Questions for Audience Analysis

A text's audience is often more complex than "women" or "minorities" or "people who like natural foods" or "people who read *Esquire* magazine" or "people who live in big cities." The following questions will help you shape a more nuanced idea of a text's audience so you can identify the subtle appeals and strategies a composer might be using to convince, persuade, or inform that audience. In turn, you will arrive at a more nuanced and critical interpretation of the text. Many of these questions overlap, so they aren't meant to be answered like an ordered checklist. Not all of these questions will apply to the text you are interpreting.

- **Who is the audience?** Do you see clues about age, class, gender, education, or political position?

- **Attitudes:** What typical attitudes does the audience have towards the topic? Is this topic something the audience is likely to feel warm or cold about?

- **Values:** What beliefs and values are involved?

- **Background:** What in their background or daily experiences helps explain the audience's point of view?

- **Knowledge base:** Does the audience appear to know a lot about the topic?

- **Misinformation:** How might they be uninformed or misinformed about the topic, and how does the composer address that?

- **Personal stake:** How would the audience like to see the problem, question, or issue resolved, answered, or handled? In other words, what personal stake might the audience members have in the topic?

- **Differences:** Does the composer acknowledge what separates him or her from the audience? Is there a difference of assumptions, values, interpretations, or consequences? How does the composer try to resolve these differences?

- **Common ground:** Does the composer try to identify with the audience? Does he or she point to a shared local or national identity? A common cause? A familiar experience? A well-known event or cultural happening?