Rhetorical Situation Worksheet

Your name:

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Completing this worksheet may take more time than you think. It's worth the time. The information you gather will help you later when writing up assignments. But more importantly, the process of addressing each of the questions below will slowly work to change *how* you read texts. Keep in mind that some answers will not be obvious or even observable in the text, and so you may have to do some critical thinking and, at times, even some online research. Use full sentences. Take as much space as you need.

Context & Exigence: What topic/conversation is this text responding to? What year is the text published? What is the exigence--that is, what motivating occasion/issue/concern prompted the writing? The motivating occasion could be a current or historical event, a crisis, pending legislation, a recently published alternative view, or another ongoing problem.

The topic of this text is language, more specifically the way we interact with it, and how language can sometimes be a barrier for some people, and can cause them to be treated differently. The motivating issue for the creation of this text was the author's own experiences with her mother, and the things she witnessed growing up, such as how she was treated differently because she spoke "broken" English. I feel as though on a broader scope, the motivating occasion could be the treatment of Asian American immigrants, or immigrants as a whole and the way they are treated or have to navigate the world.

Author: Who is the author of this text? What are the author's credentials and what is their investment in the issue?

The author of this text is Amy Tan. She is an American author from California, and she is most well-known for her novel *The Joy Luck Club*, which was published in 1989. Her investment in the issue is deeply personal, seeing as she is the daughter of Chinese immigrants, and throughout the course of the text, she discusses her experiences and the things she witnessed with her mother growing up. She speaks, for instance, about how she employed different "Englishes" when speaking to her mother versus other people, which showcases the relevance of the topic of language and dialect.

Text: What can you find out about the publication? What is the genre of the text (e.g., poem, personal essay, essay, news/academic article, blog, textbook chapter, etc.)? How do the conventions of that genre help determine the depth, complexity, and even appearance of the argument? What information about the publication or source (magazine, newspaper, advocacy Web site) helps explain the writer's perspective or the structure and style of the argument?

The publication can best be described as a short story, and I feel it would most accurately fall into the personal essay category, due to its personal and reflective nature. I feel as though the conventions of the genre determine the depth of the argument because they allow Tan to explore her relationship with her mother, and in turn herself, and garner a stronger understanding of language and how it impacts us. By looking at study.com, I learned that this text concerns itself with the topic of code-switching, which I know is something we briefly mentioned in class. As such, it helps to convey the writer's perspective by helping us understand the complexities of language and the challenges associated with interpersonal communication, especially when you are the child of immigrants.

Audience: Who is the author's <u>intended</u> audience? What can you infer about the audience (think about beliefs and political association but also age, class, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, profession,

education, geographic location, religion, etc.)? Look for clues from the text (especially the original publication) to support your inference.

I feel as though the intended audience would likely be the children of immigrants, and I feel this is the case because they are the most likely to be able to relate to what Tan is communicating. I also feel she is trying to appeal largely to English speakers in places like the US, who might be scared of embracing certain methods of speech because they think it's "broken" or whatever. I also feel as though she is potentially trying to speak to her colleagues and maybe people who aren't all too familiar with the struggles some people might go through just trying to communicate and live their day to day.

Purpose: What is the author trying to accomplish? To persuade, entertain, inform, educate, call to action, shock? How do you know?

I feel as though the author is trying to educate her audience and to get the reader to be more thoughtful and embrace the many "Englishes" which they may speak. I say this because in the text, Tan mentions how she does not favor the use of the word "broken" to refer to her mother's English, because it gave the impression that there was something missing or something that needed to be fixed. As such, Tan encourages the audience of her work to not see dialects for what they aren't, but to appreciate them for what they are. Furthermore, judging by her decision to include personal encounters her mother had, and how her dialect or way of speaking hurt her sometimes, Tan serves to highlight the challenges faced by so many people who are often not given the chance to be properly understood just because they talk a certain way.

Argument: What do you believe is the main claim/idea/argument that the author is trying to communicate? What stance does s/he take?

I believe the main argument Tan is trying to communicate is that people are often judged or belittled due to the way they speak, and yet something like language is not sufficient enough to capture the wealth of intent and thought behind somebody's words.

Evidence: How is the argument supported? Types of support include reasons and logical explanations as well as evidence. Types of evidence include anecdotes, examples, hypothetical situations, (expert) testimony, quotes, citing sources, statistics, charts/graphs, research the author or another source conducts, scientific or other facts, general knowledge, historical references, metaphors/analogies, etc.

The author primarily supports her arguments via the use of anecdotes of her mother's experiences. For instance, she talks about one time she needed to help her mother receive her CAT scan results more quickly, and another time when she had to call a stockbroker on her mother's behalf, all because her mother spoke more imperfect English and therefore people had a more difficult time understanding her. Her personal anecdotes of having to help her mother overcome language barriers make the text uniquely personal.

Rhetorical Strategies: What aspects of this text stand out for you as a *rhetorical* reader? In other words, what do you observe about what the author strategically *does* (consciously or not) in hopes of appealing to their audience? List here as many observations as you can make about what the text *does*.

I feel as though the parts of the text which stood out to me the most were when the author employed anecdotes and spoke of her experiences with her mother. I say this because it allows the reader to kind of put themselves in the shoes of the author and relate to what she is saying. For instance, at one point she mentions how when she was speaking to a crowd of people, she realized she was speaking in a way that she had never spoken to her mother before.

Citation: Add the correct MLA or APA bibliographic entry for this text. Use easybib.com if you prefer.

Tan, Amy. *Mother's Tongue - Department of English | University of Washington*. 1989, https://english.washington.edu/sites/english/files/documents/ewp/teaching_resources/amy_tan_s_mother_tongue.pdf.

Notes: What do you want to remember about this text?

The thing I want to remember about this text is how often people get treated differently just because they maybe speak a different way or they aren't as fluent or whatever it may be, and yet that does not dictate a person's worth or their intellect.