

Analysis Fun with Thurber:

Ransdell's Rough Analysis Types for English 101 & 107

For Unit 1 of English 101/107, have your students write one of the following kinds of analysis. (For the sake of simple comparisons, I've based all the examples on the Thurber fable reprinted below.) You might want to start the semester with a Textual Analysis since most students have done that kind of writing in high school but need practice with college-level close reading. For Unit 2 you might want to repeat the assignment—or feel free to choose one of the other forms. Save the Contextual Analysis for Unit 3.

While I've labeled the analysis types, they actually combine and collapse. Give your students parameters of some kind, but what you need is for students to write essays with organized structures and developed analysis based in part on a text they read (or experienced) for your class.

For Units 1 and 2:

Textual Analysis (Close Reading)

What might the author be trying to suggest through this text?
What could be the author's message or advice?

In "The Unicorn in the Garden," Thurber suggests that men are so dominated by women that they must resort to cruel tricks to find peace.

Note: Students often think there is only one right way to "read" texts. Assure them that any text might have any number of meanings; all they have to do is offer a reasonable interpretation.

Rhetorical Analysis

What strategies does the author use to deliver a particular message?

By exaggerating the wife's dialogue in "The Unicorn in the Garden," Thurber suggests that women's attitudes need to change before women will be able to communicate with men effectively.

How does the author use the concept of audience to make the text more effective?

Knowing that his audience is other middle-class males, Thurber "preaches to the choir" when he uses "The Unicorn in the Garden" to suggest that women make men's lives miserable.