**11AP Lang. & Comp.**

**SOAPS**

In discussing the rhetorical situation surrounding a text, we’ve talked about some of the background that you should consider (like the occasion, context, and purpose) and relationships that are more directly related to the text (like those among the speaker, audience, and subject). One way to remember all of these things is to use the acronym SOAPS, which stands for Subject, Occasion, Audience, Purpose, and Speaker. This offers a practical way to approach the concept of the rhetorical situation. Think of it as a kind of checklist that helps you organize your ideas rhetorically.

Background: Albert Einstein (1879- 1955) was a scientist famous for developing the general theory of relativity and the discovery of the photoelectric effect. Born in Germany, he eventually settled in the United States after Adolf Hitler rose to power. The letter below was written in response to a sixth-grade girl who wrote a letter asking Einstein whether scientists prayed.

Instructions: Use SOAPS to analyze the rhetorical situation. Closely read and annotate the text, and use the chart on the next page.

***Dear Phyllis***

**By Albert Einstein**

January 24, 1936

Dear Phyllis,

I have tried to respond to your question as simply as I could. Here is my answer.

Scientific research is based on the idea that everything that takes place is determined by laws of nature, and therefore this holds for the actions of people. For this reason, a research scientist will hardly be inclined to believe that events could be influenced by a prayer, i.e., by a wish addressed to a supernatural being.

However, it must be admitted that our actual knowledge of these laws is only imperfect and fragmentary, so that, actually, the belief in the existence of basic all-embracing laws in Nature also rests on a sort of faith. All the same this faith has been largely justified so far by the success of scientific research.

But, on the other hand, every one who is seriously involved in the pursuit of science becomes convinced that a spirit is manifest in the laws of the Universe—a spirit vastly superior to that of man, and one in the face of which we with our modest powers must feel humble. In this way the pursuit of science leads to a religious feeling of a special sort, which is indeed quite different from the religiosity of someone more naïve.

I hope this answers your question.

Best wishes

Yours, Albert Einstein

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| Subject |  |
| Occasion |  |
| Audience |  |
| Purpose |  |
| Speaker |  |