WR121

Essay #2: Summary/ Rhetorical Analysis Response

**BASIC PROMPT:** Create a 3-4 page Summary/Rhetorical Analysis Essay (750 word minimum), which summarizes a source essay from our text or our class readings (feel free to select any essay from the text, even if we have not been assigned to read it) and comments on the Source Essay’s effectiveness.

**PREWRITE:** Decide whether the author’s essay was effective or ineffective in conveying its message to its intended audience. In order to do this you will also have to consider:

- what the purpose of the essay is
- who the intended audience of the essay is.
- why certain elements of the essay were effective or ineffective

After thinking of good reasons and examples to support your view, apply the terms we have learned in class—audience, purpose, point-of-view, logos, ethos, pathos—and follow the formatting guide below.

**FORMAT:** This essay will ask for a rigid format. Make sure you follow the format below.

**Paragraph One: SUMMARY:** Begin your essay with an 8-12 sentence summary. Use the skills and methods described in our textbook to achieve this summary.

**Paragraph Two: INTRODUCTION:** After writing your summary, work on an introduction to your thesis. This paragraph should serve as a 6-12 sentence transitional paragraph that moves away from the summary and towards your rhetorical analysis. The paragraph will begin with sentences that may introduce key concepts, such as the author’s intended purpose and audience. This paragraph must end with your well developed thesis statement.

**THESIS STATEMENT:** Formulating a thesis statement: Because this assignment requires an analysis of effectiveness in rhetoric, the main argument of your essay is fairly limited. Your thesis should clearly state whether or not the source essay was effective or ineffective.

A good thesis will most likely include forecasting—outlining the major points of your argument—and/or tension building—briefly showing the opposite side of the argument.

A model thesis for this assignment may look like this:
*Although (author)'s argument was intended to (purpose), her argument is ultimately ineffective because it fails to provide enough logos to build any true ethos with her reader; without any established credibility, the author's words fail to effectively reach her audience.*

**Other Paragraphs: BODY & CONCLUSION:** These paragraphs should

- provide specific quotations as support for your claims and example.
- analyze these quotations by applying the rhetorical terms we’ve talked about in this class (logos, ethos, pathos).
- use well thought out topic sentences to give each paragraph a strong unity
- use solid transitions in order to create a smooth flow from one paragraph to the next.
- tie your analysis back to your main points and your topic sentences and thesis.
- allow the reader to see why you’re using your support and analysis and how the support and analysis proves your points.
- cite quotations inside the text with (pg#).

As always, let me know if you have any questions or concerns. Good luck!
In the essay “Oops! I’ll do it again. And again. And again...”, James Bowman writes about the detrimental effect that the self-esteem movement has had on education in America. Bowman writes about how the SAT is adopting a system called Score Choice which allows students to take the SAT more than once and choose their highest score to send to colleges. This is a manifestation of the do-over mentality that American culture has been adopting and has become increasingly apparent recently with the failed businessmen who have been asking Washington for bail-outs. Bowman draws parallels between current do-overs and the 1980s self-esteem movement in education where educators began focusing on constantly praising children for their efforts instead of fostering healthy competition. It is argued that this removed the incentive for students to work hard and caused unintended side effects like grade inflation, poor student performance on a world stage and a sense of entitlement. Bowman recounts a story his friend told him of her listening to her 8-year-old granddaughter play piano. When she suggested that the granddaughter practice some more the child burst into tears claiming that the grandma was not proud of her. He goes on to argue that this is an example of how we do no favors to children when we teach “them that they have a right to a favorable outcome in all that they do.” (Bowman 217) Bowman goes on to say that education is supposed to build character in students by exposing them to the same sorts of stresses and failures that come in adult life in order to teach them how to cope with such things. Bowman concludes his essay by stating that addressing failures only causes more widespread failures in the future and that we deserve better than this.

In his essay Bowman provides a good analysis of the faults with American society’s obsession with the self-esteem movement. Bowman points out the fact that we coddle our children too much and we are starting to see these children become adults and cause serious problems in our society. We are falling behind in education because we do no longer encourage competition and are more concerned with making everyone feel special and unique. This is simply not true, children are not unique individuals that deserve to be treated special. As Bowman points out children need to be prepared for the real world, which is harsh and unforgiving. Bowman does a good job using logos and pathos when arguing against sheltering children from failure but fails to provide ethos to make the reader believe in the credibility of his argument. Although the reader may agree with Bowman’s statements, with the lack of ethos in his argument, it is hard to look at his essay as anything more than his personal opinions.

In the essay, Bowman only cites one credible source which is something from Friedrich Hayek’s book “The Constitution of Liberty”. It sets the tone for the rest of the essay by showing ethos with a quote from a renowned economist who agrees with Bowman’s standpoint. It backs up his opinion that society needs to teach students credibility for their failures but Bowman fails to follow up with any other arguments that show credibility or authority. Bowman did not even use a direct quote from Hayek’s text; he just makes a short paragraph summary. For the purpose of ethos Bowman should have made a direct
Essentially Bowman is addressing the subject of nature vs. nurture in this essay which is a very heated debate in American society. He makes a strong point over this debate using logos with his arguments, “We do children no favors by teaching them that they have a right to a favorable outcome in all that they do,” and “If you fail, sooner or later that failure will have to be recognized, confronted and put to rights.” (217) He then sums the whole essay up by saying, “Not to do so in a timely fashion is only to spread the consequences of failure much more widely.” (217) Through these statements he uses logos to appeal to the reasoning of his audience by stating that we are the ones failing the children and that it is detrimental to their future and the future of our society. After these powerful appeals to logos Bowman fails to follow up with any ethos to back up, and make his reasonable arguments appear valid. Instead of providing ethos for the arguments Bowman instead decides to provide an abundance of pathos. Bowman appeals to the logos of the argument and tends to couple it with pathos to hit home at the emotions of the reader. Bowman writes, “the do-over mentality whose insidious creep into the larger culture has been made apparent over the past several months by the queue of failed businessmen and financiers who have come to Washington with their hands out, asking to be rescued from the consequences of their own poor answers to life’s examination questions.” (216) With this he uses the recent economic crisis that has so many people angry to draw a parallel to his argument. This is one of Bowman’s better uses of pathos to get his argument across to the reader because it is something that everyone can relate to and is fresh in everyone’s mind. Possibly the strangest appeal to pathos is when Bowman quotes a Joni Mitchell song that was based off a Rudyard Kipling poem. He says that Mitchell changes the song to be more cheerful and unrealistic where Kipling’s original poem represented the more accurate and darker view of life. He criticizes the change nearly accusing Mitchell of being irresponsible by stating, “there are no more unforgiving minutes in the wonder and delight of Ms. Mitchell’s imaginary land of endless do-overs.” (217) This is a very appealing argument to pathos as Bowman shows how pop culture is also influencing the way we believe about self-esteem boosting by re-writing a poem to make it more cheerful. Bowman does a great job appealing to logos and pathos in his essay “Oops! I’ll do it again. And again. And again…”. Unfortunately he does not appeal to ethos and most arguments need at least some credibility to be taken seriously by readers. The essay does a great job of making you understand Bowman’s viewpoint and sympathizing with it but does little to support his views with real facts. Bowman’s essay is a great opinion piece but does little to sway readers who rely more on ethos to formulate their opinions.
In his essay, “TV Watching - The Top Environmental Hazard for Children”, Tod Huffman illustrates the serious effect that today’s “hyper sexualized” social media has on our youth. Huffman believes that television is neither good or bad, but a “tool” that is a “powerful teacher”. This “tool”, he urges, is not being used responsibly by parents. Children are allowed to watch countless hours of television with little or no parental supervision or guidance. This lack of guidance and parental passivity has allowed media outlets such as television, music videos, and the Internet, to expose our kids to sex, violence, and other adult themes on a daily basis. While this “glamorized” sexual content is commonplace in television and movies, the serious consequences of engaging in sexual activities are seldom portrayed. Even more alarming, Huffman urges, is how the media is functioning as a “sexual super peer” and “role model”, escalating sexual activity in our youth. The author cites several studies depicting the correlation between exposure to sexual content in the media and early, risky sexual activity amongst adolescents. This situation is a “national concern”, Huffman proclaims, and he lists the epidemic of teen pregnancies and the widespread infection of sexually transmitted diseases as two examples of great concern. The teen pregnancy rate, which is “10 times as high as the rates in other industrialized countries”, does not seem to have been reduced by the ineffective “no sex” and “abstinence” teachings by parents and schools. But who is to blame? The media has elected to share its obsession with anything sexual or violent with our children, yet parents do still hold the final decision on what media their kids are allowed to consume. Huffman charges that it is the shared responsibility of both. The media needs to be held accountable to “public health”, and parents, he advises, need to take back “that remote”.

The purpose of Tod Huffman’s essay, “TV Watching - The Top Environmental Hazard for Children”, is to implicate both today’s media and the lack of parental control in the alarming rates of premature sexual activity in our youth. The author’s purpose is not to cast blame on either side, but to challenge his audience- the parents and others concerned with the well being of our children- to step up and reclaim their roles as educators and role models. While Huffman explores both sides of this issue, even extolling the positive influences that the media can offer, he ultimately produces a stronger argument for the negative side effects of unmonitored, early media viewing. His argument, which he supports with published studies on the subject, is both convincing and alarming. Through the use of rhetorical strategies, mainly logos and pathos, the author is effective in conveying the seriousness of his argument and motivating his audience to take action.

Huffman’s strategy of using reasoning, or Logos, is evident throughout the text. He offers the audience facts and results from studies to support his claims. Facts such as “Children and adolescents are permitted to view an average of 30 hours of television each week” (p728), and “95 percent of American children watch programs that are produced for more mature audiences” (p728), demonstrate
the lack of parental involvement and control the author is aiming to express to his audience. To show the implications that this lack of supervision has on our impressionable children, two alarming studies are included that reveal how today’s “hyper sexualized media” (p729) is affecting our youth. The first study, a look at how exposure to sexual content in the media “accelerates white adolescents’ sexual activity and increases their risk of engaging in early sexual intercourse” (p728), and the Center for Disease Control study that estimates that “3.2 million teenage girls is infected with at least one of the most common sexually transmitted diseases” (p729), are both compelling and effective statements that support the author’s claim. Through logical statements, facts, and examples, Huffman effectively supports his argument that today’s media is contributing to the “corruption of childhood” (p729), with parents blindly unaware, or too busy to care, about the “media saturated world their children inhabit” (p728).

Through emotion, or Pathos, the author is also effective in supporting his argument, particularly in spurring the audience into action. Huffman appeals to his audience’s sense of fear, shock and anger. By linking common concerns of parents, such as “sex, violence, homicide, obesity, eating disorders, school problems, and drug use” (p728), to unchecked media consumption, the author effectively instills fear and concern in his audience. In addition, shock and anger are aroused as Huffman describes the sobering statistics of teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease rates in America today. Despite the negative emotions this argument arouses, the author ultimately empowers the reader to make a change for the better.

A positive change in the lives of our children and adolescents, through responsible media and conscientious parenting, is the message that Huffman attempts to impress upon the reader. His effective strategy of exploring many sides of this issue, and placing equal culpability on both the media and the parents, made for a convincing argument. After all, what is more important than the health and welfare of our children?
In the short essay, “TV Watching-The Top Environmental Hazard for Children”, author Todd Huffman talks about the negative effects of a child or adolescents development due to messages from television and the media. Huffman begins by stating that television is not a necessity for the development of a child, but a “tool” (pg.728). However, he states that this “tool” has become more and more dangerous as the media grows larger and larger, as well as shifting its focus to younger people. The author is trying to advise his audience, whom I believe are the parents within his community (essay was printed in his local newspaper), that television and the media are having a negative effect on children’s knowledge of sex, drugs, violence and many other risky subjects. Not only does the media “glamorize” (pg. 728) these issues, but also causes additional pressure about the issues that children already face amongst their friends. Huffman advises that “A growing number of studies are revealing that exposure to sexual content in television…accelerates white adolescents’ sexual activity and increases their risk of engaging in early sexual intercourse” (pg. 728). This means that white teen girls are getting pregnant at younger and younger ages. It also means that there is a higher percentage of sexually transmitted diseases amongst this group as well. Huffman does not talk about alternative options to television to possibly help reduce these harmful messages, but instead, states that “The corruption of childhood is now pretty much a fact of modern life.” (pg. 729).

Television now, is no where near what it was ten years ago. As a child, I remember getting up early Saturday morning, excited to watch a re-run of Tom & Jerry. But from my own personal experience recently, I would have to say things have definitely changed with television and the media for the worst. I have two younger brothers, ages 12 and 10, and I see how TV and the internet has effected their knowledge of adult issues. I can still remember the day my 10 year old brother reciting a quote from an episode from South Park. The only words that I had really noticed were somewhere along the lines of “…I’m going to rape your face.” I immediately scolded my brother and asked why he was watching show’s like that. He simply responded by stating, “Mom let me watch it one time, so I kept doing it.” Now, I’m positive my mom had no idea what the show contained, but it’s a great example of the messages that are being sent to kids through television, and how parents can be completely oblivious.

I believe Todd Huffman has many valid points in his essay and I feel it was very effective in pointing out the cause and effect of the media’s negative influence on today’s kids. Being a pediatrician, and providing hard facts helps him establish credibility and get his point across to the readers. He leaves the end of the essay pretty open for his readers and almost asks them the question, “What are you going to do about it?”

And what a great question that is. What are we going to do about it? We see as consumers, how sex obviously sells. But because sexualizing EVERYTHING has become such a major part of our culture, does this mean we have become numb to it? Huffman explains how the media puts on an “Everyone
does it” kind of attitude, showing how sex and teen pregnancy has become a new fad almost. On the other side however, “the need for birth control, the risks of pregnancy or sexually transmitted infections...are rarely discussed” (pg. 728). Besides sex, other issues that are, again what Huffman states as "glamorized", include drug use, eating disorders, violence (including homicide and suicide), and school problems (pg. 728).

Huffman backs up his statements with hard evidence as well, writing that "despite recent declines, the teenage pregnancy rate in the United States is still three to 10 times as high as...other industrialized nations." Being a pediatrician, he also knows that the number of young girls with sexually transmitted diseases is high as well. He uses a statistic from the Centers for Disease Control stating that “one in four young women between the ages of 14 and 19...is infected with at least one of the most common sexually transmitted diseases” (pg. 729). The words that kill me in that quote are “…at least one…”, which tells me that there are 14 year old children in the world with more than one STD. Even though I’m not a parent, I still couldn’t imagine dealing with my brother, almost 13 years old, coming home saying that he contracted an STD, let alone, was having sex.

I find it very ironic that almost everything you look at today in the media, television, movies or on the internet has some sort of sexual message being portrayed, but talking about sex with today’s youth is taboo. Sex education has virtually vanished from public schools, causing, what Huffman states as “Reducing sex education into a two-word slogan--“no sex”...”, which obviously has not been working.

I agree one hundred percent with Huffman’s argument about the negative effects that the media has on children and adolescents. He makes a very valid point at the end of his essay that “…parents still hold a large measure of control over the media habits of their children” (pg. 729).

Yes, the TV can be a good babysitter while one is trying to get ready for work in the morning, or while the family waits for dinner; and I will admit, I have slipped and let my brothers watch things they probably shouldn’t. However, I feel it is more important to know that your developing child is constantly taking in all of the information they see, and unless supervised and taught otherwise, could feel that the information they are gaining is how reality should be. So with that, I will ask you...what are you going to do about it?