INTRODUCTION

To write an effective introduction for a rhetorical analysis, you must give context. This context can include information about the speaker, timing, and situation.

In the box below, brainstorm some points of context you could include in your introduction.

**Author/Title for the speech I will analyze:** Lady Gaga’s “Dear Class of 2020”

**Context:**

Lady Gaga gave this video speech to graduating high school seniors across the U.S. because their graduation ceremonies had to be cancelled in 2020. Many high school seniors were devastated by the experience of being quarantined away from friends/family and missing celebrations that they had looked forward to for years. There was still a lot of uncertainty about the pandemic, and many were no longer sure if they would (or should) attend college in the fall or perhaps wait a year or two until things stabilized. Overall, these students were likely feeling a mix of sadness, frustration, and anxiety. It didn’t seem like they had much control of their futures, and this was probably really overwhelming.

THREE PART THESIS STATEMENT

After giving context, it’s important to signal that you will be giving a rhetorical analysis of the speech you’ve chosen. You can do this by considering three questions as you write your thesis.

My answers to the thesis questions:

1. **What was the purpose of the speech?**
   1. *To encourage and inspire high school graduates in the U.S.*
   2. *To persuade U.S. students to work to end systemic racism*
   3. *To persuade U.S. students to be kind to others*
2. **Was the speech effective at fulfilling that purpose? Not effective? Somewhat effective but also somewhat ineffective?** *Overall, it was effective*.
3. **How do you know? In other words, what rhetorical appeals or strategies did the speaker use to reach their audience and achieve their purpose? (Give a brief overview of the main points you will make in your analysis that show why the speech was effective or less effective.)** Lady Gaga was able to build trust (or ethos) with her audience with her calm, serious tone and her acknowledgement that the U.S. is going through a difficult time. She also builds trust with her audience by praising them and expressing faith in their ability to overcome the challenges they are currently facing. Lady Gaga also appeals to pathos and logos with vivid descriptions of a metaphorical forest, and this metaphor helps her communicate her vision in simple but clear terms.

THREE PART THESIS SAMPLE (Lady Gaga’s “Dear Class of 2020”)

1. What was the purpose of the speech?

INTRODUCTION AND THESIS

Now try to combine your brainstorm for the introduction with your answers to the thesis questions into one strong paragraph.

My introduction and thesis:

The year 2020 will go down in history as one of the most pivotal of the 21st century. In March 2020 the global pandemic cause by Covid caused the United States to shut down almost all aspects of society, including public schools. These closures meant that high school seniors across the United States missed many cultural milestones: senior trips, prom, and graduation. In addition to the pandemic, the United States was also rocked by the horrifying murder of George Floyd and the protests that followed for several weeks. Tensions were high, and many celebrities recognized the frustration, sadness, and fear that high school students were feeling and decided to create video commencement speeches to help inspire and encourage these students. One of these celebrities, Lady Gaga, was able to deliver a short but memorable speech. In her commencement address, Lady Gaga effectively established trust, bolstered confidence, appealed to students’ emotions, and used a unique metaphor to help students understand how they could create a better world.

(second sample🡪 You only have to include one introduction and thesis for this worksheet, but this second sample shows a different approach so that you can see multiple options for starting a rhetorical analysis)

Stefani Joanne Angelina Germanotta, better known as Lady Gaga, is one of the most successful American celebrities of all time. She has sold millions of albums of her music, acted in world famous films, and won multiple awards for her work. When she published a video commencement speech for U.S. high school seniors in 2020, she knew they would instantly recognize her. But instead of talking about herself or capitalizing on her rockstar status, she instead focuses on the students she is speaking to. In a short but powerful commencement address, Germanotta (2020) uses a combination of ethos, logos, and pathos to create a strong rapport with her audience as she not only addresses the pain they are feeling, but also her faith that they can change the world for the better.