Rhetorical Analysis Skills

Infer (Conclude): Draw conclusions based on implied meaning in a process that leads to a final, major conclusion

For Example: You have new neighbors. You walk outside and find that their garbage can has tipped over and the contents are sprawled on the sidewalk. You notice dirty diapers, formula cans, 87 empty motor oil cans, and numerous pizza boxes. What conclusions can you draw about your new neighbors based on your observation?

Sample assignment: Infer the author's attitude toward the subject based on his/her word choice.

Analyze (Dissect/Divide): Break the subject down into its component parts and describe the importance of the part to the whole

For Example: Consider *CSI*'s use of fingernail scrapings to determine location of the crime. Soil that is removed from the victim is sent to the soil spectrograph to determine all of the components of the soil. Each component provides specific information. By examining the components of the soil, *CSI* is able to discover where the victim was located at the time of the crime.

Sample assignment: Analyze Lee's invasion of Pennsylvania in 1863.
- Purpose
- Process
- Outcome

NOTE: Analysis changes based on the content area. A reasonable analysis may focus on any or all of the above listed components. Analysis is rarely done in isolation. It is most often tied to other directives.

Evaluate (Judge): Judge the worth or value of the subject against objective criteria

For Example: When judging contestants for a dance contest, evaluators rank each participant in several categories such as choreography, artistic interpretation, costuming, and technical skill.

Sample assignment: Evaluate an especially bad movie.

NOTE: The process of evaluating must begin by establishing a criteria. For the example above, the criteria include items such as soundtrack, acting, editing, special effects, etc.

Synthesize (Create): Combine information from multiple sources to create a new insight

For Example: When shopping for a car, a buyer should consult multiple consumer guides regarding reliability, gas mileage, performance, and safety to determine the best fit for the buyer's lifestyle and needs.

Sample assignment: Write a research paper in which you review multiple research studies to decide which is the best treatment for a psychological disorder.