

SWA #2: Rhetorical Analysis: Carr & Baron- Brooke Gaumer

Cross examinations are a great skill set to have. The tool leaves room to question anything while recognizing the benefits and drawbacks of a topic. Why is it important to ask questions though? Raising awareness through curiosity allows for innovation and new perspectives we may have not considered if it wasn't for doing so. "Is Google Making Us Stupid" by Nicholas Carr and "Reading in a Digital Age" by Naomi Baron, two informative passages that introduce facts about the up-and-coming digital influence we are currently involved with. The two author's approaches are completely opposing one another, however the common factor they share making them a good comparative topic is that they are both expressing the belief that the rising use of technology is reshaping our minds and understanding of comprehension of what we are reading.

Carr's text expresses how search engines like Google have given us the ability to find answers so quick and efficiently that it doesn't make our brains think. His cautious, reflective, and concerned tone shows technology's negative influence on thinking. This 2008 article was only a glimpse into the startup of the internet. The writer took note of what he could already see, and in addition he predicted it could only get worse. The article states, "What the Net seems to be doing is chipping away my capacity for concentration and contemplation. My mind now expects to take in information the way the Net distributes it: in a swiftly moving stream of particles." This clearly shines a light on the author's concern of the internet changing the way we think. Even with a guess 17 years back he was able to foresee the danger in everything just being handed to us. With the lack of effort, lack of drive and creativity was sure to follow.

In contrast, Naomi Baron recognizes that having the technology at our disposal makes us more likely to skim over a reading or not look into things as deeply. She focuses more on the

comparison of a screen to paper or print. The text states, “But the devil may lie in the details. When researchers have altered the testing conditions or the types of questions they ask, discrepancies have appeared, suggesting that the medium does in fact matter. For example, Ackerman and Goldsmith (2011) observed that when participants could choose how much time to spend on digital versus print reading, they devoted less to reading onscreen and had lower comprehension scores. Schugar and colleagues (2011) found that participants reported using fewer study strategies (such as highlighting, note-taking, or bookmarking) when reading digitally. Kaufman and Flanagan (2016) noted that when reading in print, study participants did better answering abstract questions that required inferential reasoning; by contrast, participants scored better reading digitally when answering concrete questions. Researchers at the University of Reading (Dyson & Haselgrove, 2000) observed that reading comprehension declined when students were scrolling as they read, rather than focusing on stationary chunks of text.” To elaborate, she argues that a quick glance at a website online is much less engaging than reading a book in print. We are able to learn so much more when we read deeper into pages, and it leaves room for us to annotate, look up things we don’t understand, and retain what we learn. The more modern 2017 article represents a more relevant take due to its more recent publishing date. She claims that the cons outweigh the pros of technology. In her opinion, we should strive for progression with reading skills. She uses ethos, referencing studies and expert findings, whereas Nicholas Carr states he would rather have that we are able to find creative spark along the way and harness a space for more individual thought.