

As a graduating senior, applying for colleges is a seemingly endless and daunting task that inspires fears, apprehension, and often great stress in the lives of many of these aspiring applicants. Ordering transcripts, turning in community service hours, filling out applications, and requesting multiple letters of recommendation, all while being expected to uphold and maintain one's academic standing and success in the rigorous courses that said student is enrolled in, can cause overwhelming feelings of anxiety and nervousness. Of the most grievous of these worries for most students are the financial obligations that accompany the requirements for enrollment. Scholarships are of the utmost importance for students seeking financial assistance in post-secondary educational settings, and most of these scholarships require a personal essay to differentiate the candidates from one other. When describing myself, my achievements, involvements, and aspirations in such an essay, I employed rhetorical strategies, such as, Aristotelian appeals and intertextuality, to establish my individual voice in my writing, and to effectively communicate my résumé beyond mere test scores and statistics.

In preparation for my essays production, I analyzed other scholarship essays online and investigated the proper techniques and practical approaches that were successful in other students experiences. By visiting websites hosted by reliable and experienced sources, such as, University Language and International Student, I broadened my knowledge and understanding of what the readers were looking for, and provided myself the advantage of reading essays that were selected as winners. Inevitably, this research provided a source for intertextuality in my scholarship proposal, agreeing with James Porter's argument that, "there can be no text that does not draw on

some ideas from some other texts" (542). I was able to analyze these sample scholarship papers and draw parallels from their writing approaches to implement in my own essay.

Included in these parallels were the use of anecdotes to provide a more interpersonal relationship between myself and the audience, rather than solely focusing on my test scores and GPA, diminishing myself and my character to inconsequential statistics, that are incapable of genuinely demonstrating the essence of my being. By incorporating brief descriptors of my reason of application for these scholarships, the steps I have taken in pursuit of providing financial assistance myself, and my extracurricular and community involvements, I supply a glimpse of my life and my efforts, beyond the numbers on a transcript; in doing so, evoke a sense of acquaintanceship and a deeper appreciation of my story. My experiences make me who I am. And by sharing these experiences in the form of anecdotes, I can more effectively communicate my character and personality from the more difficult situational perspective of ink and paper.

Along with this, I had to take into account the audience of my essay, and what impression they would receive from my writing and its contents. The rhetorical situation also had to be considered and evaluated to ensure my essays effectiveness. Keith Grant-Davie, an English professor at Utah State University, defines a rhetorical situation as "...An activity, an event, or a situation is rhetorical when it is shaped by language or communication" (484). The audience in this scenario is a group of sponsors that are looking for someone deserving of their grant to develop a well-written essay that explains their rhetorical situation. Interested in above average students with below

average financial assistance, the audience is looking for applicants that are seeking help from outside sources to compensate them for their hard work and dedication in the secondary years of their education.

The exigence in the work is demonstrated in the introductory paragraph of the scholarship essay, with an explanation of the financial situation I was in at the time, and my motivation for applying for the scholarship. Natasha Jones and Stephanie Wheeler highlight the purpose and meaning of exigence in a work, explaining, "What need is calling the text into being, making it necessary, which shapes how it will be used" (654). I wanted the reader to connect with my circumstances by providing a summary of my familial demographics, my intense passion for the career that I wish to pursue, and the lengths I am willing to go to achieve the goal that I have been dreaming about since I can remember. I wanted the audience to hear my story, know my drive, and appreciate my motivation. I knew that I wanted to convey my story to the readers, but I was initially uncertain of the precise methodology to do so, so I asked my guidance counselor for advice. Knowing my case herself, and similarly wanting me to depict it in the essay, she provided me with the candid axiom of "Be yourself". I left her office with feelings of even more ambivalence than I did walking in. I asked myself what that statement means, who even am I? In the days following this consultation, I found myself questioning my identity, and delving deep into the question of: "Who are you?". Finally sitting down at my computer, with the knowledge in mind of the former days of self-reflection and discovery, I started typing. I decided to simply tell my story in a way that would demonstrate who I am as a person, and that would develop my voice as one of confidence, passion, and integrity. I used examples of activities that I participated in my

life in pursuit of my goals and aspirations, and in doing so used the rhetorical appeals of pathos and logos throughout my writing.

In listing all of my academic achievements, GPA, test scores, and community service hours I provided tangible facts and statistics that could be interpreted on a numerical scale. Branching off from the more abstract engagements that may or may not be understood in context, my inclusion of these figures provided evidence of my irrefutable progresses towards the highest tiers of scholarship qualifications and merits. Most impactful of these achievements to more math-minded individuals was the mention of my class rank of twelve out of 562 other competitive students in my graduating class. Seeing my efforts come to fruition in this aspect was well worth mentioning because of the heavy weight it held when put into perspective of the size and standing of my fellow graduates. My rhetorical decision of including logos in the piece was successful in imparting a perception of my academic prowess beyond the abstract awards mentioned elsewhere in the essay.

Pathos was another Aristotelian appeal that was utilized within the anecdotes of the piece to demonstrate feelings of empathy, nostalgia, and familial gatherings. With the initial mention of the financial condition I was undertaking, and the reasoning behind them, the audience develops a more pellucid understanding, and perhaps can relate to the predicament in one way or another, and apply it to an instance in their own lives. Likewise, when describing my passion for aeronautics, relations can be drawn from similar experiences of discovery, curiosity, and mesmerization from an incident in the life of the reader. Rereading this essay a year later, with the knowledge that I have developed in that time period, I am now realizing that I could have taken some actions

to better improve upon the impact of my usage of pathos, despite some of the constraints that I was put under. For example, by elaborating upon my experiences and fulfillment working with, teaching, and coaching, disabled children, I would have made another possible connection to the audience, and provided them with the awareness of what an extraordinary impact that this part of my community outreach had, not only my temporary contentment, but also on my long-term character and compassion.

This being said, it would have been a much more feasible task to integrate all of the impacts, details, and aspects of my anecdotes and experiences, without the word count and prompt restraints that I was under. With nearly all scholarship and application essays, there is a given word count, page limit, or prompt that the rhetor has to follow in order to be considered. In this case, the prompt suggested that that writer explain their involvements in high school, and why they should be awarded the scholarship money. A reasonably straightforward persuasion, however, coupled with the second constraint of a word count below one thousand, it became a more limiting and challenging assignment. Overall, the essay was effective in satisfying the needs of the prompt, and staying in accordance with the word count, all while successfully delivering a moving and impactful argument as to why I should earn the scholarship designation.

Through this analysis, I have developed a profound understanding of rhetorical analysis, and the effects of the rhetorical decisions that an author chooses to make on the comprehensive writing itself, and how it reads to the intended audience. I feel that I have also refined my attention to detail of rhetorical strategies in writing, and will furthermore look for, and incorporate more effectively, the pieces of rhetoric utilized by other authors and myself.

## **Works Cited**

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