

ERWC – OP-ED – RIFKIN – ACT 7

Reading for Understanding

Now you are ready to read Jeremy Rifkin’s “A Change of Heart about Animals.” For the first time through, you should read to understand the text. Read as if you trust Rifkin, and focus on what he is trying to say. Try to see whether the predictions you have made about the text are true. Is the article about what you thought it would be about? Does Rifkin say what you thought he would say?

When you have finished reading, answer the following questions:

1. Which predictions turned out to be true?
2. What surprised you?
3. What does Rifkin want readers to believe?
4. What are some of the things people believe humans can do that animals cannot? How does Rifkin challenge those beliefs?
5. What authorities does Rifkin use to support his case?
6. What action does Rifkin want readers to take?
7. How does Rifkin organize his essay? Is it an effective organization?

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Considering the Structure of the Text

Now that you have read and discussed the content of the Rifkin essay, you are ready to begin analyzing its organizational structure. First, divide the text into sections:

1. Draw a line across the page where the introduction ends. Is the line after the first paragraph, or are there more introductory paragraphs?
2. Divide the body of the essay into sections on the basis of the topics addressed.
3. Draw a line where the conclusion begins. Is it the last paragraph, or does it begin before that?

You are now ready to begin a process called “descriptive outlining”:

1. Write brief statements describing the rhetorical function and content of each paragraph or section. a. What does each section do for the reader? What is the writer trying to accomplish?
2. b. What does each section say? What is the content?
- 3.
4. After making the descriptive outline, ask questions about the article’s organizational structure: a. Which section is the most developed?
5. b. Which section is the least developed? Does it need more development?
6. c. Which section is the most persuasive? The least?
- 7.

From your work charting the text, what do you think is the essay’s main argument? Is it explicit, or is it implicit?

Noticing Language ACTIVITY 9

Create a visual representation of “your” word, study its origin or history, and be prepared to share it (and its synonyms and antonyms) with the class. You might choose to construct a tree, chart, or table from Activity 6.

Annotating and Questioning the Text / Activity 10

You should question the text in your second reading, “reading against the grain” and “playing the disbelieving (or doubting) game.” As you read, look for claims and assertions Rifkin makes. Does he back them up? Do you agree with them?

As you read, do the following:

1. Underline (with a double underline) or highlight in one color the thesis and major claims or assertions made in the article.
2. Underline (with a single underline) or highlight in a second color the evidence in support of the claims and assertions.
3. Write your comments and questions in the margins.

After reading the article again, answer the following questions:

1. What is the thesis of Rifkin’s article?
2. Does Rifkin make any claims that you disagree with? What are they?
3. Do any claims lack support?

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Analyzing Stylistic Choices—Loaded Words: Language That Puts a Slant on Reality /Act 11

1.Paragraph 4 of the article says

Studies on pigs' social behavior funded by McDonald's at Purdue University, for example, have found that they crave affection and are easily depressed if isolated or denied playtime with each other. The lack of mental and physical stimuli can result in deterioration of health.

The first sentence uses words associated with human behavior such as “affection” and “playtime,” while the second sentence uses formal scientific words such as “stimuli” and “deterioration.” What is the effect of this movement from emotional to scientific? Try rewriting the first sentence to make it sound more scientific.

1.Paragraph 7 of the article says

Researchers were stunned recently by findings (published in the journal *Science*) on the conceptual abilities of New Caledonian crows. Because scientific experiments are carefully planned and controlled, scientists are rarely “stunned” by their results.

What is the effect of using the word “stunned” here? What are some other words or phrases that might fit here that would sound more scientific? Try rewriting this sentence.

1.Paragraph 10 of the article says

An orangutan named Chantek who lives at the Atlanta Zoo used a mirror to groom his teeth and adjust his sunglasses.

“Groom” is a word that has different meanings when applied to humans and animals. If animals groom each other, it usually means that one cleans the other's fur or searches the fur to remove fleas and other parasites. It is part of social bonding. If a human grooms a horse, it means combing and brushing the animal. What does “groom” mean when applied to humans? In what sense is the word used here? Rewrite the sentence using other language to make it more scientific.

Questions About the Rifkin Article /Activity 12

Answer the following questions about the Rifkin article:

- 1.How would you describe the style of this article? Is it formal? Informal? Academic? Scientific? Conversational?
- 2.What is the effect of giving the names of most of the animals involved in the experiments but not the names of the scientists?
- 3.Throughout most of the article, Rifkin refers to “researchers” and “scientists.” In paragraph 13, however, he directly quotes Stephen M. Sivi, whom he refers to as “a behavioral scientist at Gettysburg College in Pennsylvania.” What is the effect of this sudden specificity?
- 4.What is the effect of all the rhetorical questions in paragraph 15, followed by “such questions are being raised” in the next paragraph?