

PAPER 1

AUDIENCE ANALYSIS OF A NEWSPAPER OR MAGAZINE

GOAL

To uncover and explain some of the publication's assumptions about its audience and about the milieu, or the world, in which that audience lives. You should try to make observations about the publication's readership that the casual observer would not notice. To argue, for example, that the majority of *Bild Sport's* readers love sports would not be very enticing.

OPTIONS

You may choose any newspaper or magazine, although, preferably, you should select one written in English and with which you are not familiar.

You could write on simply one or two aspects of the publication—want ads, for example, or advertisements.

You may want to compare two publications seemingly directed toward the same audience. I recommend this method highly. Compare *Time* and *Newsweek*, for example.

You could also choose a publication that is no longer published—an American women's magazine from 100 years ago, for example, or a very old issue of a newspaper. You could, if possible, compare an old issue of *The New York Times* with a current issue.

METHODS

1. Look at, read, and inspect your publication carefully. Look at more than one issue, if at all possible. Notice everything about the publication—the kinds of articles, the names of articles, the advertising, the photos, the letters to the editor, the layout. Notice the kinds of articles, ads, and photographs that are *not* there, too. Go into your investigation without a sense of what your thesis will be—with an open mind—not with a preformed idea about what you'll discover.
2. Make a list of details about the magazine that strike you as interesting, unusual, or surprising.
3. Look at your notes and see if you can find some patterns or trends. What assumptions does the magazine make about its readers and their world? What do we learn about the people who bought this magazine? about their values? their interests? their habits? their likes and dislikes? their education? economic level? social class? moral concerns? age? sex? political views? family life? Now you can start a tentative thesis.
4. Finish collecting your details, remembering that the details you observe in the magazine are your evidence for your discussion.
5. Your final essay will contain both details and inferences. An inference is a conclusion that you've arrived at after studying the details. Not all your notes, of course, will make it into your final draft. But the details you include should be representative enough to let the reader see how you arrived at your conclusion.
6. Present your evidence—the details that support your conclusions—in systematic groupings, classes, or categories. Don't present information in the same random order in which you found it.