

The following assignment is taken from a 2019 Summer Reading assignment from Mount De Sales Academy Here is that link: [original version](#). I especially like and appreciate the way Dr. Muth explains the rhetorical situation; I have reconfigured it for SJPII AP Language 2022 Summer Reading.

The Rhetorical Situation

Writing does not occur in a vacuum. A writer is trying to say something to others for specific purposes and with imagined hopes for how the audience will respond and how the world will be affected by the writing. The personal and social circumstance in which writing is created and read is called the rhetorical situation.

A rhetorical situation contains several components:

- The **rhetor**, i.e., the speaker or writer.
- The rhetor’s **purpose**, i.e., why he or she is writing.
It could be to persuade others, to entertain, to inform, to educate, to inspire, to call to action, etc.
The purpose will usually focus on a topic or issue (sometimes called the **exigence**) about which the rhetor has some purpose in writing.
- The **audience**, i.e., those who the rhetor hopes will read his or her text.
- The **medium** (e.g., speech, writing, film, etc.) and **genre** (e.g., poetry, epic, autobiography, fiction, etc.) the rhetor chooses, based largely on the rhetor’s purpose and audience.
- The social **context** of the writing.
This includes the rhetor’s and the audience’s cultural milieu, i.e., the time period and the religious, political, economic, educational, etc. context of the rhetor and the audience.

Assignment: Use the following chart/questions to examine the rhetorical situation of *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*. Feel free to develop your own chart or format your responses in standard paragraphs with the appropriate headings (If you do this, list source information below each typed paragraph). Each response should be well-developed, thoughtful and thorough (meaning answers all the questions with some specificity and depth). Use complete and grammatically correct sentences, not bullets.

[Please see the “word of warning” Dr. Muth gives about the language Douglass uses in the book.]

<p>The Rhetor/the Writer: Describe the writer of <i>Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass</i> at the time of the writing of the text. Consider these questions: Who is he? Where does he live? When did he write the text? What is his background? What does he do for a living? (Don’t write about everything – pick out what seems most important.)</p>
<p>Sources: Where did you find this information? To what source or sources did you turn? Give basic bibliographical information for the sources, NOT hyperlinks!. Look not only at online sources but of course the text itself and also at the introduction/preface. Note: (apply this for all source material for each section of the chart)</p>
<p>The Writer’s Purpose: Why is Douglass writing? What does he hope his text will do? Is there something he hopes the text will achieve? What is the main topic or issue of the text?</p>
<p>Sources:</p>
<p>The Audience: To or for whom is Douglass writing? Who does he hope will read the text? Why is he targeting this audience?</p>
<p>Sources:</p>
<p>Medium and Genre: These should be reasonably straightforward (is this a speech, a book, a newspaper article, etc.? is this a novel, a biography, a poem, an autobiography, etc.?).</p>
<p>Sources:</p>
<p>Social Context: What is the larger social context of the text? When was it written? Where? What are some of the relevant characteristics (economic, religious, political, etc.) of the time and place the text was written? (Don’t give a complete social history, but focus on those aspects of society that are most relevant to the author, his purpose, and his audience.)</p>
<p>Sources:</p>

Note: the original version was a three part assignment. Since you have Grimm’s to read too, you are only doing this part; however, you will have assignments in class that examine the 3 appeals (ethos, pathos, logos) and the rhetorical (stylistic) choices.