

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 topics being responded to in this text included the impossible existence of Standard English and the struggles of embracing a taboo version of the accepted dialect. This work of Jordan was published in 1985, and some issues that went into writing this piece include the problem progressive teachers have in trying to make their lessons relate to other aspects of life. The ramped racism and brutalization of groups for control, and the unjustified murder of Reggie Jordan by the New York City police department.

Author: Who is the author of this text? What are the author's credentials and what is their investment in the issue? Don't know? Look it up!

The author of *Nobody Mean More to Me Than You And the Future Life of Willie Jordan* is June Jordan. She is a widely published and praised writer for numerous genres, including essays, poems, and plays. Some of her awards and accolades include many fellowships, a Rockefeller Foundation grant, and the National Association of Black Journalists Award. Jordan was invested in a wide range of social issues, and the way she addressed these issues was through the writing she was so famous for. No matter the genre, she would perfectly blend personal and political together, leaving the reader engaged and pondering about what her writing touched on.

Text: What is the genre of the text (e.g., poem, personal essay, essay, news/academic article, blog, textbook chapter, etc.)? What is the original publication and what can you find out it? How might the genre and publication have influenced what the writer chose to do?

From what I can see, this text seems to be a personal essay that was published with other texts by Jordan in a collection called *On Call: Political Essays*. The publication for *On Call: Political Essays* was the Boston branch of South End Press. South End Press is an independent, nonprofit, collectively-run book publisher, with the goal of publishing works encouraging critical thinking and constructive action regarding key political, cultural, social, economic, and ecological issues shaping life in the United States and in the world. This genre and publication may have influenced Jordan to take a political issue that is in the States and other parts of the world and showcase how that issue has even affected her own personal life, and express the steps she took against it and the results.

Audience: Who is the author's intended 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 infer that Jordan's intended audience for this text is people of all ages, genders, and cultures who are interested in learning or solving global issues. In this case, specifically, issues that stem from White standards and supremacy. The clues I used to make this inference include the stigma against Black English that is displayed in the text by the Black community and the statement in the text about how other places that use English are more open to diversity, while America focuses on maintaining the White Standard. The lack of knowledge on Black English due to it not being accepted was seen when Jordan's students were unable to recognize the similarity between their speech patterns and the ones in *The Color Purple*, leading to the question of why Black English isn't taught. Lastly, the use of brutal force to maintain control seems in the essay in regards to South Africa, where police are tools used to maintain the white power structure

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

June Jordan's purpose of writing this was to educate the reader on how to write and understand Black English. Clues in the text that led me to this included the rules to keep in mind when approaching Black English that came from the students' experiences, the three main qualities of Black English, and the guidelines for Black English, coupled with examples for better understanding. All these things put together provided the readers with a step by step guide on translating and using Black English correctly. However I also feel that this piece was made to inform others about injustices and dismissals Black people go through in life. This is shown in Willie's essay that compares the brutality of apartheid in South Africa to the brutality the police showed in the murder of his brother. Also, the way his brother's murder was swept under the rug and the statements of the other students written in Black English were ignored by the press.

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 that the argument being made is in regards to the acceptable "standard" form of English, and June Jordan's stance is English is used by such a diverse group that there is no standard, all forms are acceptable, especially Black English even if America doesn't agree.

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.

This argument is supported by the statistics of the large number of native and non native speakers to show cause the possibility of having a standard is impossible. She also uses her own testimony of teaching Black English detailing how it has its own set of rules and guide lines that need to be followed in order to write it correctly. While also providing examples of this, English isn't nonsense but the voice and culture of an alienated group in America that is fighting back against the hierarchy put in place to silence them.

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

"June Jordan | The Poetry Foundation." Poetry Foundation, www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/june-jordan. Accessed 24 Sept. 2025.

"South End Press: About Us." South End Press | About Us, web.archive.org/web/20140407003041/www.southendpress.org/about. Accessed 24 Sept. 2025.

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

The blend of political and personal issues

The guidelines to write black english

The statement made by the students and Willie's essay