

## WRITING THROUGH THE RHETORICAL MODES

### SECTION 1: A RHETORICAL MODES READER

#### Chapter Two: The Expository Mode

#### Division, Classification, and Definition: Reading 4

Theophrastus, "Characters"

*Theophrastus was a Greek philosopher and the successor to Aristotle at the Peripatetic school in Athens. His Characters, of which there are 30, are possibly the earliest instance of systematic character writing, or the attempt to identify and describe the range of human personalities one encounters in everyday life.*

<http://www.eudaemonist.com/biblion/characters/>

Suggested characters: The Ironic Man, The Flatterer, The Garrulous Man, The Boor, The Reckless Man, The Chatty Man, The Gossip, The Penurious Man, The Unseasonable Man, The Stupid Man, The Oligarch

#### Questions for Reading and Discussion

- 1) Theophrastus claims to have written this essay in order to answer a question that has puzzled him for a long time: Why, if Greek culture is so uniform, does it produce so many different kinds of people? What questions have you long puzzled over? Take a moment to recall and write them down; then, share them with the class.
- 2) Do you recognize any of Theophrastus' characters? Do any of them describe you?

#### Questions for Writing and Research

- 1) We notice today that there are no women among Theophrastus' characters, as women had a very restricted role in public life in ancient Greece. However, if Theophrastus' Characters are still recognizable to us today, it may be in part because they are applicable across differences of gender, and across the great historical and cultural divides that separate us from ancient Greece. Write a paper in which you respond to this claim. Do the characters still hold up, or do we need new characters for contemporary society? Which widely known individuals fit Theophrastus' descriptions, and which demand a fresh description?
- 2) Write out a set of five characters, taking family members, friends, professors, and or classmates as your models.

3) In the style of Theophrastus, write a description of yourself as a character. Be sure to use the third person. For accuracy's sake, and as research in preparation for this task, you might ask your friends and family members to describe you.



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