

Rhetorical Analysis Essays: Thomas Paine's *The Crisis*

Top 3 “Takeaways”
(or “Things to Work On...”)

1. Specific Language

- VAGUE: “Paine’s comparison of Britain’s control to slavery really pulls at the emotions of his audience and makes them want to fight.”
- MUCH BETTER: “Paine’s comparison of the British control to slavery makes the colonists realize Britain’s blatant abuse of power; this association enrages the soldiers and inspires them to fight for their freedom.”

2. Quoting Technique

- Avoid “dropped quotes.” Quotes need to be properly embedded into your own writing.

--NOPE: Paine uses antithesis in the second paragraph. “The evil or the blessing will reach you all.”

--YEP: Paine uses antithesis in the second paragraph when he states, “The evil or the blessing will reach you all.”

2. Quoting Technique (continued)

- Avoid quoting longer passages of text. When possible, try to incorporate “snippets” of text (words / phrases) into your own writing.

(Examples on next slide)

2. Quoting Technique

- MEH: Paine almost immediately criticizes soldiers who have withdrawn from battle when he writes, “The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country.”
- MUCH BETTER: Paine almost immediately criticizes soldiers who have withdrawn from battle by describing them as “summer soldier[s]” and “sunshine patriot[s].”

3. Formulaic Transitions

I DO NOT EVER WANT TO SEE THE FOLLOWING WORD IN YOUR ESSAYS EVER AGAIN. EVER EVER EVER EVER AGAIN:

“Lastly”

Nor do I really want to see these terms again, either: “First,” “To begin,” “In conclusion,” etc.

Honorable Mention:

- When writing about a text, you need to do these two things:
 - 1) Write in present tense.
 - 2) Refer to the writer by the full name the first time he is mentioned, and then only by the last name after that.

And one more thing:

- Think about how the strategies WORK TOGETHER to accomplish the writer's purpose.
- The strongest essays explored the big picture: Consider the rhetorical situation. Why are these strategies effective? How is the writer using them to accomplish his or her goal?