

The Art of Rhetoric: Ethos, Logos, Pathos

Learning How to Use the Three Main Rhetorical Styles

Rhetoric (n) – *the art of speaking or writing effectively*. (Webster's Definition)

According to Aristotle, rhetoric is “the ability, in each particular case, to see the available means of persuasion.” He described three main forms of rhetoric: Ethos, Logos, and Pathos.

In order to be a more effective writer, you must understand these three terms. This site will help you to better understand their meanings and show you how to make your writing more persuasive.

Ethos

Ethos is appeal based on the character of the speaker. An ethos-driven document relies on the reputation of the author.

Example:

Acme Gizmotronics, the company that you've trusted for over 100 years, has recently entered the World Wide Web! Now you can purchase our fine products through the internet. Our quality gizmos, widgets, and thingamabobs can be shipped to you within minutes. All come with the famous lifetime guarantee that makes Acme the company that the world depends on for it's gizmo needs.

Wiley Coyote Our spokesperson, Mr. Coyote says “I'm not really a coyote, but I play one on tv. I've used Acme products for years. Their slingshots, rocket launchers, crowbars, pogo sticks, and power pills are the best around. And don't forget their high-powered dynamite! I buy everything from Acme. They are the company that I trust the most.”

ACME is currently supporting reasearch into a form of clean, ultra-efficient, cesium-based power that promises to usher in a new period of cheap, globally available power. Based on a small island off the coast of Costa Rica, ACME Technology Research is one of our most significant divisions.

Interested in learning more about ACME? We thought you might be.

Explanation:

Back to reality – ACME is not a real company, contrary to popular belief. It's something we made up to use as an example of Ethos. The ACME homepage is an example of ethos because of the way it keeps referring back to the character of ACME. ACME is a company that “you have trusted for over 100 years.” They even have a spokesperson vouching for their integrity.

Logos

Logos is appeal based on logic or reason. Documents distributed by companies or corporations are logos-driven. Scholarly documents are also often logos-driven.

Example:

ACME's new dihydro-cesium detonation process

By combining cesium and dihydro-oxide in laboratory conditions, and capturing the released energy, ACME has promised to lead the way into the future. Our energy source is clean, safe, and powerful. No pollutants are released into the atmosphere. The world will soon have an excellent source of clean energy.

ACME is currently working towards a patent on our process. Our scientists are exploring ways to use the process in cars, houses, airplanes, and almost anything else that needs power. ACME batteries will be refitted with small dihydro-cesium reactors. Once the entire world is powered by ACME's generators, we can all relax and enjoy a much easier life.

Explanation:

Logos is an argument based on logic or reason. The ACME Research page is primarily logos-based because it appeals to the reason of people reading it. It suggests that Cesium will provide the world's energy for a very long time. It is clean, safe, and efficient, all of which are appeals to the logic of the audience. By using such convincing reasons in its argument, ACME hopes to provide the world's energy.

Pathos

Pathos is appeal based on emotion. Advertisements tend to be pathos-driven.

Example:

Cesium-Based Reactor Kills!

A baby turtle breaks free from the leathery shell of its egg, catching its first glimpse of its first sunrise. It pauses a moment to rest, unaware of the danger that lies so close to it. As the tide comes in, approaching the nest, it also approaches a small pile of metal - cesium. The water draws closer and closer, the turtle unsuspecting of the danger. Finally, the water touches the cesium.

The nest is torn to bits in the resulting explosion, destroying even more of an endangered species.

Why does this happen? One name: Acme.

Acme Gizmotronics is supporting a dihydro-cesium reactor, trying, in their anthropocentrism, to squeeze energy out of such destructive explosions. And, they are dumping waste cesium onto the shores of their island, threatening the environment. Studies have shown that the dihydro-cesium reactor will destroy the island's ecosphere in less than four months!

How can they get away with this?

Costa Rica (where the island is near) has lax environmental laws, allowing Acme to do whatever they want - including destroy endangered species.

What can you do about this?

Don't let them get away with it! Boycott Acme products! And call your representatives, and tell them you support stricter legislation to prevent things like this!

Explanation:

Pathos is an argument based on emotion, playing on sympathy, fears, and desires. The Say "NO!" To Acme! page is pathos-based because it relies on an emotional response from the people reading it. By stressing the helplessness of the (endangered) turtle, it attempts to sway people to its side, against the "commercial hordes" of Acme.