

# Critical Reading and Effective Writing in the Multicultural Classroom

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# Critical Reading

“A critical reader thinks carefully about what he or she reads, evaluates it, tests its logic and its facts, seeks its strengths and weaknesses. Critical readers learn more and certainly enjoy their reading more than passive readers.”

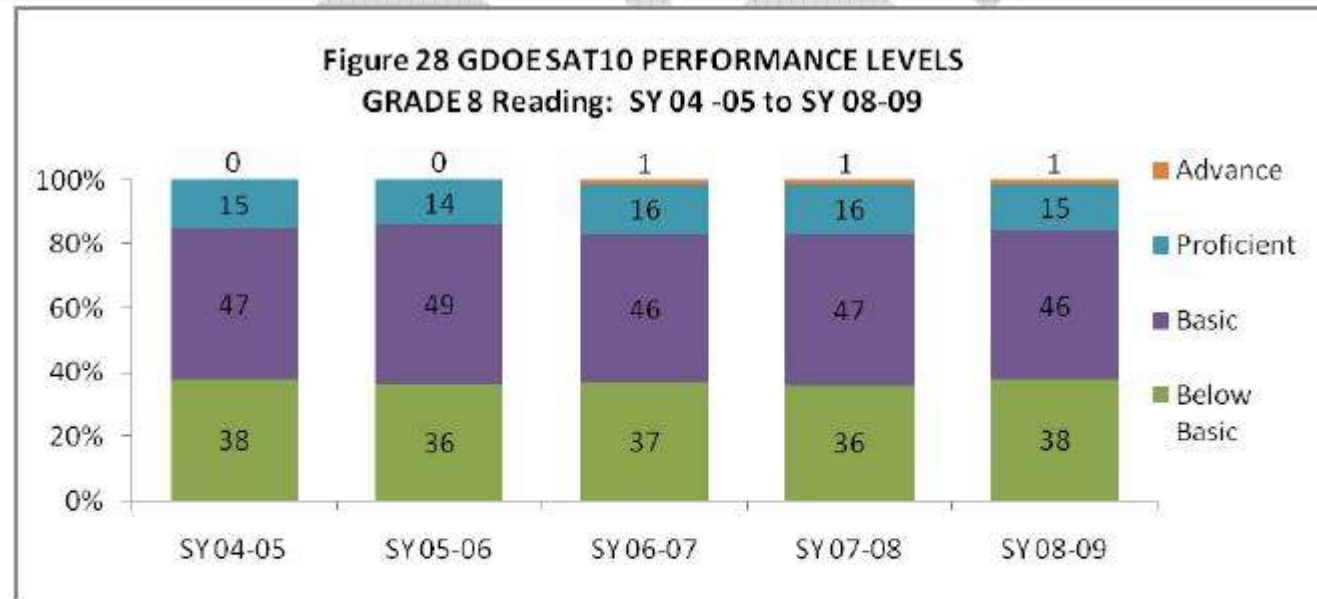
--W. Ross Winterowd

# The Writer and the Need for Writing Well

- “A writer is a person who enters into sustained relations with language for experiment and experience not available in any other way”  
--William Stafford
- “Students who are not able to develop an essay in an organized fashion with few mechanical errors will no longer receive a high school diploma [in a number of states].”  
--Carol Jago

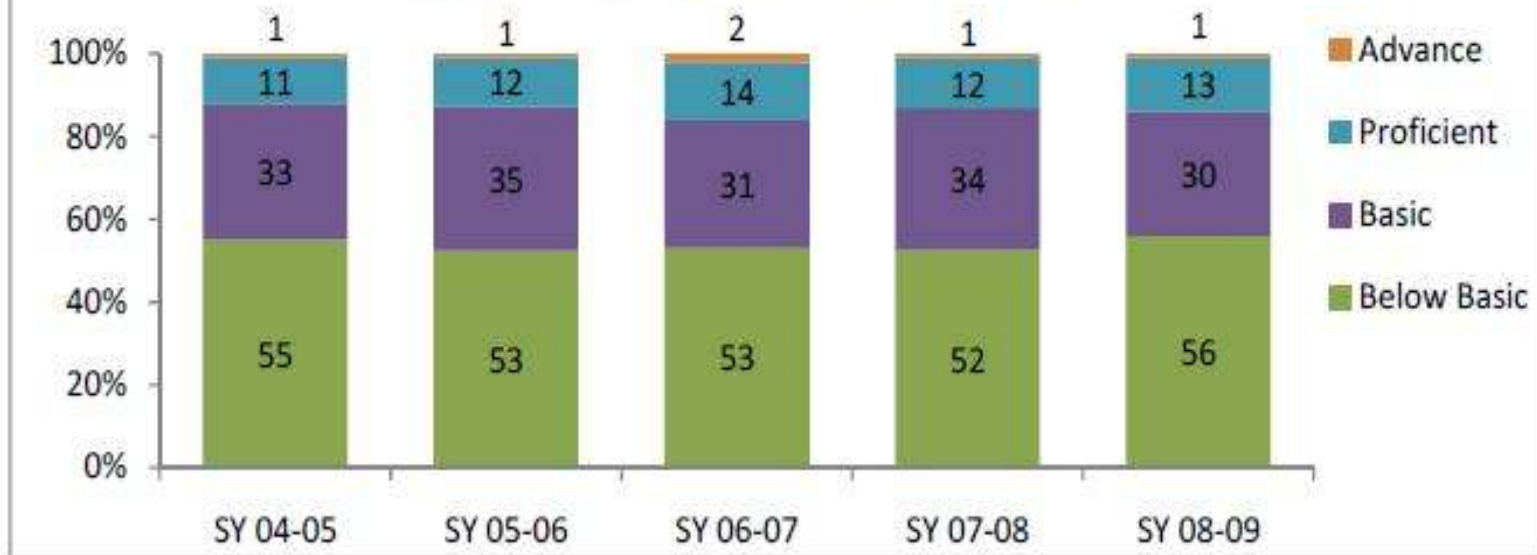
# Some Current Data\*

<http://216.236.125.173/reportcard/GDOEAnnualReportCardSY20082009.aspx>

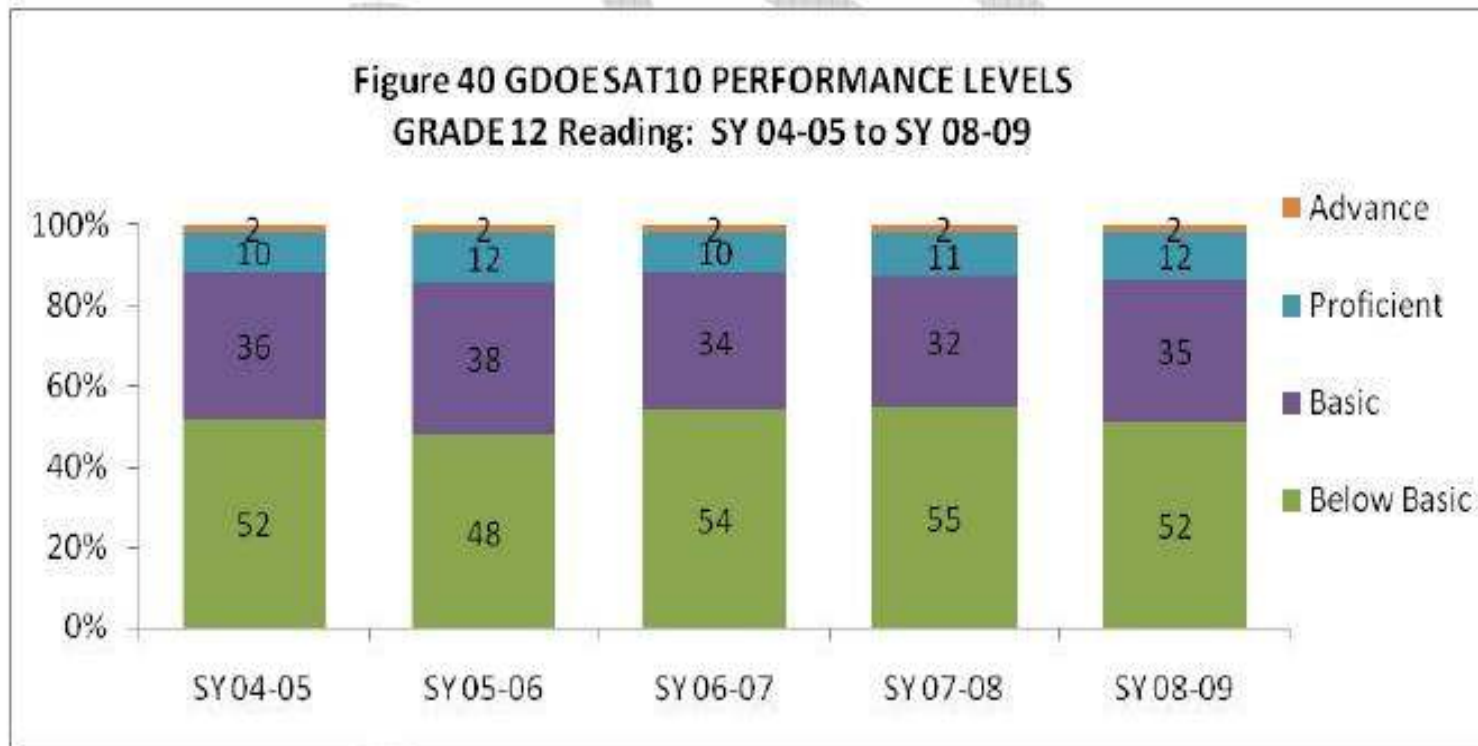


- **Figure 28** shows that in SY 07-08, 17% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders performed at the **Proficient and Advanced levels** in reading as compared to 16% who performed at the same levels in SY 08-09, a **decrease** of 1 percentage point.
- In SY 07-08, 83% of students performed at the **Basic and Below Basic levels** as compared to 84% in SY 08-09, an **increase** of 1 percentage point.

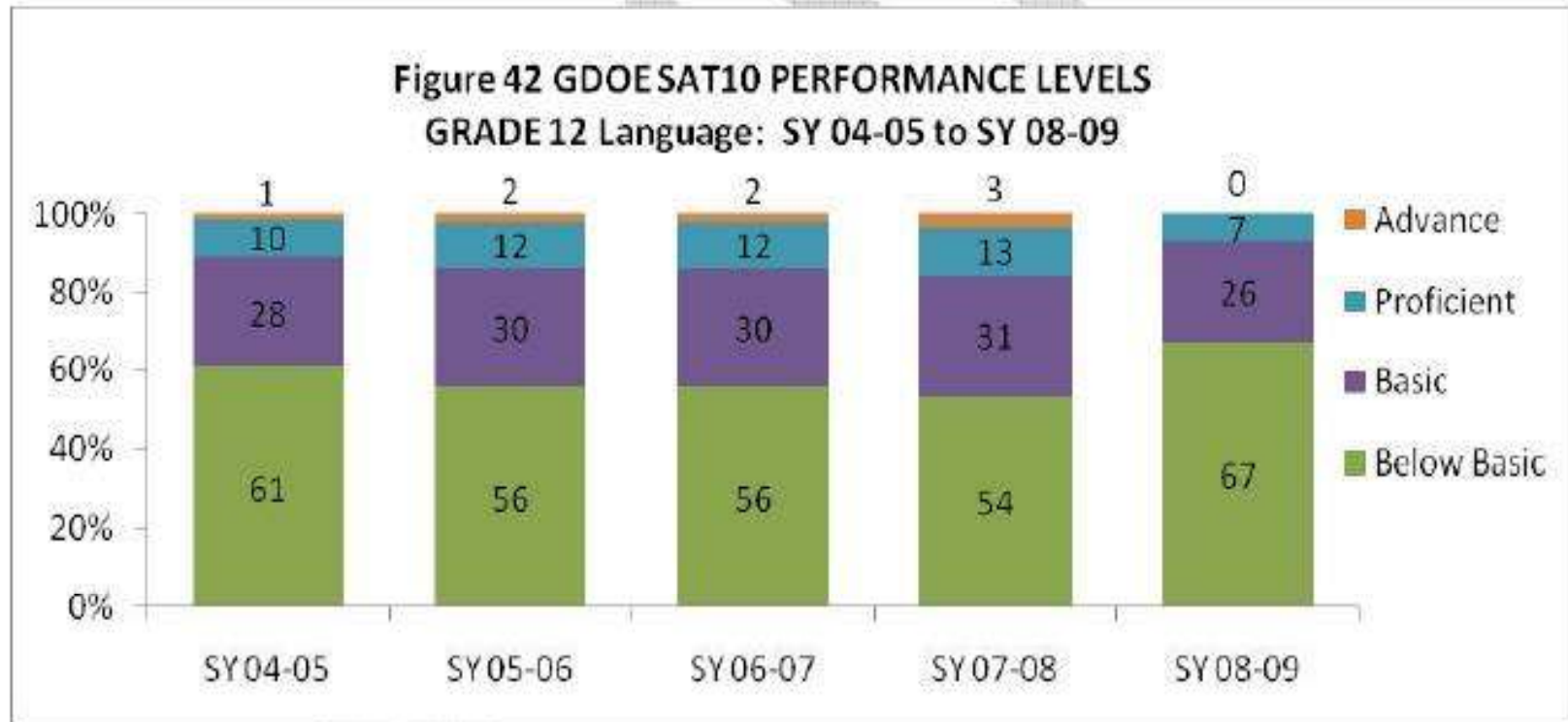
**Figure 30 GDOE SAT10 PERFORMANCE LEVELS  
GRADE 8 Language: SY 04 -05 to SY 08-09**



- **Figure 30** shows that in SY 07-08, 13% of 8th graders performed at the ***Proficient and Advanced levels*** in language as compared to 14% who performed at the same levels in SY 08-09, an **increase** of 1 percentage point.
- In both SY 07-08 and SY 08-09, 86% of students performed at the ***Basic and Below Basic levels***.



- **Figure 40** shows that in SY 07-08, 13% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders performed at the ***Proficient and Advanced levels*** in reading as compared to 14% who performed at the same levels in SY 08-09, an **increase** of 1 percentage point.
- In both SY 07-08 and SY 08-09, 87% of students performed at the ***Basic and Below Basic levels***.



- **Figure 42** shows that in SY 07-08, 16% of 12th graders performed at the ***Proficient and Advanced levels*** in language as compared to 7% who performed at the same levels in SY 08-09, a **decrease** of 9 percentage points.
- In SY 07-08, 85% of students performed at the ***Basic and Below Basic levels*** as compared to 93% in SY 08-09, an **increase** of 8 percentage points.

# No Magic Bullet

- As troubling as these numbers are, we are still experimenting with programs and methods aimed at engaging students in a rigorous curriculum.
- What I'm positing today are just some of the many effective strategies that are out there and that have helped me teach my students how to be more critical in reading and more effective in writing.

# Strategies to Enhance Critical Reading: Types of Questions

## Level One Questions:

These questions can be answered explicitly by facts contained in the text or by information accessible in other resources.

## Level Two Questions:

These questions are textually implicit, requiring analysis and interpretation of specific parts of the text.

## Level Three Questions:

These questions are more open-ended and go beyond the text. They are intended to provoke a discussion of an abstract idea or issue.

*Marigolds*  
Eugenia Collier

I leaped furiously into the mounds of marigolds and pulled madly, trampling and pulling and destroying the perfect yellow blooms. The fresh smell of early morning and of dew-soaked marigolds spurred me on as I went tearing and mangling and sobbing while Joey tugged my dress or my waist crying, "Lizabeth stop, please stop!"

And then I was sitting in the ruined little garden among the uprooted and ruined flowers, crying and crying, and it was too late to undo what I had done. Joey was sitting beside me, silent and frightened, not knowing what to say. Then, "Lizabeth look."

I opened my swollen eyes and saw in front of me a pair of large calloused feet; my gaze lifted to the swollen legs, the age-distorted body clad in a tight cotton night dress, and then the shadowed Indian face surrounded by stubby white hair. And there was no rage in the face, now that the garden was destroyed and there was nothing any longer to be protected.

"Miss Lottie!" I scrambled to my feet and just stood there and stared at her, and that was the moment when childhood faded and womanhood began. That violent, crazy act was the last act of childhood. For as I gazed at the immobile face with sad, weary eyes, I gazed upon a kind of reality which is hidden to childhood. The witch was no longer a witch but only a broken old woman who had dared to create beauty in the midst of ugliness and sterility. She had been born in squalor and had lived in it all her life. Now at the end of that life she had nothing except a falling-down hut, a wrecked body, and John Burke, the mindless son of her passion. Whatever verve there was left in her, whatever was of love and beauty and joy that had not been squeezed out by life, had been there in the marigolds she had so tenderly cared for. . .

There are times when the image of those passionate yellow mounds returns with a painful poignancy. For one does not have to be ignorant and poor to find that his life is barren as the dusty yards of our town. And I too have planted marigolds.

### Literal Questions

1. Describe Lizabeth's actions in this scene.
2. What are the meanings of the words "sterility," "verve" and "poignancy"?
3. How is Miss Lottie described?
4. What sense words are used to describe the marigold garden?
5. What does Lizabeth do right after she destroys the flowers?

### Interpretive Questions

1. Why do you think the narrator destroyed the marigolds?
2. Why is Lizabeth unable to stop her actions?
3. Why did Miss Lottie so tenderly care for the marigolds?
4. Why has Lizabeth's understanding of Miss Lottie changed?
5. How do you interpret the last line of the story?
6. Can you identify any stylistic devices? How do they add meaning to the passage?

### Experience-Based Questions

1. Can you think of a time when your anger got out of control? What were the consequences of your behavior?
2. Have you had an experience that changed your perception of another person? (i.e. divorce, failures, sickness)
3. What information can you find about the Great Depression? How is this information significant to this story?
4. When does childhood end and adulthood begin? Is this the same for all people?

*The Chaser* by John Collier

Alan Austin is in love with Diana, but she does not return his affection. He goes to a chemist for some help. The chemist first shows Alan a poison which he calls a "glove cleaner," but Alan is not interested.

"So," said Alan, "you really do sell love potions?"

"If I did not sell love potions," said the old man, reaching for another bottle, "I should not have mentioned the other matter to you. It is only when one is in a position to oblige that one can afford to be so confidential."

"And these potions," said Alan. "They are not just—just—er . . ."

"Oh, no," said the old man. "Their effects are permanent, and extend far beyond casual impulse. But they include it. Rountifully, insistantly. Exedastingly."

"Dear me!" said Alan, attempting a look of scientific detachment. "How very interesting!"

"But consider the spiritual side," said the old man.

"I do, indeed," said Alan.

"For indifference," said the old man, "they substitute devotion. For scorn, adoration. Give one tiny measure of this to the young lady—its flavor is imperceptible in orange juice, soup, or cocktails—and however gay and giddy she is, she will change altogether. She will want nothing but solitude, and you."

"I can hardly believe it," said Alan. "She is so fond of parties."

"She will not like them any more," said the old man. "She will be afraid of the pretty girls you may meet."

"She will actually be jealous?" cried Alan in rapture. "Of me?"

"Yes, she will want to be everything to you."

"She is, already. Only she doesn't care about it."

"She will, when she has taken this. She will care intensely. You will be her sole interest in life."

"Wonderful," cried Alan.

"She will want to know all you do," said the old man. "All that has happened to you during the day. Every word of it. She will want to know what you are thinking about, why you smile suddenly, why you are looking sad."

"That is love!" cried Alan.

"Yes," said the old man. "How carefully she will look after you! She will never allow you to be tired, to sit in a draught, to neglect your food. If you are an hour late, she will be terrified. She will think you are killed, or that some siren has caught you."

"I can hardly imagine Diana like that," cried Alan, overwhelmed with joy.

"You will not have to use your imagination," said the old man. "And by the way, since there are always sirens, if by chance you should, later on, slip a little, you need not worry. She will forgive you, in the end. She will be terribly hurt, of course, but she will forgive you—in the end."

"That will not happen," said Alan fervently.

"Of course not," said the old man. "But, if it did, you need not worry. She would never divorce you. Oh, no! And, of course, she herself will never give you the least, rounds for—uneasiness."

"And how much," said Alan, "is this wonderful mixture?"

"It is not as dear," said the old man, "as the glove-cleaner, as I sometimes call it. That is five thousand dollars, never a penny less. One has to be older than you are to indulge in that sort of thing. One has to save up for it."

"But the love potion?" said Alan.

"Oh, that," said the old man, opening the drawer in the kitchen table, and taking out a tiny, rather dirty-looking phial. "That is just a dollar."

"I can't tell you how grateful I am," said Alan, watching him fill it.

"I like to oblige," said the old man. "Then customers come back, later in life, when they are rather better off, and want more expensive things. Here you are. You will find it very effective."

"Thank you again," said Alan. "Good-bye."

"Au revoir," said the old man.

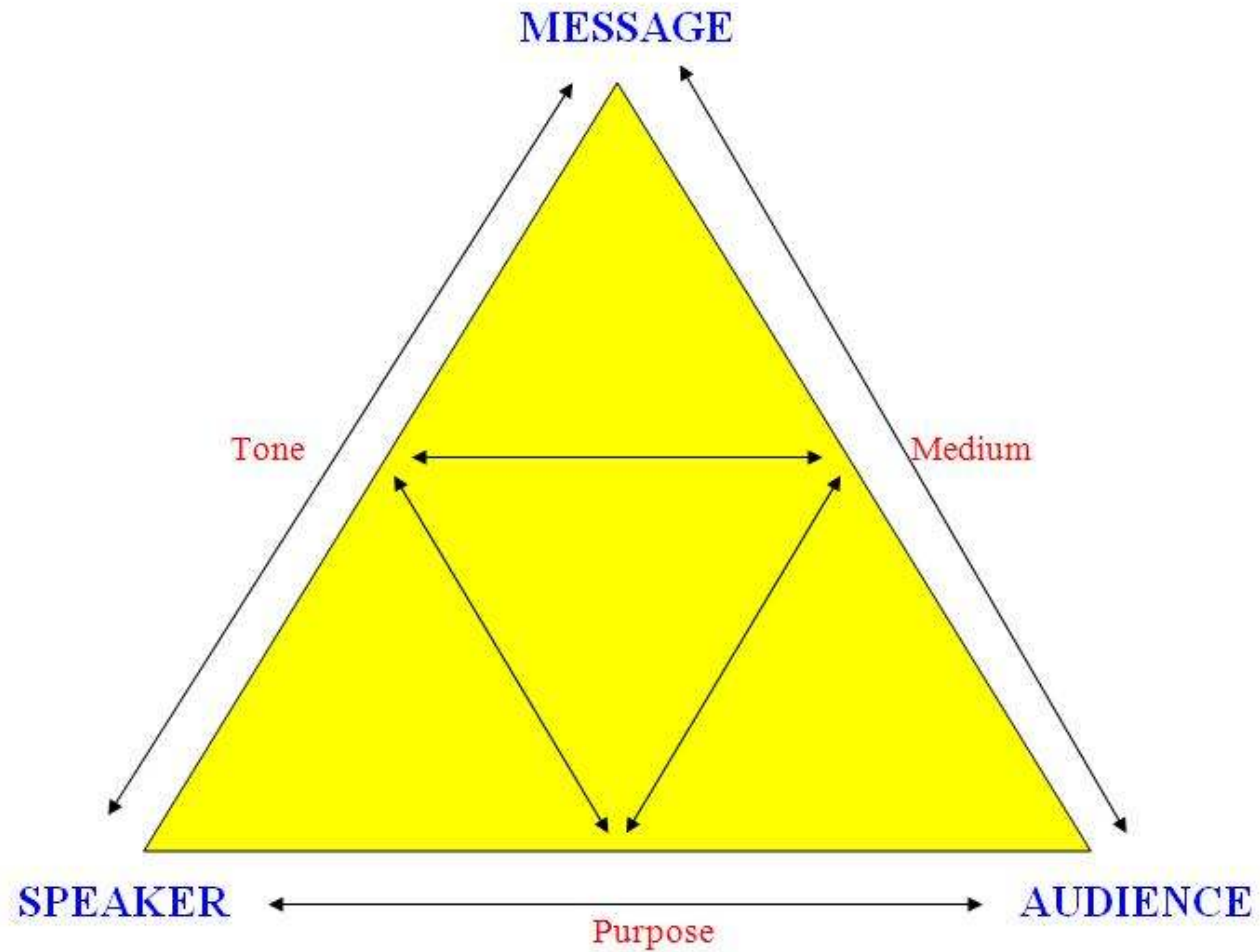
# The World is Too Much With Us

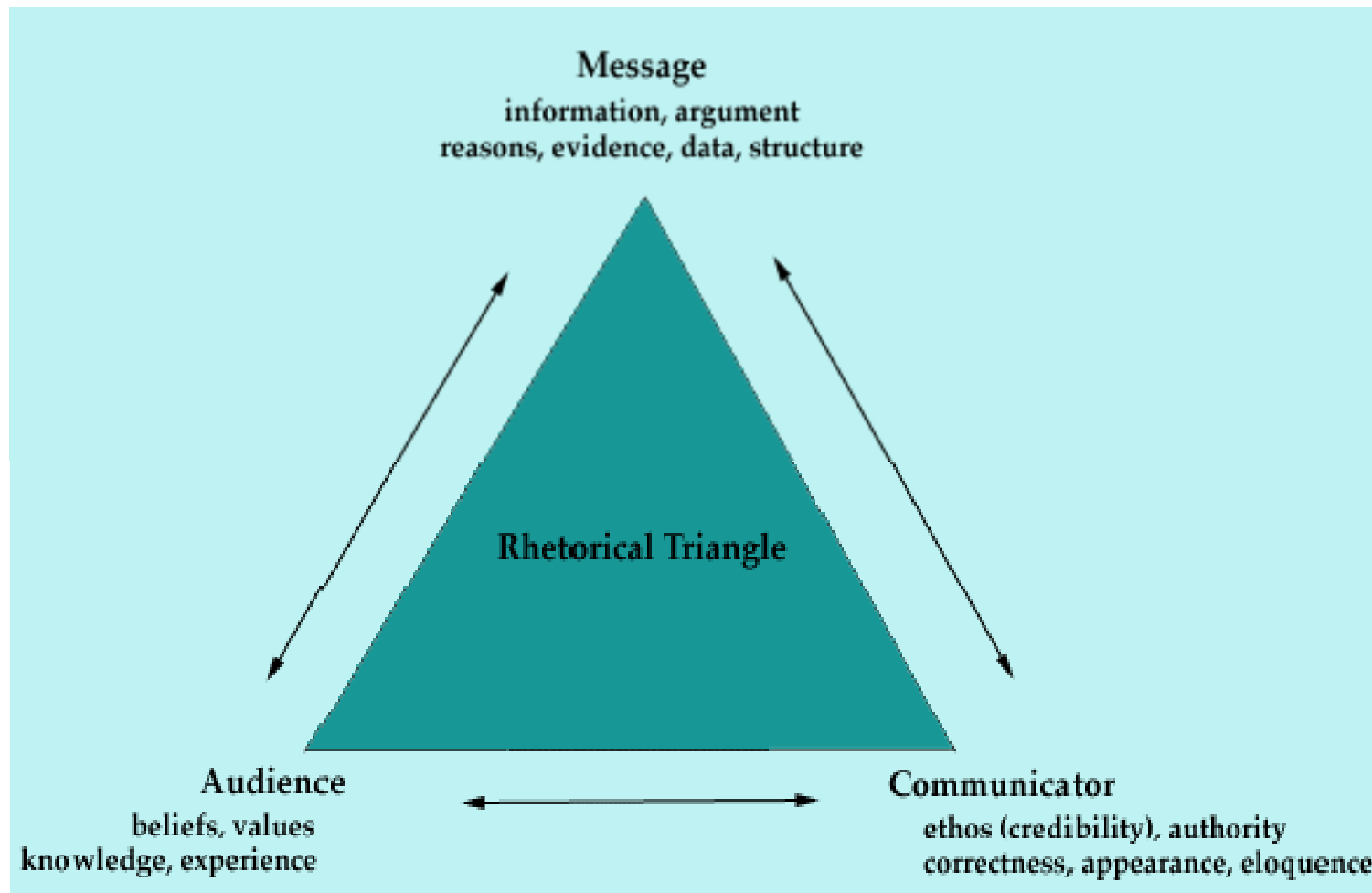
## by William Wordsworth

The world is too much with us; late and soon,  
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;  
Little we see in Nature that is ours;  
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!  
This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon,  
The winds that will be howling at all hours,  
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers,  
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;  
It moves us not.--Great God! I'd rather be  
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;  
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,  
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;  
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;  
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn.

<b>T</b>	<b>TITLE</b>	Before you even think about reading the poetry or trying to analyze it, speculate on what you think the poem <i>might</i> be about based upon the title. Often time authors conceal meaning in the title and give clues in the title. Jot down what you think this poem will be about.
<b>P</b>	<b>PARAPHRASE</b>	Before you begin thinking about meaning or trying to analyze the poem, don't overlook the literal meaning of the poem. One of the biggest problems that students often make in poetry analysis is jumping to conclusions before understanding what is taking place in the poem. When you paraphrase a poem, write in your own words exactly what happens in the poem. Look at the number of sentences in the poem—your paraphrase should have exactly the same number. This technique is especially helpful for poems written in the 17 <sup>th</sup> and 19 <sup>th</sup> centuries. Sometimes your teacher may allow you to <i>summarize</i> what happens in the poem. Make sure that you understand the difference between a <i>paraphrase</i> and a <i>summary</i> .
<b>C</b>	<b>CONNOTATION</b>	Although this term usually refers solely to the emotional overtones of word choice, for this approach the term refers to any and all poetic devices, focusing on how such devices contribute to the meaning, the effect, or both of a poem. You may consider imagery, figures of speech (simile, metaphor, personification, symbolism, etc), diction, point of view, and sound devices (alliteration, onomatopoeia, rhythm, and rhyme). It is not necessary that you identify all the poetic devices within the poem. The ones you do identify should be seen as a way of supporting the conclusions you are going to draw about the poem.
<b>A</b>	<b>ATTITUDE</b>	Having examined the poem's devices and clues closely, you are now ready to explore the multiple attitudes that may be present in the poem. Examination of diction, images, and details suggests the speaker's attitude and contributes to understanding. You may refer to the list of words on <i>Tone</i> that will help you. Remember that usually the tone or attitude cannot be named with a single word. Think <u>complexity</u> .
<b>S</b>	<b>SHIFTS</b>	Rarely does a poem begin and end the poetic experience in the same place. As is true of most us, the poet's understanding of an experience is a gradual realization, and the poem is a reflection of that understanding or insight. Watch for the following keys to shifts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• key words, (but, yet, however, although)</li> <li>• punctuation (dashes, periods, colons, ellipsis)</li> <li>• stanza divisions</li> <li>• changes in line or stanza length or both</li> <li>• irony</li> <li>• changes in sound that may indicate changes in meaning</li> <li>• changes in diction</li> </ul>
<b>T</b>	<b>TITLE</b>	Now look at the title again, but this time on an interpretive level. What new insight does the title provide in understanding the poem?
<b>T</b>	<b><u>THEME</u></b>	What is the poem saying about the human experience, motivation, or condition? What subject or subjects does the poem address? What do you learn about those subjects? What idea does the poet want you take away with you concerning these subjects? Remember that the theme of any work of literature is stated in a complete sentence.

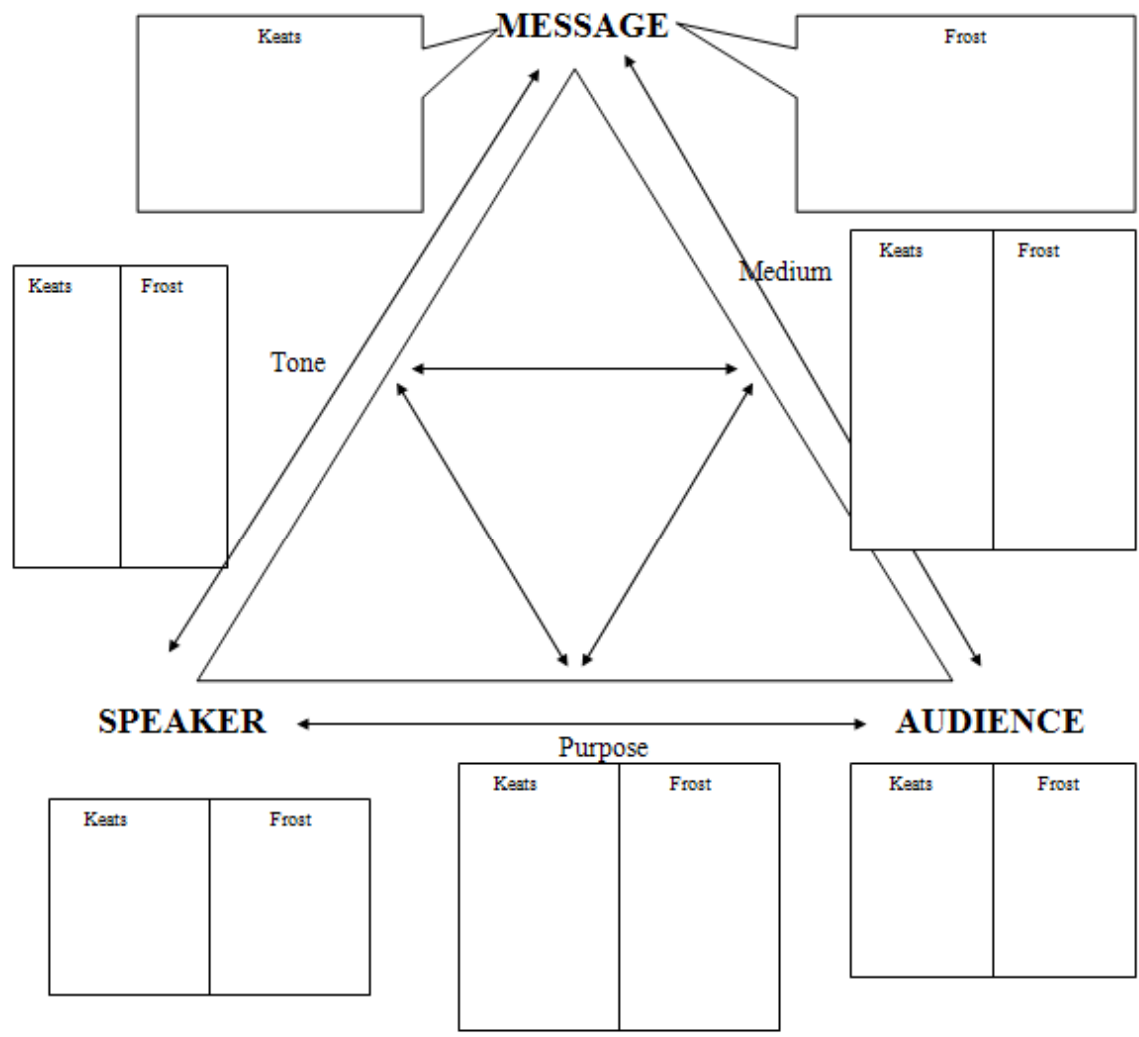
# The Rhetorical Triangle





## The Rhetorical Triangle





# STUDENT SAMPLES

- Questions
- TPCASTT
- Rhetorical Triangles
- Essays (Above Average, Average, and Below Average)