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Rhetoric: Explicit and Implicit Argumentation

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All writers are *always* arguing a point or trying to persuade readers of *something*. After reading this article, you should be able to acknowledge your purposes, articulate your argument, and construct the rhetoric of your paper more effectively.

Introduction

A typical college-level essay consists of an introduction paragraph that includes a thesis statement, followed by multiple body paragraphs intended to provide evidence to support that thesis, and a final concluding paragraph that reinforces the thesis. The essay focuses entirely on proving the thesis statement correct. This is an example of explicit persuasion or argumentation. However, not all arguments are so straightforward. For instance, an essay about raising awareness for breast cancer research may subtly suggest that readers donate to a charity, while a politician's speech supporting local factory workers ultimately aims to secure votes. To elevate your writing, shift your mindset to recognize that your goal is to persuade your reader of your implicit, as well as your explicit arguments.

The Art of Persuasion

The primary way that academic writers use explicit persuasion is through their thesis statement. In most college papers or projects, a thesis statement should be given before the end of the introduction. This consists of a sentence or two that clearly states the main argument of the essay. Many papers respond to a prompt that tasks students with researching a topic, forming a position on it (the thesis), and presenting evidence proving that their position is valid. In these instances, the main task of the paper is to argue a position. This is where rhetoric comes in. Rhetoric includes the specific writing techniques you might use to support an argument.

It is easy to locate an argument in a paper that specifically asks for a position on a topic, but others are not so obvious. The task may be to present factual data. Or it may be to narrate a story of a significant moment in your life and what you learned from it. When this is the case, it is still important to use rhetorical strategies to convey information in the shape of an argument. Consider, therefore, how you, as a reader, might wish to receive the data or story. What would make this report more interesting or engaging to your audience? How can you keep them interested and emphasize the importance of your information? By putting yourself in the minds of your readers, you can utilize the same techniques you would use in any persuasive paper.

Examples

By way of analysis, try reading an essay or speech by a historical person. Identify their purpose. Then look below the surface: is there a secondary purpose? Is there something subtle or hidden that they want from the reader? Are there assumptions that they expect the reader to take for granted? How

does the language they use reveal the warrants behind their arguments and the values behind their assumptions?

For practice, pretend you are given a writing prompt to identify a problem and offer a reasonable solution. In this essay, there are explicit arguments to be made as well as implicit. Primarily, you need to argue that your solution is the best response to the problem. However, there is also an implicit argument to be made here. By comparing your solution to other responses, you are implicitly claiming that your solution is superior. You are also demonstrating what you value in the kinds of criteria you offer for your solution (e.g. cost-effectiveness, efficiency, utility, care for others, etc.). The language you use in your essay reveals your highest concerns and allows you to connect with your readers.

Tips

1. Implicit papers need strong and varied evidence. If your thesis is not directly stated, then the evidence you use for support should clearly lead to a logical conclusion.
2. Implicit papers thrive with suspense. Gradually building up your argument will allow your readers to stay engaged and create a story-like structure.
3. For explicit papers, use varied types of evidence. Try researching different types of articles, statistics, case studies, and expert opinions to create a well-rounded argument.
4. Consider how your body paragraphs will support your main argument. What evidence will be presented to prove that it is correct? What logical analyses will be written to prove the validity of your thesis? How can you clearly communicate information that portrays you as the writer as knowledgeable on the subject?

Works Consulted

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