**Critical Reading Context Questions**

To understand the forces shaping an argument, you should ask the following questions. This will allow you to analyze the writer’s rhetorical strategies. These are also questions you should always consider when you are the writer or speaker.

* Who is the intended **audience(s)**?
* What is the writer’s **purpose**? (can range from exploring an issue to changing the reader’s mind to motivating the reader to do something)
* What is the writer’s “**kairos**,” the immediate motivation for writing? (can be related to the place and the occasion of the writing, especially if it’s a speech)
* What is the larger **context** for the argument? (what is going on in the world of the writer and the audience that relates to the topic, including the history of the topic)
* What is the writer’s **ethos?** (relevant experience or expertise, stance toward audience, stake in the issue, character and personality)
* What appeals to **pathos** are used? (statements that appeal to the values, beliefs, emotions of the audience)
* What appeals to **logos** are used? (evidence, logical arguments, appeals to reason, citation of sources)
* What **genre** does the argument fit into? (what type of writing is it—letter to the editor, letter to shareholders, annual report, blog posting, speech to Congress, essay in a magazine, etc.)
* What is the **forum**? Where is the argument published or where is the speech delivered? (what physical space is used?)
* What **style of language** is used and what is the writer’s **tone**? (level of formality, complexity of the sentences, vocabulary choice)