

Activity Title: TikTok Rhetoric and Media Literacy Analysis

Overview

This activity introduces students to rhetorical analysis (ethos, pathos, logos) and media literacy using TikTok videos. Students will individually select and analyze videos, then collaborate in groups to discuss, evaluate, and present findings. The entire activity is designed to fit within a 60-90 minute class period, assuming a class of 20-30 students. It promotes critical thinking, peer review, and public speaking skills.

Learning Objectives

- Identify and explain ethos (credibility/ethical appeal), pathos (emotional appeal), and logos (logical appeal) in short-form media.
- Apply NAMLE's core media literacy questions to evaluate media messages.
- Engage in collaborative discussion and constructive feedback.
- Develop skills in analyzing digital content for persuasion and intent.

Materials Needed

- Student devices with TikTok app or web access (ensure school policies allow; alternatives like YouTube Shorts if restricted).
- Worksheet or digital template for notes (provided below or via Google Docs/printed handouts).
- Timer for pacing.
- Projector or shared screen for presentations (optional for sharing video links).
- NAMLE questions reference (printed or displayed):
 1. Who created this message?
 2. What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?
 3. How might different people understand this message differently?
 4. What values, lifestyles, and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?
 5. Why is this message being sent?

Preparation

- Review ethos, pathos, logos with a quick 5-minute mini-lecture or examples at the start.
- Divide class into groups of 3-5 students in advance or at the beginning.
- Provide a simple worksheet template:
 - Video 1 Link/Description:
 - Ethos:
 - Pathos:
 - Logos:
 - Video 2 Link/Description:
 - Ethos:
 - Pathos:
 - Logos:

Step-by-Step Instructions

1. Introduction and Individual Browsing/Analysis (15-20 minutes)

- Begin with a brief overview: Explain ethos (e.g., creator's expertise or trustworthiness), pathos (e.g., evoking fear, joy, or sympathy), and logos (e.g., facts, statistics, or logical arguments). Share NAMLE questions as a framework for deeper analysis.
- Instruct students to open TikTok and browse their "For You" page or search for topics like trends, ads, or social issues for 5-7 minutes. They should select 2 videos (under 60 seconds each) that demonstrate persuasion (e.g., product reviews, social commentary, or motivational content).
- For each video, students note:
 - Specific examples of ethos, pathos, and logos (e.g., "Ethos: The creator is a doctor, building credibility").
 - Video link or a brief description if sharing links isn't feasible.
- Tip: Encourage variety—avoid duplicates if possible. Remind students to focus on safe, appropriate content.

2. Group Discussion and Evaluation (20-25 minutes)

- Have students form pre-assigned groups of 3-5.
- Each student shares their 2 videos (play them if devices allow, or describe vividly). The group discusses:
 - Examples of ethos, pathos, and logos provided by the student.
 - Whether the analysis is accurate (e.g., "Is this really logos, or more pathos? Why?").
- Group members provide feedback: Agree, suggest alternatives, or correct misconceptions. Aim for consensus on each video's rhetorical elements.
- Facilitate by circulating the room, prompting questions like "How does this video persuade its audience?" to keep discussions on track.

3. Group Selection and Presentation Preparation (10-15 minutes)

- Each group selects 1 standout video from those shared (based on clarity of rhetorical elements or relevance to media literacy).
- As a group, prepare a short presentation (2-3 minutes per group):
 - Summarize ethos, pathos, and logos with examples.
 - Answer the 5 NAMLE questions (e.g., "Who created this? A influencer promoting a brand—why? To sell products.").
- Assign roles: One for rhetoric, one for NAMLE, one for Q&A.

4. Presentations and Class Debrief (15-20 minutes)

- Groups present in rotation. If time allows, share the video via screen share or link.
- After each presentation, open for 1-minute class Q&A or feedback (e.g., "Do you agree with their pathos analysis?").
- Wrap up with a 5-minute debrief: Ask "What surprised you about TikTok's persuasive tactics?" or "How does this apply to other social media?" Collect worksheets for assessment.

TikTok Rhetoric & Media Literacy Activity

Goal: Explore how short videos persuade us using ethos (credibility), pathos (emotion), and logos (logic), then dig deeper with media literacy questions.

Time: One class period (60–90 minutes)

What you'll need: Your phone/tablet with TikTok access (or web version), this handout, and a pen/digital note app.

Part 1: Individual Analysis (15–20 minutes)

1. Open TikTok and scroll your For You page or search for videos on trends, product reviews, social issues, motivation, or ads (keep it school-appropriate—nothing violent, explicit, or harmful).
2. Spend 5–7 minutes browsing. Pick **TWO** short videos (under 60 seconds each) that try to persuade or convince the viewer in some way.
3. For **each** video, fill out the Individual Analysis Form below:
 - Write the video link (or describe it clearly: creator username, main topic, and approx. length).
 - Identify and explain examples of **ethos**, **pathos**, and **logos**. Use specific details from the video.
 - **Ethos** = How does the creator build trust/credibility? (e.g., "I'm a certified trainer," shows expertise, has many followers)
 - **Pathos** = How does it appeal to emotions? (e.g., makes you laugh, feel sad/angry/inspired, uses cute animals/music)
 - **Logos** = How does it use logic/reason? (e.g., facts, stats, step-by-step explanation, evidence)
 - Be ready to play or describe your videos to your group.

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Part 2: Group Discussion & Evaluation (20–25 minutes)

1. Get into your assigned group (3–5 people).
2. Take turns sharing your two videos (play them if possible or describe vividly).
3. For each video:
 - The presenter explains their ethos/pathos/logos notes.
 - Group discusses: Do we agree? Are the examples accurate? Suggest improvements or different interpretations.
 - Give constructive feedback (e.g., "I think that's more pathos than logos because...").
4. As a group, pick **ONE** video from the ones shared that has the clearest/most interesting rhetorical elements and media literacy angles.

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Part 3: Group Presentation Prep & Delivery (20–25 minutes total)

1. Using your chosen video, complete the Group Presentation Form together.
 - Summarize ethos, pathos, logos with the best examples.
 - Answer the 5 NAMLE Key Questions (see reference below). Not every question will fit perfectly—focus on the most relevant ones.
2. Prepare a short presentation (2–3 minutes):
 - Show/play the video (or describe it).
 - Present your ethos/pathos/logos findings.
 - Share your answers to the NAMLE questions.
 - Be ready for 1 minute of class questions.
3. One or more group members will present (divide roles if you want).
5. **NAMLE Key Questions Reference** (from the National Association for Media Literacy Education)

Wrap-up: After presentations, we'll debrief as a class: What did you notice about persuasion on TikTok? How does this connect to other media?

Tips for Success

- Stay focused during browsing—no endless scrolling!
- Respect privacy: Don't share personal videos without permission.
- Be respectful in discussions—disagree thoughtfully.
- Have fun—TikTok is full of clever (and sneaky) persuasion!

Individual Analysis Form

Student Name: _____ Date: _____

Video 1

Content Creator name and @username:

Link or Description (creator, topic, length, etc. Consider describing what is actually what is presented **WITHOUT** interpretation):

Ethos (credibility/trust):

Pathos (emotion):

Logos (logic/facts):

Video 2

Content Creator name and @username:

Link or Description (creator, topic, length, etc. Consider describing what is actually what is presented **WITHOUT** interpretation):

Ethos (credibility/trust):

Pathos (emotion):

Logos (logic/facts):

Group Presentation Form (One per group – complete together)

Group Members:

Chosen Video

Link or Description (creator @username, topic, length):

Poster 1 Rhetorical Appeals Summary

Ethos:

Pathos:

Logos:

Poster 2:

NAMLE Media Literacy Questions (answer the most relevant ones)