

## Ashland English 102 Essay #2

### Rhetorical Analysis

As a writer, you should read everything in two different ways: as a reader (interested in the content) and as a writer (interested in the craft). This paper is about the craft.

Begin by reading

- Nancy Mairs, “On Being a Cripple,” *50 Essays*: pp. 226-238
- Brent Staples, “Just Walk on By: Black Men and Public Space,” *50 Essays*: pp. 339-342

### Your Writing Task

Choose one of the essays above and write a four-page essay that analyzes the rhetoric—the way the piece is written and the choices made by the author.

Keep your task in mind. You are not writing a summary or the kind of review that says, “You should really read this piece.” Nor are you answering the question, “Is this any good?”

You are asking questions about the intended audience and what the author was trying to do. Who, specifically, was the author writing to? (No, it’s not “everyone who wants to read this.” That’s a cop-out comment.) What was the author trying to do to this audience? Did it work? What kinds of word and essay structure choices did the author make?

It is not a critique of the author’s ideas. (A valid rhetorical analysis question, however, is whether the author’s strategies worked to advance the ideas or worked to get in their way.)

### Hints For Success

Keep asking “how?” and “why?” questions about the writer’s art.

Be like the kid who goes to the baseball game and keeps asking strategy questions. For a serious baseball fan, there’s a lot more than the score; real students of the game ask why a bunt is a good idea at this point in the game.

### *Some comments to get you going:*

Why would Staples begin the essay with that story? What does he risk by misleading the audience? The Staples essay was published in 1986 in *Ms. Magazine*, a liberal feminist magazine dealing with issues such as abortion, and the stereotype that women were only interested in fashions and in housekeeping hints. Does this information change your perception of the Staples essay?

Mairs calls herself a cripple. That is somewhat offensive. (If I call such a person a “cripple,” especially to their face, people would assume that I am rude and trying to hurt the person.) Why did she do that? Is she only trying to get sympathy for herself? Is this essay aimed at entertainment, political persuasion, or what? How do you know?

## Mechanical Details

**Length:** Minimum 1300 words not counting title, your name, etc. That's about a four-page paper. There is no maximum, but try to keep it under 1950. Papers significantly under the minimum (90% or less) will not receive the best possible grade.

**Format:** Standard MLA format. (12-point Times Roman type, double-spaced, 1" margin all around, MLA header.)

### *Submitting the paper:*

- The English Department wants electronic copies of all your essays this semester, so please upload the final product to the drop box in Blackboard. Some students (especially those who use Google Docs) have trouble figuring out how to do this, so ask if you are uncertain how to proceed!
- If you have any trouble getting the Blackboard upload to work, simply print a copy and bring it to class.

## Due Dates

1. **Peer editing:** Monday, September 23, 2019
2. **Final copy:** Friday, September 27, 2019

This essay is worth 100 points.

### *Note about peer editing:*

Peer editing counts as a quiz. You get credit if you show up in person with two printed copies of your rough draft (at least 90% of the assigned length). Do not expect us to hand your laptop around the room and make comments on your word processing file. Take a deep breath and actually print these out on paper.

- No credit for sending your copy by email.
- No credit for bringing it in later.