

Response Paper: A Rhetorical Analysis of Pre- and Post-1799 Slave Bills

According to Lloyd F. Bitzer, “rhetorical discourse comes into existence as a response to a situation, in the same sense that an answer comes into existence *in* response to a question, or a solution in response to a problem” (5). Using Bitzer’s idea of rhetoric as situational, analyze the slave bill(s) of sale you examined at the Brooklyn Historical Society in light of the Declaration of Independence (1776) and the 1799 Act for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery. You may refer to Gellman’s “The Problem of Abolition” to explain the historical context for the 1799 Act.

Here are some questions to consider: What situations give rise to the slave bills of sale? To what situations do the Declaration of Independence and the 1799 Act respond? What is the purpose of each of the documents, including the slave bills? Who are their authors? Audiences? How do the two political documents define freedom? How do the slave bills of sale complicate these definitions?

Be sure to cite all secondary and primary sources using MLA style documentation (see LIU Handbook and/or Purdue OWL).

A typed, 3-5-page draft is due Wednesday, Oct. 9. The revision is due Mon., Oct. 28. Format: Double-space, one-inch margins, 12 pitch font. Be sure to title your essay, number the pages, and cite all secondary and primary sources using MLA style (see Hacker).

RUBRIC FOR RESPONSE PAPER

CRITERIA	ADVANCED	PROFICIENT	EMERGING	ATTEMPTED
Rhetorical Analysis	Comprehensive grasp of rhetorical exigency, audience, and constraints insightfully applied to analysis of rhetorical discourse.	Operational grasp of rhetorical exigency, audience, and constraints thoughtfully applied to analysis of rhetorical discourse	Partial grasp of rhetorical exigency, audience, and constraints. Inadequately applies to analysis of rhetorical discourse.	Little or confused understanding of rhetorical exigency, audience, and constraints. Attempts ineffectively to apply to analysis of rhetorical discourse.
Focus (purpose, thesis)	Engaging, full development of a clear research-driven thesis appropriate to assignment purpose.	Competent, well-developed, research-driven thesis; thesis represents sound, adequate understanding of the chosen topic.	Mostly intelligible ideas; thesis is weak and may not reflect research topic, unclear, too broad.	Mostly simplistic and unfocused ideas; little or no sense of purpose or control of thesis or thesis is missing or not discernible.
Content (development/evidence)	Originality and depth of ideas supported by consistent evidence; ideas work together as a unified whole and demonstrate ability to integrate texts; points supported; support is valid and specific.	Ideas supported sufficiently by appropriate sources and work together to demonstrate ability to interact with those sources; support is sound, valid, and logical.	Main points and ideas are only indirectly supported and may not relate to research topic; fair interaction with texts; support isn’t sufficient or specific, but is loosely relevant to main points.	Insufficient, non-specific and/or Irrelevant support with little or poor interaction with texts. May make illogical generalizations unconnected to evidence.
Use of primary and secondary sources	Identifies sources correctly as primary or secondary and perceptively explains and elaborates on the meaning of the evidence.	Identifies sources correctly as primary or secondary and adequately explains and elaborates on the meaning of the evidence.	May identify sources correctly as primary or secondary and may identify/determine key ideas of primary and secondary sources.	Does not identify sources correctly as primary or secondary and does not identify/determine the key ideas of primary and secondary sources.

Audience (tone, point of view)	Clear discernment of distinctive audience; tone and point-of-view are appropriate to the assignment.	Effective and accurate awareness of general audience; tone and point-of-view satisfactory.	Little or inconsistent sense of audience related to assignment/purpose; tone and point-of-view not refined or consistent.	Shows little awareness of a particular audience; tone and point-of-view inappropriate or inconsistent for research essay.
Style: Sentence Structure/Mechanics	Eloquently structured sentences; rich, well-chosen variety of sentence styles and length. Strong control over mechanics and punctuation; virtually free of punctuation, spelling, capitalization errors; appropriate format and presentation for assignment.	Effective and varied sentences; infrequent, if any, sentence structure errors. Contains only occasional spelling, punctuation, and/or capitalization errors. Few formatting errors. Most errors careless.	Formulaic or tedious sentence patterns; shows some errors in sentence construction; some non-standard syntax. Contains several punctuation, spelling, and/or capitalization errors; several errors in formatting or formatting is inconsistent.	Contains many errors of grammar and sentence structure that interfere with meaning. Heavy reliance on simple sentences and/or numerous fragments or run-ons. Contains many, often serious errors of punctuation, spelling, and/or capitalization; formatting is mostly incorrect and inconsistent.
MLA Documentation	Works cited is formatted to MLA specifications exactly. In-text citations clearly and obviously show connection to the WC; contain relevant, accurate information; are correctly formatted.	Works cited is formatted to MLA specification with the exception of 1-2 errors. In-text citations show connection to the WC; contain basic information; are mostly correct in formatting.	Works cited is formatted to MLA specification with the exception of 3-4 errors. In-text citations connection to WC is unclear or confusing; may contain basic information; may be mostly correct.	Works cited has more than 4 errors in MLA formatting. Lacking citations; unidentifiable connection to WC; unclear or confusing.