

**Activity 9: Analyzing Stylistic Choices**

See handout

**Activity 3 (Revisited): Surveying the Text**

Look at the Braithwaite article. Think about the following questions:

1. Where and when was this article published?
2. Who wrote the article? Do you know anything about this writer? (Hint: Look at the end of the article.) How could you find out more? Is this writer more or less credible than Jeremy Rifkin?
3. What is the title of the article? The subtitle? What does that tell you about what the article might say? Can you make some predictions?

**Read “Hooked on a Myth: Do Fish Feel Pain” Victoria Braithwaite****Activity 7 (revisited): Descriptive Outline**

See handout

**Activity 8 (revisited): Annotations**

See handout

**Activity 9 (revisited): Analyzing Stylistic Choices**  
See handout

**Read “Of Primates and Personhood: Will According Rights and  
“Dignity” to Nonhuman Organisms Halt Research? By Ed Yong**

**Activity 7 (revisited): Descriptive Outline**  
See handout

**Activity 8 (revisited): Annotations**  
See handout

**Activity 9 (revisited): Analyzing Stylistic Choices**  
See handout

**Activity 10: Thinking Critically Questions**  
See handout

**Read Letters to the Editor**

**Activity 11: Questions**

Answer the following questions about the Letters to the Editor.

1. Which letter is more convincing? Why?
2. What elements of persuasion does Bob Stevens use?
3. What elements of persuasion does Lois Frazier use?

**Activity 12: Writing Assignment - Letter to the Editor**

A common way to respond to an editorial is to write a letter to the editor. Now that you have worked extensively with this text, you are ready to write a well-informed response to Rifkin’s or Braithwaite’s ideas.

**Requirements:**

1. Begin your letter with “Dear Editor.”
2. Elements of persuasion must be used: Logos, Ethos, Pathos.
3. Edit your letter for spelling and grammar errors.
4. Turn in a copy of your Letter to the Editor with your Module Packet.

**Suggestions:**

1. Look at the Opinion/Editorial section of a newspaper for ideas on how to craft your letter.

**Grading:**

1. Letters will be scored using the Scoring Guide for Letters to the Editor. See handout.

**Note:** 1. A good letter to the editor is focused and concise. It should make your point, but no words should be wasted. It is sometimes best to write a longer draft and then cut out everything that is not essential.

2. These days, most letters are emailed to the newspaper.

**Choose ONE of the Letter-to-the-Editor Assignments below.**

**Response to Rifkin**

After thinking about your reading, discussion, and analysis of Rifkin’s article and the letters in response to it, what do you personally think about Rifkin’s point? Do you think it is true, as Rifkin says, that “many of our fellow creatures are more like us than we had ever imagined”? Do you think we need to change the way we treat the animals around us? Or do you think Rifkin is wrong? Write a letter expressing your viewpoint to the editor of the newspaper.

**Response to Braithwaite**

Victoria Braithwaite argues that fish have nervous systems that are similar to humans and are very likely to feel pain the way we do. She says, “We should adopt a precautionary ethical approach and assume that in the absence of evidence to the contrary, fish suffer.” She also says, “Of course, this doesn’t mean that we necessarily must change our behavior. One could reasonably adopt a utilitarian cost-benefit approach and argue that the benefits of sportfishing, both financial and recreational, may outweigh the ethical costs of the likely suffering of fish.”

Should we ban the use of barbed hooks? Should we change our fishing practices because fish might suffer? Or is Braithwaite making a big deal out of nothing? Write a letter expressing your viewpoint to the editor of the newspaper.

**Activity 13: EPT Timed Write**

Schedule a time to meet with your teacher to complete the Timed Practice EPT Essay. You will have 45 minutes to plan and write an essay in response to the ideas and articles in this module. This essay will be scored using the EPT Rubric and is intended to mirror the English Placement Test. The essay *must* be completed in front of a teacher.

Turn in your completed Module Packet when you meet with your teacher for the practice EPT.



Activity 17  
(Continued)

## Scoring Guide for Letters to the Editor

### *Categories*

- Focus
- Word choice, including the use of text from the article
- Argument and support, including the use of logical, emotional, and/or ethical appeals
- Grammar and mechanics

### *Scoring*

#### **Score of 4—Superior**

- The letter is tightly focused on the issue or issues raised in the editorial, article, or opinion piece to which it responds.
- The letter uses words effectively and efficiently and quotes key words and phrases from the article.
- The letter makes a clear point or points and provides convincing support for those points, including logical, emotional, and/or ethical appeals.
- There are no grammatical or mechanical errors.

#### **Score of 3—Good**

- The letter focuses on an issue or issues raised in the editorial, article, or opinion piece to which it responds.
- The letter uses words accurately and effectively.
- The letter makes a clear point or points and provides support for those points.
- Grammatical or mechanical errors, if present, are minor.

#### **Score of 2—Fair**

- The letter discusses an issue or issues raised in the editorial, article, or opinion piece to which it responds but may be unclear or vague as to its focus.
- The letter is sometimes repetitive or vague in language.
- The letter does not make a clear point or does not provide support for its points.
- Grammatical or mechanical errors inhibit communication.

#### **Score of 1—Poor**

- The letter fails to clearly address an issue raised in the article.
- The letter is vague, repetitive, or confusing.
- The letter fails to make a clear point.
- Grammatical and mechanical errors confuse and distract the reader.



### Activity 7: Descriptive Outline

It is important to analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of the structure an author uses in presenting his argument, and in order to do so readers must first truly understand the structure that the author has crafted. There is always a method in mind.

**STEP ONE:**

Mark the article

- Draw a line across the page where the introduction ends. Does the line go after the first paragraph, or are there more introductory paragraphs?
- Draw a line where the conclusion begins. Is it the last paragraph, or does it begin before that?

**STEP TWO:**

For each section of the article, tell:

- a) What part is it (Introduction, Body, Conclusion)?
- b) What does it “DO” for the reader? What is the author trying to accomplish?
- c) What does it “SAY”? What is the content? Write one sentence for each paragraph.

Paragraphs	Intro, Body or Conclusion?	“DO”	“SAY”
1-2			
3-5			
6-8			
9-10			
11			



## Activity 8: Annotations

### *“A Change of Heart About Animals”*

<b>Sentences from the article</b>	<b>In my own words...</b>
What is the thesis?	
What are the major claims that he makes?	
Are there any claims that he makes that you would disagree with? What are they?	
What evidence does he use to support his claim?	

*Comment on or question 4 things that Rifkin states in the article.*

What Rifkin says...	My response...

***“Hooked on a Myth: Do Fish Feel Pain?”***

<b>Sentences from the article</b>	<b>In my own words...</b>
What is the thesis?	

<p>What are the major claims that she makes?</p>	
<p>Are there any claims that she makes that you would disagree with? What are they?</p>	
<p>What evidence does she use to support her claim?</p>	

<p>What are the major claims that he makes?</p>	
<p>Are there any claims that he makes that you would disagree with? What are they?</p>	
<p>What evidence does he use to support his claim?</p>	

***Comment on or question 4 things that Yong states in the article.***

<p>What Yong says...</p>	<p>My response...</p>
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## Activity 9: Analyzing Stylistic Choices

### Part A

Reread Rifkin's article, looking for "loaded" words—*words the author uses to evoke a positive or negative emotional response from the reader*. List at least five words and explain whether each has a positive or negative connotation. What neutral word might Rifkin have used instead that has the same meaning but not the same emotional impact?

Rifkin's Word	Positive/Negative Connotation	Neutral Word/ General Denotation

### Part B

Answer the following questions about the Rifkin article:

- How would you describe the style of this article? Is it formal? Informal? Academic? Scientific? Conversational?
- What is the effect of giving the names of most of the animals involved in the experiments, but not the names of the scientists?

3. Throughout most of the article, Rifkin refers to “researchers” and “scientists.” In paragraph 13, however, he directly quotes Stephen M. Siviuy, whom he refers to as “a behavioral scientist at Gettysburg College in Pennsylvania.” What is the effect of this sudden specificity?
  
4. What is the effect of all the rhetorical questions in paragraph 15, followed by “such questions are being raised” in the next paragraph?

### **Part C**

Reread Braithwaite’s article, noticing the author’s preference for scientific terms. Answer the following questions about the Braithwaite text in complete sentences.

1. What is the effect of the use of scientific terms in an article that is written for newspaper readers?
  
2. Do these terms confuse the reader?
  
3. Do they make the writer more credible?
  
4. Do they help the reader understand the type of argument being made?

**Part D**

Reread Yong’s article. Note that “A Change of Heart about Animals” and “Hooked on a Myth” were both written to argue for a particular position. However, “Of Primates and Personhood” has a different purpose. What is Yong trying to do in this article? How do his stylistic choices help accomplish this purpose?

The article is designed to report on recent developments in animal rights and what the consequences might be. The author presents different points of view rather than taking a stand of his own. He is careful to note who thinks what and how the positions relate to one another.

Words and phrases can be used to position ideas in relationship to each other. These distinctions might be according to time, location, degree, or other types of differences. For each phrase below, tell how the language positions the ideas that follow it in relation to other ideas. The first one is shown for you.

<b>Author’s phrase</b>	<b>How it positions (sets up) ideas that follow</b>
At the forefront of the battle... (¶ 2)	<i>This phrase identifies a front-runner as opposed to others who will follow.</i>
Other countries...have taken steps... (¶ 3)	
Not everyone is comfortable... (¶ 4)	
Speaking personally... (¶ 5)	
In the US, there is a greater resistance... (¶ 8)	



## Activity 10: Thinking Critically

At this point, the concepts of *ethos*, *logos*, and *pathos* come back into play. From the analysis you have done so far, you should be well prepared to analyze the logic and support of the arguments, the character and intentions of the author, and the emotional effects that the language used and the details provided have on the reader.

### RIFKIN

#### Questions about Logic (Logos)

1. Locate major claims and assertions you have identified in your previous analysis and ask yourself: Do I agree with Rifkin's claim that . . . ?
2. Look at support for major claims and ask yourself: Is there any claim that appears to be weak or unsupported? Which one, and why?
3. Can you think of counterarguments that the author does not deal with?
4. Do you think Rifkin has left something out on purpose? Why or why not?

#### Questions about the Writer (Ethos)

1. Who is Rifkin? If you have not done so already, do an Internet search to find out something about him. What is his profession? What does he usually write about? Does everybody agree with him? Do the facts you find about his life, his credentials, and his interests make him more credible to you? Less credible?
2. Pick one of the studies Rifkin mentions and try to find out more. Is Rifkin's description of the study accurate?
3. Does Rifkin have the right background to speak with authority on this subject?
4. What does the author's style and language tell you about him?
5. Do you trust this author? Do you think this author is deceptive? Why or why not?

#### Questions about Emotions (Pathos)

1. Rifkin says that Germany is encouraging farmers to give pigs human contact and toys. Does this fact have an emotional impact on the reader? If so, what triggers it? What are some other passages that have an emotional effect?
2. Rifkin calls his essay "A Change of Heart About Animals." Does this imply that the scientific discoveries he summarizes here should change how we *feel* about animals?
3. Does this piece affect you emotionally? Which parts?
4. Do you think Rifkin is trying to manipulate your emotions? How?
5. Do your emotions conflict with your logical interpretation of the arguments? In what ways?

### YONG

In paragraph 7, Yong discusses the case of Hiasl (pronounced Hee- sel), a former research chimpanzee who is going to be homeless because his sanctuary is going bankrupt. It is clear from the article that Hiasl's fate depends on how we define "person." Can Hiasl be declared a person with rights? Answer the following questions:

1. What exactly is Hiasl?
2. What qualities does Hiasl have that would make us call him a person? What qualities does he have that would make us call him something else? (You might want to make a chart.)
3. Is Hiasl a person?
4. What should we do about Hiasl?
5. Does Hiasl's plight have potential as an appeal to pathos?
6. Does Yong use it for this purpose?
7. Is Yong entirely objective?