# **The Rhetorical Triangle** (Taken from Writing Arguments, Chapter 4)

Before looking at the construction of arguments, it is first necessary to look at their shape and form. To do this, we must recognize that arguments occur within \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. They are the process/product of people *\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_* and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Over the years, several scholars have mapped out these relations, much as you would a family tree. Aristotle was the first to notice the similarities of arguments and stories. For Aristotle, the act of storytelling consisted of three elements: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

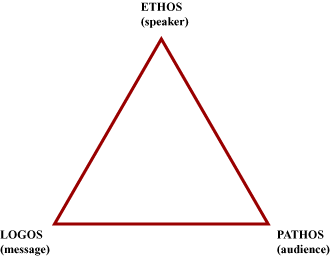
**Storytelling = Storyteller -----------------🡪 Message ------------------🡪 Audience**

Similarly, arguments require these three elements.

**Arguments = Speaker/Writer ---------🡪 Message -------------🡪 Audience**

Aristotle defined these three elements as \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Since then, different scholars have conceived of different models of rhetoric, but the model we are concerned with comes from Robert Scholes. Realizing the three elements, Scholes examined the relationship between the speaker/message, speaker/audience, and message/audience. These three relations make up the three sides of the **rhetorical triangle***.* You may use this triangle to map out the overall effectiveness of an argument.

Note how the *equilateral* triangle below would reflect an argument with a careful balance of *ethos*, *logos*, and *pathos.*



What if this were an *isosceles* or *right* triangle? What might it suggest about the effectiveness of its argument?

**Ethos***(Taken from Writing Arguments, Chapters 4 and 7)*

**ETHOS**, or "character" in Greek, refers to the credibility of the writer/speaker. A writer can develop ethos in a number of ways:

* Tone and Style
* Evidence and Support
* Treatment of Opposing Views

Plato implicitly addresses the "ethical appeal" of a speaker in *The Symposium* by asking who would you trust more: a *real* doctor, or someone who *seems* like a doctor?

If the *real* doctor doesn't act or behave in the ways we expect doctors to act/behave, how much do we *believe* him/her? Aren't we more likely to listen to the person who acts/behaves the way we want doctors to act/behave?

As such, the writer/speaker must always be conscious of the appearance/impression that he/she creates in the mind of the audience. Some questions that the writer/speaker must always consider when attempting to persuade:

* *What is the rhetorical context? Who is my audience and what do they expect from me?*
* *How can I use this context and these expectations to present myself effectively ?*

The best way to address these questions:

* **Be Knowledgeable**--*Know what you are talking about; present evidence and support for your position and reasons.*
* **Be Fair**--*You must be a****reasonable participant****(no****skeptics****or****fanatics****); to avoid a pseudo-argument, be tolerant and understanding. Just because someone differs in opinion does not mean that they are stupid and wrong.*
* **Build a Bridge to Your Audience**--*Use****audience-based reasons****; to avoid another pseudo-argument, build your reasoning around the****shared assumptions****of your audience. Show your audience that you care about the same things they do.*

When looking at the [Evian page](http://www.evian.com/origins/index.html), what "ethical appeals" are made? What is the ethos of the page?

**Logos***(Taken from Writing Arguments, Chapter 4)*

**LOGOS**, "word" in Greek, refers to the logical consistency of an anrgument. A writer develops logos by supplying two key ingedients:

* A Claim
* A Reason

Anytime we support a claim to one or more reasons, we create what Aristotle referred to as an ***enthymeme***, or an "incomplete logical structure." To complete the logical structure of the enthymeme, we must recognize one or more ***unstated assumptions***. The classical enthymeme, "Socrates is mortal *because* he is human" supports the claim "Socrates is mortal" with the reason "because he is human." What unstated assumption does this create?

As such, the writer/speaker must always be conscious of the logic and reasoning of the enthymemes he/she provides the audience. Some questions that the writer/speaker must always consider when attempting to persuade:

* *What is the rhetorical context? Who is my audience and what do they think logical?*
* *How can I use this context and these expectations to present myself effectively?*
* *How can I make an argument that is internally consistent and logical?*
* *How can I find the best reasons and support them with the best evidence?*

The best way to address these questions:

* **Have a Clear and Consistent Claim**--*Always make it apparent and understandable to your audience what you are arguing.*
* **Provide Logical Reasons**--*Always make sure that the unstated assumptions you create are not fallacious.*
* **Use Effective Evidence**--*Always make sure that the evidence you provide adequately supports both the stated reason****and****the unstated assumption.*

**Pathos***(Taken from Writing Arguments, Chapters 4 and 7)*

**PATHOS, "suffering**" or "experience" in Greek, refers to the "emotional appeal" that the writer/speaker makes to the audience. The writer/speaker can develop pathos in a number of ways:

* Tone and Style
* Anecdotes and Analogies
* Classical or Delayed Thesis

Plato was against using the emotions of the audience to the speaker/writer's advantage, but Aristotle understood that as humans, we are not moved by the intellect alone; emotions can play a role in the effectiveness of arguments.

As such, the writer/speaker must always be conscious of the cares and concerns of the audience. Some questions that the writer/speaker must always consider when attempting to persuade:

* *What is the rhetorical context? Who is my audience and what do they care about?*
* *How can I use this context and these concerns to present myself effectively ?*

Some ways to address these questions:

* **Use Concrete Language**--*The use of vivid description allows the audience to imagine themselves in a certain situation and can increase their reaction to that situation*.
* **Use Specific Examples and Illustrations**--*These have two purposes: they can serve as evidence and support; and they can provide presence and emotional resonance*.
* **Use Narratives--***Arguments can benefit from stories embedded within them. These stories appeal directly to the audience's sympathies and imagination. Like concrete language, stories allow the audience to envision themselves within the situation and their reaction to it.*

Other concerns that can affect your pathos:

* **Diction**--*The choice of words, metaphors and analogies should be dependent on the writer/speaker's aim and agenda. The use of synonyms, antonyms, similes, and metaphors can reveal a writer/speaker's slant. When would you want to refer to someone as "homeless" as opposed to "displaced," or "meek?"*
* **Classical vs. Delayed Thesis--***Dependent upon the likelihood of your audience's acceptance or rejection of your message, you may want to consider either frontloading or delaying your thesis. If you believe your audience will generally accept your position, it might be best to explicitly state your thesis immediately. But if you suspect that your audience may be resistant to your message, you may want to imply your thesis and save it until after your have presented your evidence and reasoning.*