

Rhetoric and Rhetorical Appeals

This final mini unit is going to focus on practical writing that you encounter every day. This approach is based on the ancient Greeks, but for sake of brevity we will use one man's name: Aristotle (384-322 B.C.E.).

What is rhetoric?

If you go to Dictionary.com, this is the first definition you will find: "The undue use of exaggeration or display." But rhetoric was first defined as the art of persuasion, and it evolved to a study of how language is used effectively. Generally speaking, when people talk, frequently they want others to do something; they are persuading an audience to agree with them. It's possible that some people might say anything just to convince others to do their bidding; hence, we now have our current view of rhetoric.

What are the rhetorical appeals?

The rhetorical appeals are simply methods used by a writer or speaker to convince an audience to believe him/her. There are three main appeals (though they are frequently used together):

Logos: Logic, appeal to the rational. It appeals to the head using numbers, explanations, and facts. Through logos, a writer aims at a person's intellect. The idea is that if you are logical, you will understand.

Ethos: Character, appeal to ethics. This appeals to conscience, ethics, morals, standards, values, and principles. Ethos presents the voice and reputation of the speaker or writer, his/her character.

Pathos: Emotion, appeal to emotion by yanking on heart strings. This appeal relies on emotions, sympathy, passions, and sentimentality.

So let's apply these rhetorical appeals.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oKtQEnERhSY>

The Assignment

This assignment is going to be short and sweet. Each one of you will be presented with a situation where you want to convince someone to do something. You need to write a paragraph using ethos, pathos, and logos and you need to identify where you are using these appeals. Here's an example.

You are all going out for dinner. All of your friends want to go to different places, and you want Chinese. Here is what you could say.

Okay, so our options are pizza, sushi and Mexican. You know I'm a reasonable person and I don't push my own agenda, so hear me out. The last time we went out we had pizza, and although I love pizza, Antoinette is lactose intolerant, and we need to be mindful. She had a terrible stomach ache after dinner, and it would be such a bummer if she had to sit and watch us eat while she nibbled on a salad. We could do sushi as no one is allergic to that, but it's really expensive. Plus, Wyatt has this thing about raw fish, and I don't want him to be uncomfortable—even if he just gets a spring roll. He's our buddy, and we need to support his idiosyncratic nature. Of course, there's always Mexican, but the Mexican restaurant just got a health violation, and I don't want to risk any kind of infection. The idea of watching people puke up their guts is less than appetizing (get it? Appetizing?) Plus, I have friends who work there, and they get lousy benefits, so I would like to support them. If we get Chinese we avoid the lactose issue, we can select from a wide variety to choices, so if people want fish that's an option, and there are three different Chinese restaurants from which to choose so we don't have to worry about health concerns.

Logos

Ethos

Pathos

Here are your options:

1. Convince your parental unit/guardian to stay out past your curfew
2. Convince your parental unit/guardian to give you/raise your allowance.
3. Convince your parental unit/guardian to get you a pet of your choice.
4. Convince your boss to give you the weekend off.
5. Convince your boss to give you a raise.
6. Convince your friend(s) to go to a specific movie/event/concert/etc.
7. Convince your friend(s) to wear/buy an item/outfit/experience.
8. Convince your teacher to give you an extension.
9. Convince your teacher to change your grade.