

Visual Analysis Essay Template

You may use this outline template to help you structure your essay. These are suggestions, though—by no means are you required to structure your essay in this manner.

I. Introduction

You may want to use a technique that is discussed in the chapter “From Introductions to Conclusions” in your Inquiry text.

Here are common techniques for introductions:

- *Inverted-triangle Introduction*
- *Narrative Introduction*
- *Interrogative Introduction*
- *Paradoxical Introduction*
- *Minding-the-Gap Introduction*

Thesis

You may want to place your thesis at the end of your introduction or at the end of the ad’s description. Use your own judgment, but be sure to smoothly transition into the thesis.

Here is a possible thesis template. You are not required to use this template for your thesis. If you have another way of wording your thesis, by all means, use that.

The _____ ad explicitly sells _____, but it implicitly sells _____ to _____.

Sample:

The **Marlboro** ad explicitly sells **cigarettes**, but it implicitly sells **acceptance, strength, and independence to males**.

- The explicit messages are the obvious messages. The ad obviously sells cigarettes.
- The implicit messages are the hidden messages—these are the promises the advertisement seems to make to the consumer. In the Marlboro ad, the advertisers seem to say, “If you buy this product, you will gain acceptance from your peers. You will gain strength and independence.” Of course, this is the arguable part of your thesis, as not everyone may agree on the ad’s implicit messages. As a writer, you must support your claims for the implicit messages. In other words, if this were the argument for the Marlboro ad, I would have to show and explain how the ad promises acceptance, strength, and independence. I may do this by explaining the ad’s use of rhetorical appeals throughout the essay.

II. A brief description of the ad

Overall, this should reflect an objective account of the ad’s features. For example, you might explain how the ad looks, who or what the ad features, and what colors appear in the ad. Do not

attempt to analyze the ad in this section—you are simply explaining what the reader would see. You are not explaining how the ad works—this discussion will come later in the essay.

III. Discussion of the target audience and the publication in which the ad appeared

What group of people does the ad (and the publication) target? Consider the sex, age, race, class, education, marital status, etc. of the target audience. Do other ads and/or articles in the publication reiterate or contradict the ad's message?

IV. Logos (Logical Appeals)

How does the ad use logos to appeal to the target audience?

You may need to write a few paragraphs to address the ad's use of logos.

V. Pathos (Emotional Appeals)

How does the ad use pathos to appeal to the target audience?

You may need to write a few paragraphs to address the ad's use of pathos.

VI. Ethos (Ethical Appeals)

How does the ad use ethos to appeal to the target audience?

You may need to write a few paragraphs to address the ad's use of ethos.

VII. Conclusion

This is usually a good place to address the ad's cultural significance. What values, attitudes, and/or beliefs does the ad perpetuate? What does this ad tell us about American culture?

For example, in the case of the Marlboro cigarette ad, I might argue that the ad seems to reiterate the notion that men should be strong and independent. I might argue that the ad seems to uphold many stereotypical ideas of how society expects a man to act. Again, this is an arguable discussion—there are no right or wrong answers, but you must support the claims that you make.