



my homeschool

Year Ten

Skills in English:

Rhetoric and

Opinion

By Jo Lloyd

My Homeschool – Year 10A – Skills in English: Rhetoric and Opinion

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The Rhetoric of Opinion

Beginning Year Ten at My Homeschool we assume students are familiar with writing narrations, being able to succinctly re-tell and share what they have read, learned, and experienced in a variety of forms. Students will have read books from a wide variety of authors, learning first-hand how books act as both a mirror and a window.

Reading from different authors, about various places and times in history (and in the future!) allows us to reflect on our own circumstances as books mirror images and stories, ideals and challenges; they also offer a glimpse into the other and the unknown, giving us a dynamic and vibrant learning experience. This is precisely why My Homeschool is founded on the tradition of reading great living books.

By this stage in a teenager's learning experience, they are beginning to better find their own voice, thoughts and perspectives on different themes, topics, subjects and events; and many teenagers are needing new tools in their toolkit to help them finesse and nuance their expression to be able to present the intricacies of their thoughts, knowledge, wisdom and understanding. Therefore, consistent with Classical Education principles and modern curricula, like the Australian Curriculum, the focus on these last years of high school focus on the need to equip students to discern opinion, evaluate and value the tool of rhetoric, learning how to harness well the inclusiveness (and exclusiveness) of language and empowerment, considering the influence and value of various texts to communicate and inform.

Skills in Writing: Rhetoric and Opinion seeks to inform and equip teenagers with a confident writing voice. By analysing and evaluating how other authors communicate, examining their writing style and the effects of particular texts, teenagers will feel more able and ready to explore and apply these same techniques in their own writing. It is an exciting new developmental milestone and an important tool that they will continue to use throughout their lives.

The essence of rhetoric is a style of writing that is persuasive and effective at presenting a particular point of view or position. To study rhetoric is to examine the ways that writers construct their texts to provide their persuasive arguments, opinions and perspectives. Sometimes this is considered only in the context of speeches or essays, but the reality is that examining aspects of

rhetoric and opinion in a range of written works allows a reader to discern these devices to better understand the purposes and aims of a piece. The ancient Greeks would study rhetoric to better understand how to inform, educate, persuade, or motivate others yet aspects of this style still pervade modern writing in many guises.

Presenting a different text each lesson, teenagers will read a range of texts from many authors and analyse the text and its effects, with a particular emphasis on the literary techniques used and the role of rhetoric and opinion within this.

Students are given a five-step process which is effective, yet deceptively simple, and is based on the principle of narration:

1. **Read the introductory comments** to contextualise the selected piece;
2. **Closely read the text presented**, either in this resource or provided online in the Complementary Links, underlining or highlighting sections as needed and making notes in the margin if desired;
3. **Narrate the text**, making an entry in their English Notebook;
4. **Return to read the analysis** on the text presented; and then
5. **Make notes in their English Notebook** on the key tools and techniques used.

Skills in English: Rhetoric and Opinion is a resource that will be used once a week for Semester One in Year 10 and offers an elegant way to share a carefully curated range of texts that present and teach key aspects of the use of rhetoric and opinion pieces. It includes authors that represent a broad range of background influences, writing for different purposes and audiences. It utilises topics of varied interests to teach students how to write and critically read a range of text types: students will read speeches that changed history, an essay, texts from long ago featuring language from another era, through to contemporary pieces that your child will encounter in the public domain. Each lesson aims to encourage your teen to respond to writing assignments with confidence and skills.

Lesson 1 – I’m a Geographer

Introductory Comments

The text selected for this lesson is an article profiling microbiologist and cave researcher, Hazel Barton. It appeared in *Geographical*, the magazine of the Royal Geographical Society, in November 2020. This magazine was founded in 1935 and promotes advancing exploration, research and promoting geography, geographical knowledge and how geographical themes are relevant and interesting to readers across the world. Each issue profiles a geographer in the regular column called *I’m a Geographer*.

Selected Text

The selected text for this lesson can be found in the Complementary Links.

Write your Notebook Entry

Please now pause and write your narration on the selected text in your English Notebook, being sure to make note of the title of the text and its author, Hazel Barton.

Text Analysis

The purpose of this text is to showcase different geographers to allow readers to see the different pathways and options for geographers and the various projects and initiatives they are interested in. Some might suggest that it presents geography and geographers in such a way that it makes it exciting and enticing for others to follow their lead. Given the purpose and audience and the restriction to one page, as well as the fact that this is a regular column, the format stays largely the same. Notice the key elements of the text type:

- The headings to clearly present the purpose of the text: “I’m a Geographer” and including the person being profiled, Hazel Barton, in bold, red font at the top of the page.
- A small profile picture so readers can see what Hazel looks like before even reading about her.
- A short snippet that captures Hazel’s career in an engaging tone: “...is a microbiologist and cave researcher. She is passionate about the value of exploration to help humanity combat the planet’s most urgent issues.”
- Timeline overviewing Hazel’s key career milestone.

- Headings in bold to guide the reader to key aspects, some of which compel the reader to continue reading the article with their exciting lead-ins, such as “I’ve been trapped in caves before...”.
- A short passage of text which makes it a relatively quick read.

It is likely that you have read other written pieces like this, perhaps profiling a musician, sportsperson, author, entrepreneur or politician. It is conversational in style, and even though it is really a monologue, it mimics the question-and-answer style, particularly with the use of the bold text for the first line of each paragraph. This writing almost makes the reader feel included within a conversation and echoes the style of an interview you may hear on a radio show, television segment or podcast, making it accessible to a wide audience.

Finalise Your Notebook Entry

To complete this lesson please note the key points you learned from examining this text. This may include the use of headings (particularly ones which grab your attention) or the succinct outlining of career milestones within the CV section. Please also note the way that the image portrays this female geographer and how this serves to show geographers in action.