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An Introduction to Rhetoric Using the “Available Means”

To many people, the word *rhetoric* automatically signals that trickery or deception is afoot. They assume that an advertiser is trying to manipulate a consumer, a politician wants to obscure a point, or a spin doctor is spinning. “Empty rhetoric!” is a common criticism—and at times an indictment. Yet the Greek philosopher Aristotle (384–322 B.C.E.) defined **rhetoric** as “the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion.”

At its best, rhetoric is a thoughtful, reflective activity leading to effective communication, including the rational exchange of opposing viewpoints. In Aristotle’s day and in ours, those who understand and can use the available means to appeal to an **audience** of one or many find themselves in a position of strength. They have the tools to resolve conflicts without confrontation, to persuade readers or listeners to support their position, or to move others to take action.

Rhetoric is not just for Roman senators in togas. You might use rhetoric to convince a friend that John Coltrane is worth listening to, explain to readers of your blog why *Night of the Living Dead* is the most influential horror movie of all time, or persuade your parents that they should buy you a car. Rhetoric is also not just about speeches. Every essay, political cartoon, photograph, and advertisement is designed to convince you of something. To simplify, we will call all of these things **texts** because they are cultural products that can be “read,” meaning not just consumed and comprehended, but investigated. We need to be able to “read” between the lines, regardless of whether we’re reading a political ad, a political cartoon, or a political speech. Consider documentary films: every decision—such as what lighting to use for an interview, what music to play, what to show and what to leave out—constitutes a rhetorical choice based on what the filmmaker thinks will be most persuasive.

It is part of our job as informed citizens and consumers to understand how rhetoric works so that we can be wary of manipulation or deceit, while appreciating effective and civil communication. And it is essential that each of us communicates as effectively and honestly as possible.

• ACTIVITY •

Identify an article, a speech, a video, or advertisement that you think is manipulative or deceptive and one that is civil and effective. Use these two examples to explain what you see as the difference.

The Rhetorical Situation

Let's start out by looking at a speech that nearly everyone has read or heard: the speech that baseball player Lou Gehrig gave at an Appreciation Day held in his honor on July 4, 1939. Gehrig had recently learned that he was suffering from amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), a neurological disorder that has no cure (today it is known as Lou Gehrig's disease). Although Gehrig was a reluctant speaker, the fans' chant of "We want Lou!" brought him to the podium to deliver one of the most powerful and heartfelt speeches of all time.

Farewell Speech

LOU GEHRIG

Fans, for the past two weeks you have been reading about a bad break I got. Yet today I consider myself the luckiest man on the face of the earth. I have been in ball-parks for seventeen years and have never received anything but kindness and encouragement from you fans. Look at these grand men. Which of you wouldn't consider it the highlight of his career just to associate with them for even one day?

Sure, I'm lucky. Who wouldn't consider it an honor to have known Jacob Ruppert; also the builder of baseball's greatest empire, Ed Barrow; to have spent six years with that wonderful little fellow, Miller Huggins; then to have spent the next nine years with that outstanding leader, that smart student of psychology—the best manager in baseball today, Joe McCarthy? Who wouldn't feel honored to have roomed with such a grand guy as Bill Dickey?

Sure, I'm lucky. When the New York Giants, a team you would give your right arm to beat, and vice versa, sends you a gift—that's something! When everybody down to the groundskeepers and those boys in white coats remember you with trophies—that's something!

When you have a wonderful mother-in-law who takes sides with you in squabbles against her own daughter—that's something! When you have a father and mother who work all their lives so that you can have an education and build your body—it's a blessing! When you have a wife who has been a tower of strength and shown more courage than you dreamed existed—that's the finest I know!

So I close in saying that I might have been given a bad break, but I have an awful lot to live for! Thank you.

While in our time the word *rhetoric* may suggest deception, this speech reminds us that rhetoric can serve sincerity as well. No wonder one commentator wrote, “Lou Gehrig’s speech almost rocked Yankee Stadium off its feet.”

Occasion, Context, and Purpose

Why is this an effective speech? First of all, rhetoric is always situational. It has an **occasion**—the time and place the text was written or spoken. The occasion exists within a specific **context**—the circumstances, atmosphere, attitudes, and events surrounding the text. **Purpose** is the goal the speaker wants to achieve. In the case of Gehrig’s speech, the occasion is Lou Gehrig Appreciation Day. More specifically, his moment comes at home plate between games of a doubleheader. The context is first and foremost Gehrig’s recent announcement of his illness and his subsequent retirement, but as is often the case, the context goes well beyond that. Gehrig, known as the Iron Horse, held the record for consecutive games played (2,130) and was one of the greatest sluggers of all time. For such a durable and powerful athlete to fall victim to a disease that strips away strength and coordination seemed an especially cruel fate. Just a couple of weeks earlier, Gehrig was still playing ball; but by the time he gave this speech, he was so weak that his manager had to help him walk out to the mound for the ceremony.

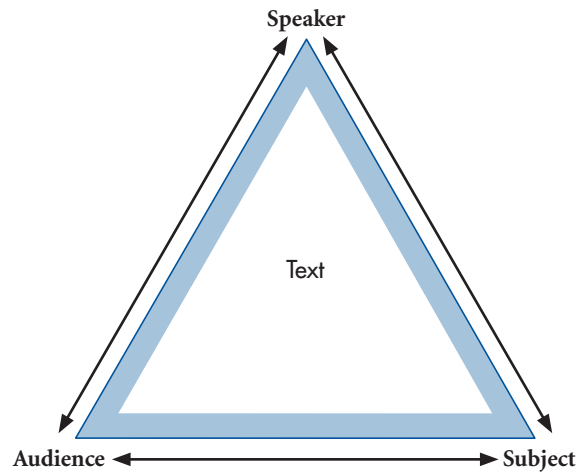
One of Gehrig’s chief purposes in delivering this speech is to thank his fans and his teammates, but he also wants to demonstrate that he remains positive: he emphasizes his past luck and present optimism and downplays his illness. He makes a single reference to the diagnosis and does so in the strong, straightforward language of an athlete: he got a “bad break.” There is no blame, no self-pity, no plea for sympathy. Throughout, he maintains his focus: to thank his fans and teammates for their support and get on with watching the ballgame. Gehrig responds as a true Yankee, not just the team but the can-do Yankee spirit of America, by acknowledging his illness and accepting his fate with dignity, honor, humility, and even a touch of humor.

The Rhetorical Triangle

Another important aspect of the rhetorical situation is the relationship among the speaker, audience, and subject. One way to conceptualize the relationship among these elements is through the **rhetorical triangle**. Some refer to it as the **Aristotelian triangle** because Aristotle used a triangle to illustrate how these three elements are interrelated. How a speaker perceives the relationships among these elements will go a long way toward determining what he or she says and how he or she says it.

Let’s use the rhetorical triangle (see p. 4) to analyze Gehrig’s speech.

The **speaker** is the person or group who creates a text. This might be a politician who delivers a speech, a commentator who writes an article, an artist who draws a political cartoon, or even a company that commissions an advertisement.



Aristotle's Rhetorical Triangle

Don't think of the speaker solely as a name, but consider a description of who the speaker is in the context of the text. The speaker of the speech we just read is not just Lou Gehrig, but baseball hero and ALS victim Lou Gehrig. Sometimes, there is a slight difference between who the speaker is in real life and the role the speaker plays when delivering the speech. This is called a **persona**. Persona comes from the Greek word for "mask"; it means the face or character that a speaker shows to his or her audience. Lou Gehrig is a famous baseball hero, but in his speech he presents himself as a common man who is modest and thankful for the opportunities he's had.

The **audience** is the listener, viewer, or reader of a text or performance, but it is important to note that there may be multiple audiences. When making rhetorical decisions, speakers ask what values their audiences hold, particularly whether the audience is hostile, friendly, or neutral and how informed it is on the topic at hand. Sure, Gehrig's audience was his teammates and the fans in the stadium that day, but it was also the teams he played against, the fans listening on the radio, and posterity—us.

The **subject** is the topic. And the subject should not be confused with the purpose, which is the goal the speaker wants to achieve. Gehrig's subject is his illness, but it is also a catalog of all the lucky breaks that preceded his diagnosis.

• ACTIVITY •

Construct and analyze a rhetorical situation for writing a review of a movie, video game, or concert. Be very specific in your analysis: What is your subject? What is your purpose? Who is your audience? What is your relationship to the

audience? Remember, you need not write a full essay; just analyze the rhetorical situation.

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. It's a mnemonic device that 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. Let's use SOAPS to look at the rhetorical situation in a letter written by Albert Einstein.

Widely considered the greatest scientist of the twentieth century, Einstein (1879–1955) is responsible for the theory of relativity, quantum mechanics, and other foundational scientific concepts. He won the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1921. In 1936, he wrote the following letter to a sixth-grade student, Phyllis Wright, in response to her questions: Do scientists pray? And if so, what do they pray for?

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 naive.

I hope this answers your question.

Best wishes

Yours,

Albert Einstein

Subject	The explicit subject here is whether scientists pray and, if so, what they pray for. Implicitly, the subject is the nature of faith.
Occasion	The occasion is Einstein's receipt of a letter from Phyllis Wright asking questions about science and religion.
Audience	The primary audience for the letter is Phyllis herself, though the formality of his response suggests that Einstein realized that his letters would have a larger audience. (Note that he won the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1921, so by 1936 he was a world-renowned scientist.)
Purpose	Einstein's purpose is probably the most complex element here. At its most straightforward, his purpose is to respond to a sincere schoolgirl's question about science and religion. Beyond that, it seems that Einstein's purpose is to expand Phyllis's horizons a bit, to help her understand that science and religion do not necessarily represent two antagonistic ways of thinking.
Speaker	The speaker, a scientist approaching age sixty, is responding to a girl who is likely twelve, so his purpose is intertwined with that speaker–audience relationship: the wise elder in dialogue with the younger generation.

Ultimately, Einstein does not “answer” Phyllis directly at all; rather, he returns the question to her by offering different ways to think about the nature of science and religion and the way spiritual and scientific perspectives interact. Viewed in this light, Einstein's purpose can be seen as engaging a younger person—who might become a scientist—in thinking more deeply about her own question.

• ACTIVITY •

Using SOAPS, analyze the rhetorical situation in the following speech.

9/11 Speech

GEORGE W. BUSH

Good evening.

Today, our fellow citizens, our way of life, our very freedom came under attack in a series of deliberate and deadly terrorist acts.

The victims were in airplanes or in their offices—secretaries, businessmen and women, military and federal workers. Moms and dads. Friends and neighbors.

Thousands of lives were suddenly ended by evil, despicable acts of terror.

The pictures of airplanes flying into buildings, fires burning, huge structures collapsing, have filled us with disbelief, terrible sadness, and a quiet, unyielding anger.

These acts of mass murder were intended to frighten our nation into chaos and retreat. But they have failed. Our country is strong. A great people has been moved to defend a great nation.

Terrorist attacks can shake the foundations of our biggest buildings, but they cannot touch the foundation of America. These acts shatter steel, but they cannot dent the steel of American resolve.

America was targeted for attack because we're the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world. And no one will keep that light from shining.

Today, our nation saw evil, the very worst of human nature, and we responded with the best of America, with the daring of our rescue workers, with the caring for strangers and neighbors who came to give blood and help in any way they could.

Immediately following the first attack, I implemented our government's emergency response plans. Our military is powerful, and it's prepared. Our emergency teams are working in New York City and Washington, D.C., to help with local rescue efforts.

Our first priority is to get help to those who have been injured and to take every precaution to protect our citizens at home and around the world from further attacks. The functions of our government continue without interruption. Federal agencies in Washington which had to be evacuated today are reopening for essential personnel tonight and will be open for business tomorrow.

Our financial institutions remain strong, and the American economy will be open for business as well.

The search is under way for those who are behind these evil acts. I've directed the full resources of our intelligence and law enforcement communities to find those responsible and bring them to justice. We will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them.

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Appeals to Ethos, Logos, and Pathos

Now that we understand how to assess the rhetorical situation, the next step is to use the tools of rhetoric to persuade an audience. Let's start with what Aristotle called **rhetorical appeals**. He identified three main appeals: ethos, logos, and pathos.

Ethos

Speakers appeal to **ethos** (Greek for "character") to demonstrate that they are credible and trustworthy. Think, for example, of a speech discouraging teenagers from drinking. Speakers might appeal to ethos by stressing that they are concerned parents, psychologists specializing in alcoholism or adolescent behavior, or recovering alcoholics themselves. Appeals to ethos often emphasize shared values between the speaker and the audience: when a parent speaks to other parents in the same community, they share a concern for their children's education or well-being.

Lou Gehrig brings the ethos of being a legendary athlete to his speech, yet in it he establishes a different kind of ethos—that of a regular guy and a good sport who shares the audience’s love of baseball and family. And like them, he has known good luck and bad breaks.

In some instances, a speaker’s reputation immediately establishes ethos. For example, the speaker may be a scholar in Russian history and economics as well as the nation’s secretary of state. Or the speaker may be “the dog whisperer,” a well-known animal behaviorist. In these instances, the speaker brings ethos to the text; but in other cases, a speaker establishes ethos through what he or she says in the text by sounding reasonable, acknowledging other opinions, or being thoughtful and well informed. The speaker’s ethos—expertise, knowledge, experience, sincerity, common purpose with the audience, or a combination of these factors—gives the audience a reason for listening to this person on this subject.

Automatic Ethos

Let’s look at an example of how a speaker’s title or status automatically brings ethos to the rhetorical situation. On September 3, 1939, King George VI gave a radio address to the British people declaring that the country was at war with Germany. The very fact that he is king gives him a certain degree of automatic ethos to speak on the subject of war, yet King George also emphasizes the shared values that unite everyone.

The King’s Speech (September 3, 1939)

KING GEORGE VI

In this grave hour, perhaps the most fateful in history, I send to every household of my peoples, both at home and overseas, this message, spoken with the same depth of feeling for each one of you as if I were able to cross your threshold and speak to you myself.

For the second time in the lives of most of us, we are at war. Over and over again, we have tried to find a peaceful way out of the differences between ourselves and those who are now our enemies, but it has been in vain. We have been forced into a conflict, for we are called, with our allies to meet the challenge of a principle which, if it were to prevail, would be fatal to any civilized order in the world.

It is a principle which permits a state in the selfish pursuit of power to disregard its treaties and its solemn pledges, which sanctions the use of force or threat of force against the sovereignty and independence of other states. Such a principle, stripped of all disguise, is surely the mere primitive doctrine that might is right, and if this principle were established throughout the world, the freedom of our own country and of the whole British Commonwealth of nations would be in danger. But far more than this, the peoples of the world would be kept in bondage of fear, and

all hopes of settled peace and of the security of justice and liberty among nations, would be ended.

This is the ultimate issue which confronts us. For the sake of all we ourselves hold dear, and of the world order and peace, it is unthinkable that we should refuse to meet the challenge.

It is to this high purpose that I now call my people at home and my people across the seas who will make our cause their own. I ask them to stand calm and firm and united in this time of trial. The task will be hard. There may be dark days ahead, and war can no longer be confined to the battlefield, but we can only do the right as we see the right, and reverently commit our cause to God. If one and all we keep resolutely faithful to it, ready for whatever service or sacrifice it may demand, then with God's help, we shall prevail.

May He bless and keep us all.

At the outset, King George expresses his commitment to his people, his subjects, knowing that he is asking them to make their own commitment and sacrifice. As their king he is not expected to present himself as a common man, yet he establishes the ethos of a common experience. He tells them he speaks “with the same depth of feeling . . . as if I were able to cross your threshold and speak to you myself.”

He uses “we” in order to speak as one of the people. He acknowledges that “we are at war” for “the second time in the lives of most of us.” He also uses the inclusive first person plural possessive as he identifies “our enemies,” not Britain's enemies. This personalization and emphasis on the people themselves is followed by several sentences that are much more abstract in discussion of a “principle.” At the end of that discussion, King George reinforces the nation's shared values: “For the sake of all we ourselves hold dear, and of the world order and peace, it is unthinkable that we should refuse to meet the challenge.”

Later on, he calls the citizenry to “this high purpose” and refers to them not as citizens or subjects but as “my people,” a description that suggests a closeness rather than emphasizing the distance between a ruler and his subjects. The penultimate paragraph's references to “God” are another reminder of their shared beliefs: they worship the same god and “commit [their] cause” to him. King George brings ethos to his speech by virtue of his position, but when he assures his audience that “we shall prevail,” rather than saying that England or Britain shall prevail, he is building ethos based on their common plight and common goals. They are all in this together, from king to commoner.

Building Ethos

So, what do you do if you're not a king? Writers and speakers often have to build their ethos by explaining their credentials or background to their readers, or by emphasizing shared values. You're more likely to listen to someone who is qualified to

speak on a subject or who shares your interests and concerns. Following is the opening from “The Myth of the Latin Woman: I Just Met a Girl Named Maria” by Judith Ortiz Cofer. Note how she draws on her own Puerto Rican heritage as she describes her experience with prejudice as a young Latina:

from *The Myth of the Latin Woman: I Just Met a Girl Named Maria*

JUDITH ORTIZ COFER

On a bus trip to London from Oxford University where I was earning some graduate credits one summer, a young man, obviously fresh from a pub, spotted me and as if struck by inspiration went down on his knees in the aisle. With both hands over his heart he broke into an Irish tenor’s rendition of “Maria” from *West Side Story*. My politely amused fellow passengers gave his lovely voice the round of gentle applause it deserved. Though I was not quite as amused, I managed my version of an English smile: no show of teeth, no extreme contortions of the facial muscles—I was at this time of my life practicing reserve and cool. Oh, that British control, how I coveted it. But Maria had followed me to London, reminding me of a prime fact of my life: you can leave the Island, master the English language, and travel as far as you can, but if you are a Latina, especially one like me who so obviously belongs to Rita Moreno’s gene pool, the Island travels with you.

This is sometimes a very good thing—it may win you that extra minute of someone’s attention. But with some people, the same things can make you an island—not so much a tropical paradise as an Alcatraz, a place nobody wants to visit. As a Puerto Rican girl growing up in the United States and wanting like most children to “belong,” I resented the stereotype that my Hispanic appearance called forth from many people I met.

As Cofer develops her argument about common stereotypes of Latin women, she establishes her authority to speak on the subject of racial prejudice through her background (Puerto Rican, Latina), education (graduate student at Oxford University), and experience (firsthand encounter with ethnic bias)—and thus she gains her readers’ trust.

• **ACTIVITY** •

Think of a situation in which you are presenting your view on the same subject to two different audiences. For instance, you might be presenting your ideas on ways to stop bullying (1) to the School Board or a group of parents and (2) to a group of middle schoolers. Discuss how you would establish ethos in each situation.

Logos

Speakers appeal to **logos**, or reason, by offering clear, rational ideas. Appealing to logos (Greek for “embodied thought”) means thinking logically—having a clear main idea and using specific details, examples, facts, statistics, or expert testimony to back it up. Creating a logical argument often involves defining the terms of the argument and identifying connections such as causality. It can also require considerable research. Evidence from expert sources and authorities, facts, and quantitative data can be very persuasive if selected carefully and presented accurately. Sometimes, writers and speakers add charts and graphs as a way to present such information, but often they weave this information into their argument.

Although on first reading or hearing, Lou Gehrig’s speech may seem largely emotional, it is actually based on irrefutable logic. He starts with the thesis that he is “the luckiest man on the face of the earth” and supports it with two points: (1) the love and kindness he’s received in his seventeen years of playing baseball, and (2) a list of great people who have been his friends, family, and teammates in that time.

Conceding and Refuting

One way to appeal to logos is to acknowledge a **counterargument**—that is, to anticipate objections or opposing views. While you might worry that raising an opposing view might poke a hole in your argument, you’ll be vulnerable if you ignore ideas that run counter to your own. In acknowledging a counterargument, you agree (concede) that an opposing argument may be true or reasonable, but then you deny (refute) the validity of all or part of the argument. This combination of **concession** and **refutation** actually strengthens your own argument; it appeals to logos by demonstrating that you understand a viewpoint other than your own, you’ve thought through other evidence, and you stand by your view.

In longer, more complex texts, the writer may address the counterargument in greater depth, but Lou Gehrig simply concedes what some of his listeners may think—that his bad break is a cause for discouragement or despair. Gehrig refutes this by saying that he has “an awful lot to live for!” Granted, he implies his concession rather than stating it outright; but in addressing it at all, he acknowledges a contrasting way of viewing his situation—that is, a counterargument.

Let’s look at an example by Alice Waters, a famous chef, food activist, and author. Writing in the *Nation*, she argues for acknowledgment of the full consequences of what she calls “our national diet”:

from *Slow Food Nation*

ALICE WATERS

It’s no wonder our national attention span is so short: We get hammered with the message that everything in our lives should be fast, cheap and easy—especially food.

So conditioned are we to believe that food should be almost free that even the rich, who pay a tinier fraction of their incomes for food than has ever been paid in human history, grumble at the price of an organic peach—a peach grown for flavor and picked, perfectly ripe, by a local farmer who is taking care of the land and paying his workers a fair wage. And yet, as the writer and farmer David Mas Masumoto recently pointed out, pound for pound, peaches that good still cost less than Twinkies. When we claim that eating well is an elitist preoccupation, we create a smokescreen that obscures the fundamental role our food decisions have in shaping the world. The reason that eating well in this country costs more than eating poorly is that we have a set of agricultural policies that subsidize fast food and make fresh, wholesome foods, which receive no government support, seem expensive. Organic foods seem elitist only because industrial food is artificially cheap, with its real costs being charged to the public purse, the public health, and the environment.

To develop a logical argument for better, healthier food for everyone, Waters refutes the counterargument that any food that is not “fast, cheap and easy” is “elitist.” She does that by redefining terms such as “cheap,” “[eating] well,” “expensive,” and “cost.” She explains in a step-by-step fashion the “smokescreen” of price that many people use to argue that mass-produced fast food is the best alternative for all but the very wealthy. She points out that “[o]rganic foods *seem* elitist only because industrial food is *artificially* cheap” (emphasis added). Waters asks her readers to think more deeply about the relationships among availability, production, and distribution of food: she appeals to reason.

• ACTIVITY •

Following is an excerpt from an article by George Will, a columnist for the *Washington Post* and *Newsweek*, entitled “King Coal: Reigning in China.” Discuss how he appeals to logos in this article on “China’s ravenous appetite for coal.”

from King Coal: Reigning in China

GEORGE WILL

Half of the 6 billion tons of coal burned globally each year is burned in China. A spokesman for the Sierra Club, which in recent years has helped to block construction of 139 proposed coal-fired plants in America, says, “This is undermining everything we’ve accomplished.” America, say environmentalists, is exporting global warming.

Can something really be exported if it supposedly affects the entire planet? Never mind. America has partners in this crime against nature, if such it is. One Australian company proposes to build the Cowlitz facility; another has signed a \$60 billion contract to supply Chinese power plants with Australian coal.

The *Times* says ships—all burning hydrocarbons—hailed about 690 million tons of thermal coal this year, up from 385 million in 2001. China, which

imported about 150 million tons this year, was a net exporter of coal until 2009, sending abroad its low-grade coal and importing higher-grade, low-sulfur coal from, for example, the Powder River Basin of Wyoming and Montana. Because much of China's enormous coal reserves is inland, far from coastal factories, it is sometimes more economical to import American and Australian coal.

Writing in the *Atlantic* on China's appetite for coal and possible aptitude for using the old fuel in new, cleaner ways, James Fallows quotes a Chinese official saying that the country's transportation system is the only serious limit on how fast power companies increase their use of coal. One reason China is building light-rail systems is to get passenger traffic out of the way of coal trains.

Fallows reports that 15 years from now China expects that 350 million people will be living in cities that do not exist yet. This will require adding to China's electrical system a capacity almost as large as America's current capacity. The United States, China, Russia and India have 40 percent of the world's population and 60 percent of its coal.

Pathos

Pathos is an appeal to emotions, values, desires, and hopes, on the one hand, or fears and prejudices, on the other. Although an argument that appeals exclusively to the emotions is by definition weak—it's generally **propagandistic** in purpose and more **polemical** than persuasive—an effective speaker or writer understands the power of evoking an audience's emotions by using such tools as figurative language, personal anecdotes, and vivid images.

Lou Gehrig uses the informal first person (*I*) quite naturally, which reinforces the friendly sense that this is a guy who is speaking on no one's behalf but his own. He also chooses words with strong positive **connotations**: *grand*, *greatest*, *wonderful*, *honored*, *blessing*. He uses one image—*tower of strength*—that may not seem very original but strikes the right note. It is a well-known description that his audience understands—in fact, they probably have used it themselves. But, of course, the most striking appeal to pathos is the poignant contrast between Gehrig's horrible diagnosis and his public display of courage.

Let's look at a more direct example of pathos. As a vice-presidential candidate, Richard Nixon gave a speech in 1952 defending himself against allegations of inappropriate use of campaign funds. In it, he related this anecdote, which is the reason that the speech will forever be known as "the Checkers speech":

from *The Checkers Speech*

RICHARD NIXON

One other thing I probably should tell you, because if I don't they'll probably be saying this about me, too. We did get something, a gift, after the election. A man down in Texas heard Pat [his wife] on the radio mention the fact that our two youngsters

would like to have a dog. And believe it or not, the day before we left on this campaign trip we got a message from Union Station in Baltimore, saying they had a package for us. We went down to get it. You know what it was? It was a little cocker spaniel dog in a crate that he'd sent all the way from Texas, black and white, spotted. And our little girl Tricia, the six-year-old, named it "Checkers." And you know, the kids, like all kids, love the dog, and I just want to say this, right now, that regardless of what they say about it, we're gonna keep it.

This example of pathos tugs at every possible heartstring: puppies, children, warm paternal feelings, the excitement of getting a surprise package. All of these images fill us with empathetic feelings toward Nixon: our emotions are engaged far more than our reason. Despite never truly addressing the campaign funds issue, Nixon's speech was a profound success with voters, who sent enough dog food to feed Checkers for a year! And yet, history has come to view this part of the speech as baldly manipulative.

Images and Pathos

You can often appeal to pathos by using striking imagery in your writing, so it's no surprise that images often serve the same purpose. A striking photograph, for example, may lend an emotional component that greatly strengthens an argument. Advertisers certainly make the most of photos and other visual images to entice or persuade audiences. In the accompanying example, which appeared in both the *New York Times* and the *New Yorker* magazine in 2000, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) makes a dramatic assertion, an appeal to pathos through both visual images and written text, as a call to support its organization. According to its mission statement, the ACLU seeks "to defend and preserve the individual rights and liberties that the Constitution and laws of the United States guarantee everyone in this country."

The headline below the pictures reads:

It happens every day on America's highways. Police stop drivers based on their skin color rather than for the way they are driving. For example, in Florida 80% of those stopped and searched were black and Hispanic, while they constituted only 5% of all drivers. These humiliating and illegal searches are violations of the Constitution and must be fought. Help us defend your rights. Support the ACLU.

The advertisement does not name the two men pictured, assuming the audience will recognize revered civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. on the left and convicted serial killer Charles Manson on the right. The headline at the top is an assertion that is bound to evoke a visceral response. The written text below the photos makes a series of logical appeals by pointing out that racial profiling accounts for the police stopping drivers on the basis of their race, and by offering statistical evidence from the state of Florida. The main appeal, however, is to pathos through the juxtaposition of a hero with a madman presented in a form reminiscent of a "wanted" poster.

**THE MAN ON THE LEFT
IS 75 TIMES MORE LIKELY TO BE STOPPED
BY THE POLICE WHILE DRIVING THAN
THE MAN ON THE RIGHT.**

It happens every day on America's highways. Police stop drivers based on their skin color rather than for the way they are driving. For example, in Florida 80% of those stopped and searched were black and Hispanic, while they constituted only 5% of all drivers. These humiliating and illegal searches are violations of the Constitution and must be fought. Help us defend your rights. Support the ACLU. To learn more and to send your Members of Congress a free fax go to www.aclu.org/racialprofiling.

american civil liberties union
125 Broad Street, 18th Floor, NY, NY 10004 www.aclu.org

Humor and Pathos

Another way to appeal to pathos is through humor. Since we like to hear things that we already believe are true, our first reaction to anything that challenges our beliefs is often negative: we think “that’s all wrong!” and get defensive or outright

offended. Humor works rhetorically by wrapping a challenge to our beliefs in something that makes us feel good—a joke—and thus makes us more receptive to the new idea.

This goes not just for new ideas, but for the people who are presenting those ideas. Whether it is gentle tongue-in-cheek teasing or bitter irony, humor may help a writer to make a point without, for instance, seeming to preach to the audience or take himself or herself too seriously. Political commentator Ruth Marcus employs gentle humor in the following essay from 2010 in which she addresses the speaker of the House of Representatives and objects to the members of Congress using electronic devices during hearings and other deliberations. Even the title, a play on words, signals the humorous tone: “Crackberry Congress.” Let’s look at a few passages:

from *Crackberry Congress*

RUTH MARCUS

Mr. Speaker, please don’t.

Go ahead, if you must, and cut taxes. Slash spending. Repeal health care. I understand. Elections have consequences. But BlackBerrys and iPads and laptops on the House floor? Reconsider, before it’s too late.

The current rules bar the use of a “wireless telephone or personal computer on the floor of the House.” The new rules, unveiled last week, add three dangerous words. They prohibit any device “that impairs decorum.”

In other words, as long as you’ve turned down your cellphone ringer and you’re not strolling around the floor chatting with your broker or helping the kids with their homework, feel free to tap away.

If the Senate is the world’s greatest deliberative body, the House is poised to be the world’s greatest tweeting one. 5

A few upfront acknowledgements. First, I’m not one to throw stones. I have been known to sneak a peek, or 10, at my BlackBerry during meetings. For a time my daughter had my ringtone set to sound like a squawking chicken; when I invariably forgot to switch to vibrate, the phone would cluck during meetings. In short, I have done my share of decorum impairing.

Second, let’s not get too dreamy about the House floor. John Boehner, the incoming speaker, once passed out campaign checks from tobacco companies there. One of his former colleagues once came to the chamber with a paper bag on his head to dramatize his supposed embarrassment at fellow lawmakers’ overdrafts at the House bank. Worse things have happened on the House floor than a game of Angry Birds—check it out!—on the iPad.

Nonetheless, lines have to be drawn, and the House floor is not a bad place to draw them. Somehow, it has become acceptable to e-mail away in the midst of meetings. Even Emily Post has blessed what once would have been obvious rudeness, ruling that “tapping on a handheld device is okay if it’s related to what’s being discussed.”

The larger war may be lost, but not the battle to keep some remaining space in life free of gadgetry and its distractions. I'm not talking Walden Pond—just a few minutes of living the unplugged life. There are places—dinner table, church, school and, yes, the House floor—where multitasking is inappropriate, even disrespectful.

First of all, Marcus structures her criticism as a letter, which obviously is a fiction and sets a humorous note right away. Who, after all, would begin a letter to the Speaker of the House by saying, “please don’t”? Marcus often works by teasing about “decorum,” yet she makes a serious point about “connectivity” as she exaggerates her fear that “the House is poised to be the world’s greatest tweeting [body].” Humor is also one of her strategies for establishing ethos in this case, as she says, “I’m not one to throw stones” and admits to checking her own BlackBerry during meetings. Overall, by taking a more lighthearted approach and not sounding like Ms. Manners, Marcus makes her point about the inappropriateness of elected officials interacting with their electronic devices while colleagues and others are debating important issues.

Marcus could have marshaled all manner of examples that illustrate the decline in civility and courtesy in modern life, but readers would likely have dismissed her as old-fashioned or shrill. By taking a humorous approach, she appeals to readers’ sense of humor as well as their community values: don’t we want our elected officials to forego “instantaneous communication” for more thoughtful deliberations when they are making decisions about the laws of the land?

• ACTIVITY •

General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force in Europe, distributed the following Order of the Day to the military troops right before the 1944 D-Day invasion of Normandy. Discuss how General Eisenhower appeals to pathos.

Supreme Headquarters



Allied Expeditionary Force

Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen of the Allied Expeditionary Force!

You are about to embark upon the Great Crusade, toward which we have striven these many months. The eyes of the world are upon you. The hopes and prayers of liberty-loving people everywhere march with you. In company with our brave Allies and brothers-in-arms on other Fronts, you will bring about the destruction of the German war machine, the elimination of Nazi tyranny over the oppressed peoples of Europe, and security for ourselves in a free world.

Your task will not be an easy one. Your enemy is well trained, well equipped, and battle-hardened. He will fight savagely.

But this is the year 1944! Much has happened since the Nazi triumphs of 1940–41. The United Nations have inflicted upon the Germans great defeats, in open battle, man-to-man. Our air offensive has seriously reduced their strength in the air and their capacity to wage war on the ground. Our Home Fronts have given us an overwhelming superiority in weapons and munitions of war and placed at our disposal great reserves of trained fighting men. The tide has turned! The free men of the world are marching together to Victory!

I have full confidence in your courage, devotion to duty, and skill in battle. We will accept nothing less than full Victory!

Good Luck! And let us all beseech the blessing of Almighty God upon this great and noble undertaking.



Combining Ethos, Logos, and Pathos

Most authors don't rely on just a single type of appeal to persuade their audience; they combine these appeals to create an effective argument. And the appeals themselves are inextricably bound together: if you lay out your argument logically, that will help to build your ethos. It is only logical to listen to an expert on a subject, so having ethos can help build a foundation for an appeal to logos. It's also possible to build your ethos based on pathos—for example, who better to speak about the pain of losing a loved one than someone who has gone through it? The best political satirists can say things that are both perfectly logical and completely hilarious, thus appealing to both logos and pathos at the same time.

Let's examine a letter that Toni Morrison, the only African American woman to win the Nobel Prize for Literature, wrote to then-senator Barack Obama endorsing him as the Democratic candidate for president in 2008. The letter was published in the *New York Times*.

Dear Senator Obama,

This letter represents a first for me—a public endorsement of a Presidential candidate. I feel driven to let you know why I am writing it. One reason is it may help gather other supporters; another is that this is one of those singular moments that nations ignore at their peril. I will not rehearse the multiple crises facing us, but of one thing I am certain: this opportunity for a national evolution (even revolution) will not come again soon, and I am convinced you are the person to capture it.

May I describe to you my thoughts?

I have admired Senator [Hillary] Clinton for years. Her knowledge always seemed to me exhaustive; her negotiation of politics expert. However I am more compelled by the quality of mind (as far as I can measure it) of a candidate. I cared little for her gender as a source of my admiration, and the little I did care was based on the fact that no liberal woman has ever ruled in America. Only conservative or "new-centrist" ones are allowed into that realm. Nor do I care very much for your

race[s]. I would not support you if that was all you had to offer or because it might make me “proud.”

In thinking carefully about the strengths of the candidates, I stunned myself when I came to the following conclusion: that in addition to keen intelligence, integrity, and a rare authenticity, you exhibit something that has nothing to do with age, experience, race, or gender and something I don’t see in other candidates. That something is a creative imagination which coupled with brilliance equals wisdom. It is too bad if we associate it only with gray hair and old age. Or if we call searing vision naivete. Or if we believe cunning is insight. Or if we settle for finessing cures tailored for each ravaged tree in the forest while ignoring the poisonous landscape that feeds and surrounds it. Wisdom is a gift; you can’t train for it, inherit it, learn it in a class, or earn it in the workplace—that access can foster the acquisition of knowledge, but not wisdom.

When, I wondered, was the last time this country was guided by such a leader? 5
Someone whose moral center was un-embargoed? Someone with courage instead of mere ambition? Someone who truly thinks of his country’s citizens as “we,” not “they”? Someone who understands what it will take to help America realize the virtues it fancies about itself, what it desperately needs to become in the world?

Our future is ripe, outrageously rich in its possibilities. Yet unleashing the glory of that future will require a difficult labor, and some may be so frightened of its birth they will refuse to abandon their nostalgia for the womb.

There have been a few prescient leaders in our past, but you are the man for this time.

Good luck to you and to us.

Toni Morrison

Let’s take a step back. Who is Morrison’s audience for this letter? Of course, she claims Senator Obama is, yet it is an open letter printed in a newspaper. Thus, we have a sense that while she does intend that he read the letter, she also understands that her public endorsement of his candidacy, and not Senator Hillary Clinton’s, will have an impact on a much larger audience than Obama himself: her audience is the large national and international readership of the *Times*, readers who value the viewpoint of a Nobel Prize winner.

Given that audience, Morrison need not establish her ethos as a credible person whose opinion should carry some weight. After all, both Obama and the readers of the *New York Times*—in fact, readers in general—know her as an award-winning author, someone who has written many novels, a professor at Princeton University, and the winner of a Nobel Prize. She is not, however, a person accustomed to publicly weighing in on political campaigns, so she opens with her announcement that this endorsement is “a first” for her. She does not assume that she has the authority or position to make Senator Obama (or others) listen to her; instead, she asks, deferentially, “May I describe to you my thoughts?” As a woman in her seventies with a proven record as a respected author and thinker, she could demand that Obama listen to her, but she does not; asking a question rather than

launching into her viewpoint presents herself as courteous and reasonable. The ethos she establishes is as a person who cares deeply for the future of America and is moved to speak out because she believes that the country is at a crossroads (“this is one of those singular moments that nations ignore at their peril”).

Although she does not offer facts and figures nor cite expert sources, Morrison develops a logical argument. She addresses two counterarguments: (1) Senator Clinton is the better candidate, and (2) her support of Obama is driven primarily by race. In paragraph 3, she concedes and refutes both. She points out that she has “admired” Senator Clinton over the years and offers reasons; gender is not, however, among them. She effectively makes that argument also serve as evidence that she would not support Obama purely because of race, saying, “I would not support you if that was all you had to offer or because it might make me ‘proud.’” In paragraph 4, Morrison provides reasons for her support of Obama. She acknowledges that he is a person of “keen intelligence, integrity, and a rare authenticity,” yet those qualities are neither her only nor her chief reasons for supporting his candidacy. She claims that she sees in him “a creative imagination which coupled with brilliance equals wisdom.” Once Morrison makes this point, she addresses another counterargument: that Obama is too young. She refutes that belief by claiming that wisdom is not necessarily a matter of age.

Morrison continues to develop her reasons for supporting Obama as she adds appeals to pathos. By asking a series of rhetorical questions, she calls up the shared values of the country; for instance, she asks when the country was actually guided by “[s]omeone whose moral center was un-embargoed.” She chooses language likely to evoke emotions, such as her distinction between “courage instead of mere ambition.” By the end of the letter, she uses images of birth (“the glory of that future will require a difficult labor, and some may be so frightened of its birth they will refuse to abandon their nostalgia for the womb”) and language that pulls at our heartstrings, such as “Our future is ripe, outrageously rich.”

She draws the conclusion, again appealing to logos, that given all the evidence presented in the letter Senator Obama is “the man for this time.” Morrison closes with a final appeal to ethos as she emphasizes that she is an integral part of the community of the country: “Good luck to you and to us.” The “us” is decidedly not just African Americans but all Americans.

• ACTIVITY •

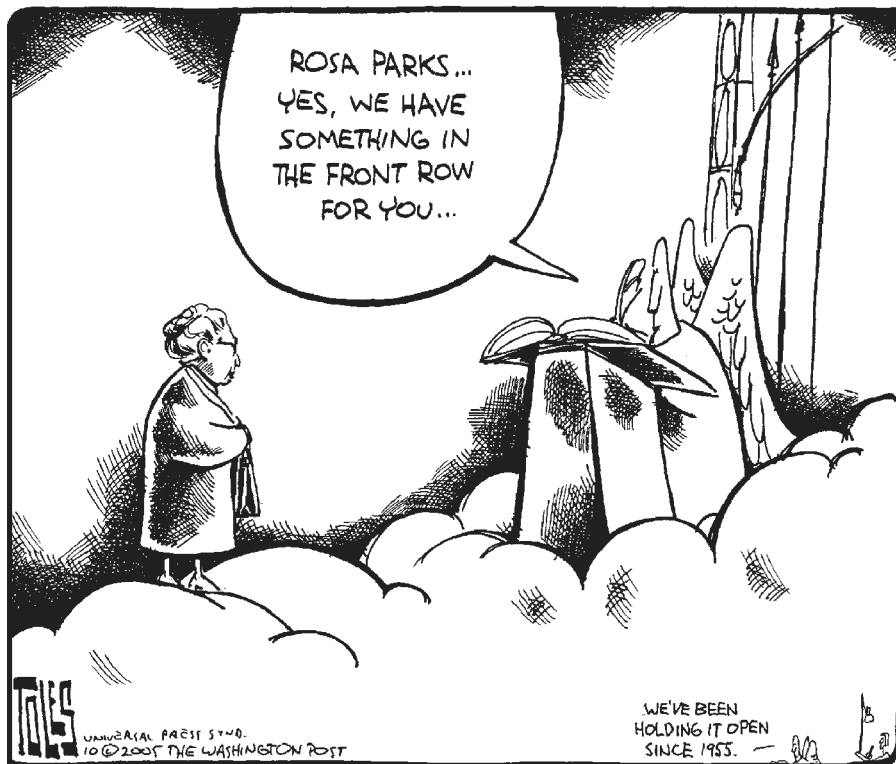
Select one of the following rhetorical situations, and discuss how you would establish your ethos and appeal to logos and pathos.

- You are trying to persuade your skeptical parents that a “gap year”—taking a year off between high school graduation and college—will be beneficial.

- You have been asked to make a presentation to your school's principal and food service staff to propose healthier food choices in the cafeteria at a time when the overall school budget is constrained.
- You are making the case for the purchase of a specific model and make of car that will best fit your family's needs and resources.
- You are the student representative chosen to go before a group of local businesspeople to ask them to provide financial support for a proposed school trip.

Rhetorical Analysis of Visual Texts

Many visual texts are full-fledged arguments. Although they may not be written in paragraphs or have a traditional thesis, they are occasioned by specific circumstances, they have a purpose (whether it is to comment on a current event or simply to urge you to buy something), and they make a claim and support it with appeals



SOURCE: Toles © 2005 The Washington Post. Reprinted with permission of UNIVERSAL UCLICK. All rights reserved.

to authority, emotion, and reason. Consider the cartoon on page 21, which cartoonist Tom Toles drew after the death of civil-rights icon Rosa Parks in 2006. Parks was the woman who in 1955 refused to give up her seat on the bus in Montgomery, Alabama; that act came to symbolize the struggle for racial equality in the United States.

We can discuss the cartoon rhetorically, just as we've been examining texts that are exclusively verbal: The occasion is the death of Rosa Parks. The speaker is Tom Toles, a respected and award-winning political cartoonist. The audience is made up of readers of the *Washington Post* and other newspapers—that is, it's a very broad audience. The speaker can assume that his audience shares his admiration and respect for Parks and that they view her passing as the loss of a public figure as well as a private woman. Finally, the context is a memorial for a well-loved civil-rights activist, and Toles's purpose is to remember Parks as an ordinary citizen whose courage and determination brought extraordinary results. The subject is the legacy of Rosa Parks, a well-known person loved by many.


Readers' familiarity with Toles—along with his obvious respect for his subject—establishes his ethos. The image in the cartoon appeals primarily to pathos. Toles shows Rosa Parks, who was a devout Christian, as she is about to enter heaven through the pearly gates; they are attended by an angel, probably Saint Peter, who is reading a ledger. Toles depicts Parks wearing a simple coat and carrying her pocketbook, as she did while sitting on the bus so many years ago. Her features are somewhat detailed and realistic, making her stand out despite her modest posture and demeanor.

The commentary at the bottom right reads, “We’ve been holding it [the front row in heaven] open since 1955,” a reminder that more than fifty years have elapsed since Parks resolutely sat where she pleased. The caption can be seen as an appeal to both pathos and logos. Its emotional appeal is its acknowledgment that, of course, heaven would have been waiting for this good woman; but the mention of “the front row” appeals to logic because Parks made her mark in history for refusing to sit in the back of the bus. Some readers might even interpret the caption as a criticism of how slow the country was both to integrate and to pay tribute to Parks.

• ACTIVITY •

The following advertisement is from the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), a conservation organization that “combines global reach with a foundation in science, involves action at every level from local to global, and ensures the delivery of innovative solutions that meet the needs of both people and nature.”

What rhetorical strategies does the WWF use to achieve its purpose in this advertisement? Pay particular attention to the interaction of the written text with the visual elements. How does the arrangement on the page affect your response? How does the WWF appeal to ethos, logos, and pathos? How effective do you think the advertisement is in reaching its intended audience? Explain.



The advertisement features a large, close-up, black and white photograph of a fish's head, showing its eye and the patterned scales on its side. In the top right corner, there is the WWF logo, which consists of a stylized panda silhouette above the letters 'WWF'. Below the main image, the text reads 'Protecting the Future of Nature'. To the left of the main text is a small inset photograph showing two people in a boat on a body of water. To the right of the inset is a block of text: 'Ten million people in sub-Saharan Africa make a living fishing. In the past three decades the number of fish in their waters has declined by 50 percent. Around the world, oceans and the life they support are at risk. WWF is at work in more than 40 countries, developing responsible fishing practices and collaborating with governments and coastal communities on managing their fisheries while safeguarding livelihoods. We can protect marine populations from overfishing and still ensure a catch big enough to feed fishermen, their families and you.' At the bottom of the advertisement, it says 'Be Part of Our Work' and 'worldwildlife.org'.

Protecting the Future of Nature

Ten million people in sub-Saharan Africa make a living fishing. In the past three decades the number of fish in their waters has declined by 50 percent. Around the world, oceans and the life they support are at risk. WWF is at work in more than 40 countries, developing responsible fishing practices and collaborating with governments and coastal communities on managing their fisheries while safeguarding livelihoods. We can protect marine populations from overfishing and still ensure a catch big enough to feed fishermen, their families and you.

Be Part of Our Work worldwildlife.org

(See insert for color version.)

Determining Effective and Ineffective Rhetoric

Not every attempt at effective rhetoric hits its mark. A famous example of humorously ineffective rhetoric is the proposal of Mr. Collins to the high-spirited heroine Elizabeth Bennet in the novel *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen. Mr. Collins,

a foolish and sycophantic minister, stands to inherit the Bennet estate; thus, he assumes that any of the Bennet sisters, including Elizabeth, will be grateful for his offer of marriage. So he crafts his offer as a business proposal that is a series of reasons. Following is a slightly abridged version of Mr. Collins's proposal:

from *Pride and Prejudice*

JANE AUSTEN

My reasons for marrying are, first, that I think it a right thing for every clergyman in easy circumstances (like myself) to set the example of matrimony in his parish. Secondly, that I am convinced it will add very greatly to my happiness; and thirdly—which perhaps I ought to have mentioned earlier, that it is the particular advice and recommendation of the very noble lady whom I have the honour of calling patroness. . . . But the fact is, that being, as I am, to inherit this estate after the death of your honoured father (who, however, may live many years longer), I could not satisfy myself without resolving to chuse a wife from among his daughters, that the loss to them might be as little as possible, when the melancholy event takes place—which, however, as I have already said, may not be for several years. This has been my motive, my fair cousin, and I flatter myself it will not sink me in your esteem. And now nothing remains for me but to assure you in the most animated language of the violence of my affection. To fortune I am perfectly indifferent, and shall make no demand of that nature on your father, since I am well aware that it could not be complied with; and that one thousand pounds in the 4 per cents, which will not be yours till after your mother's decease, is all that you may ever be entitled to. On that head, therefore, I shall be uniformly silent; and you may assure yourself that no ungenerous reproach shall ever pass my lips when we are married.

Mr. Collins appeals to *logos* with a sequence of reasons that support his intent to marry: ministers should be married, marriage will add to his happiness, and his patroness wants him to marry. Of course, these are all advantages to himself. Ultimately, he claims that he can assure Elizabeth “in the most animated language of the violence of [his] affection,” yet he offers no language at all about his emotional attachment. Finally, as if to refute the counterargument that she would not reap many benefits from the proposed alliance, he reminds her that her financial future will be grim unless she accepts his offer, and he promises to be “uniformly silent” rather than to remind her of that fact once they are married.

Where did he go wrong? Without devaluing the wry humor of Austen in her portrayal of Mr. Collins, we can conclude that at the very least he failed to understand his audience. He offers reasons for marriage that would have little appeal to Elizabeth, who does not share his businesslike and self-serving assumptions. No



Feeding Kids Meat Is
CHILD ABUSE

Fight the Fat: Go Vegan | **PETA**

(See insert for color version.)

wonder she can hardly wait to get away from him; no wonder he responds with shocked indignation.

Unlike Mr. Collins's clearly bad attempt at rhetoric, in the real world deciding whether rhetoric hits or misses its mark is often a matter of debate. Consider the advertisement above from PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals).

It's important to note that PETA, an animal rights group, sponsors this ad. A positive reading would see the image of an overweight child about to bite into a burger as an effective attention-getter. The headline, with "meat" the only word in red, makes the bold assertion that parents who allow children to eat meat are guilty of child abuse. Since most people would not have thought of this connection, its boldness might have the shock value to make them stop and think. By choosing a particularly unappetizing burger and plump-looking kid, PETA presents an image of childhood obesity that might want to make the viewer grab the burger from the child before she gets it in her mouth! The smaller print calls for a "vegan" diet to combat obesity, asserting that replacing burgers with vegetables is a healthier alternative—a claim few people would find questionable.

But that's not the only way to interpret this ad. Claiming that allowing a child to eat a hamburger is the same as committing child abuse is a serious allegation, and it could be seen as hyperbole. If you read the large print as an unfounded exaggeration, then the ad's purpose is lost. It's unlikely that anyone would argue with the exhortation to "fight the fat," but to link consumption of any kind of meat with a heinous act of child abuse might not seem logical to every view, which could undermine the ad's effectiveness.

Let's turn to an essay, an op-ed piece that appeared in the *Washington Post* in 2011 after Japan was hit by a massive earthquake and tsunami that severely damaged nuclear reactors. Columnist Anne Applebaum uses this devastating situation

to argue against further use of nuclear power. As you read the article, analyze it rhetorically and ask yourself if she is likely to achieve her purpose or if her strategies miss the mark.

If the Japanese Can't Build a Safe Reactor, Who Can?

ANNE APPLEBAUM

In the aftermath of a disaster, the strengths of any society become immediately visible. The cohesiveness, resilience, technological brilliance and extraordinary competence of the Japanese are on full display. One report from Rikuzentakata—a town of 25,000, annihilated by the tsunami that followed Friday's massive earthquake—describes volunteer firefighters working to clear rubble and search for survivors; troops and police efficiently directing traffic and supplies; survivors are not only “calm and pragmatic” but also coping “with politeness and sometimes amazingly good cheer.”

Thanks to these strengths, Japan will eventually recover. But at least one Japanese nuclear power complex will not. As I write, three reactors at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power station appear to have lost their cooling capacity. Engineers are flooding the plant with seawater—effectively destroying it—and then letting off radioactive steam. There have been two explosions. The situation may worsen in the coming hours.

Yet Japan's nuclear power stations were designed with the same care and precision as everything else in the country. More to the point, as the only country in the world to have experienced true nuclear catastrophe, Japan had an incentive to build well, as well as the capability, laws and regulations to do so. Which leads to an unavoidable question: If the competent and technologically brilliant Japanese can't build a completely safe reactor, who can?

It can—and will—be argued that the Japanese situation is extraordinary. Few countries are as vulnerable to natural catastrophe as Japan, and the scale of this earthquake is unprecedented. But there are other kinds of extraordinary situations and unprecedented circumstances. In an attempt to counter the latest worst-possible scenarios, a Franco-German company began constructing a super-safe, “next-generation” nuclear reactor in Finland several years ago. The plant was designed to withstand the impact of an airplane—a post-Sept. 11 concern—and includes a chamber allegedly able to contain a core meltdown. But it was also meant to cost \$4 billion and to be completed in 2009. Instead, after numerous setbacks, it is still unfinished—and may now cost \$6 billion or more.

Ironically, the Finnish plant was meant to launch the renaissance of the nuclear power industry in Europe—an industry that has, of late, enjoyed a renaissance around the world, thanks almost entirely to fears of climate change. Nuclear plants emit no carbon. As a result, nuclear plants, after a long, post-Chernobyl lull, have

became fashionable again. Some 62 nuclear reactors are under construction at the moment, a further 158 are being planned and 324 others have been proposed.

Increasingly, nuclear power is also promoted because it is safe. Which it is—except, of course, when it is not. Chances of a major disaster are tiny, one in a hundred million. But in the event of a statistically improbable major disaster, the damage could include, say, the destruction of a city or the poisoning of a country. The cost of such a potential catastrophe is partly reflected in the price of plant construction, and it partly explains the cost overruns in Finland: Nobody can risk the tiniest flaw in the concrete or the most minimal reduction in the quality of the steel.

But as we are about to learn in Japan, the true costs of nuclear power are never reflected even in the very high price of plant construction. Inevitably, the enormous costs of nuclear waste disposal fall to taxpayers, not the nuclear industry. The costs of cleanup, even in the wake of a relatively small accident, are eventually borne by government, too. Health-care costs will also be paid by society at large, one way or another. If there is true nuclear catastrophe in Japan, the entire world will pay the price.

I hope that this will never, ever happen. I feel nothing but admiration for the Japanese nuclear engineers who have been battling catastrophe for several days. If anyone can prevent a disaster, the Japanese can do it. But I also hope that a near-miss prompts people around the world to think twice about the true “price” of nuclear energy, and that it stops the nuclear renaissance dead in its tracks.

Does Applebaum miss her mark? Does she use a worst-case scenario to make her case? Do her references to September 11 and World War II make nuclear power seem alarming, or do they just make Applebaum sound alarmist? Are her fears fully justified, or is this nothing but fear mongering? Consider that she does acknowledge that Japan’s situation is unusual because the country is so “vulnerable to natural catastrophe” and the earthquake that struck was unusually strong. She cites facts and figures about the efforts in Finland to build a nuclear plant that is meant to be “super-safe” and withstand every imaginable contingency. She explains that other European nations are following the Finnish lead (“158 are being planned and 324 others have been proposed”) because nuclear power, which does not emit carbon dioxide, is not thought to contribute to climate change. There is quite a bit to consider, even in this relatively brief piece.

• ACTIVITY •

Following is a rhetorical analysis of the effectiveness of Applebaum’s argument written by an AP student, Tamar Demby. How does she develop her position? Why do you agree or disagree with her? How might she improve her essay?

Alarmist or Alarming Rhetoric?

TAMAR DEMBY


In an age when threats to life as we know it seem to grow too enormous to face, it becomes tempting to regard any danger as an apocalypse waiting to happen. But however huge and urgent an incident appears, it is important to look at the big picture and calmly analyze the true risks of all responses. Within the context of Japan's struggle to avert a nuclear meltdown in Fukushima Prefecture, Anne Applebaum, writing for the *Washington Post*, argues against any further expansion of nuclear power. However, she undermines her own purpose by basing her argument on unsupported claims, relying on highly emotional language, and failing to establish her ethos as a credible authority on the issue.

As a journalist rather than a nuclear physicist or someone with credentials earned by education and training, she has to present a clear viewpoint supported by solid evidence. If she has a history of reporting on nuclear power issues, then she should have explained that expertise. Instead, she relies on hot-button issues such as Chernobyl to alarm her readers, who are likely an educated and well-informed audience. Even though she is writing in the midst of the crisis in Japan when no one knew what would happen to the reactors, she needs to establish a fair-minded ethos and build a more fact-based case. Unless she moves her audience to share her concern and alarm, she fails to achieve her purpose of making them see the true "cost" of nuclear power and oppose further expansion.

Applebaum's central point is spelled out in the title of her piece: "If the Japanese Can't Build a Safe Reactor, Who Can?" In order to ask and then answer this question, she must establish the supremacy of the Japanese to build a safe nuclear reactor. In her first paragraph, she highlights the strengths of the Japanese: "cohesiveness, resilience, technological brilliance and extraordinary competence" and cites examples of all these traits *except* technological brilliance — leaving the reader with no reason to agree with her assessment of Japanese technological prowess. This pattern continues in the second paragraph, as Applebaum attempts to explain that the Japanese can be expected to have built the safest possible nuclear reactors because they were "designed with the same care and precision as everything else in the country" — a statement she fails to support. Verified details seem to be reserved for viscerally effective descriptions of the situation in the Fukushima Daiichi plant. Applebaum states that the plant will not "eventually recover," as three reactors are "letting off radioactive steam . . . (and) there have been two explosions." These facts serve only to appeal to the reader's emotions, focusing on the horrifying results of the catastrophe but not addressing — or supporting — Applebaum's claims. Ultimately, Applebaum's position seems to be based more on personal alarm than analysis of facts.


• ACTIVITY •

Examine the following advertisement sponsored by the Federal Highway Administration. Analyze the rhetorical situation and appeals used in the advertisement, and determine whether you think this advertisement is effective or ineffective.



**“I was looking out for other cars.
I didn’t see the mother and child
in the crosswalk.”**

**Stop for Pedestrians
Think of the Impact You Could Make**


U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration

In the time it takes to look for someone in the crosswalk *and stop for them*, you could save a life... or change yours forever.

• CULMINATING ACTIVITY •

By this point, you have analyzed what we mean by the rhetorical situation, and you have learned a number of key concepts and terms. It's time to put all the ideas together to examine a series of texts on a single subject. Following are four texts related to the 1969 *Apollo 11* mission that landed the first humans on the moon. The first is a news article from the *Times* of London reporting the event; the next is a speech by William Safire that President Nixon would have given had the mission not been successful; the third is a commentary by novelist Ayn Rand; the last is a political cartoon that appeared at the time. Discuss the purpose of each text and how the interaction among speaker, audience, and subject affects the text. How does each text appeal to ethos, pathos, and logos? Finally, how effective is each text in achieving its purpose?

Man Takes First Steps on the Moon

THE *TIMES*

The following article appeared in a special 5 A.M. edition of the Times of London.

Neil Armstrong became the first man to take a walk on the moon's surface early today. The spectacular moment came after he had inched his way down the ladder of the fragile lunar bug Eagle while colleague Edwin Aldrin watched his movements from inside the craft. The landing, in the Sea of Tranquillity, was near perfect and the two astronauts on board Eagle reported that it had not tilted too far to prevent a take-off. The first word from man on the moon came from Aldrin: "Tranquillity base. The Eagle has landed." Of the first view of the lunar surface, he said: "There are quite a few rocks and boulders in the near area which are going to have some interesting colours in them." Armstrong said both of them were in good shape and there was no need to worry about them. They had experienced no difficulty in manoeuvring the module in the moon's gravity. There were tense moments in the mission control centre at Houston while they awaited news of the safe landing. When it was confirmed, one ground controller was heard to say: "We got a bunch of guys on the ground about to turn blue. We're breathing again." Ten minutes after landing, Aldrin radioed: "We'll get to the details of what's around here. But it looks like a collection of every variety, shape, angularity, granularity; a collection of just about every kind of rock." He added: "The colour depends on what angle you're looking at . . . rocks and boulders look as though they're going to have some interesting colours."

Armstrong says: one giant leap for mankind

From the News Team in Houston and London

It was 3.56 A.M. (British Standard Time) when Armstrong stepped off the ladder from Eagle and on to the moon's surface. The module's hatch had opened at 3.39 A.M.

"That's one small step for man but one giant leap for mankind," he said as he stepped on the lunar surface.

The two astronauts opened the hatch of their lunar module at 3.39 A.M. in preparation for Neil Armstrong's walk. They were obviously being ultra careful over the operation for there was a considerable time lapse before Armstrong moved backwards out of the hatch to start his descent down the ladder.

Aldrin had to direct Armstrong out of the hatch because he was walking backwards and could not see the ladder.

Armstrong moved on to the porch outside Eagle and prepared to switch the television cameras which showed the world his dramatic descent as he began to inch his way down the ladder.

By this time the two astronauts had spent 25 minutes of their breathing time but their oxygen packs on their backs last four hours.

When the television cameras switched on there was a spectacular shot of Armstrong as he moved down the ladder. Viewers had a clear view as they saw him stepping foot by foot down the ladder, which has nine rungs.

He reported that the lunar surface was a "very fine-grained powder."

Clutching the ladder Armstrong put his left foot on the lunar surface and reported it was like powdered charcoal and he could see his footprints on the surface. He said the L.E.M.'s engine had left a crater about a foot deep but they were "on a very level place here."

Standing directly in the shadow of the lunar module Armstrong said he could see very clearly. The light was sufficiently bright for everything to be clearly visible.

The next step was for Aldrin to lower a hand camera down to Armstrong. This was the camera which Armstrong was to use to film Aldrin when he descends from Eagle.

Armstrong then spent the next few minutes taking photographs of the area in which he was standing and then prepared to take the "contingency" sample of lunar soil.

This was one of the first steps in case the astronauts had to make an emergency take-off before they could complete the whole of their activities on the moon.

Armstrong said: "It is very pretty out here."

Using the scoop to pick up the sample Armstrong said he had pushed six to eight inches into the surface. He then reported to the mission control centre that he placed the sample lunar soil in his pocket.

The first sample was in his pocket at 4.08 A.M. He said the moon "has soft beauty all its own," like some desert of the United States. . . .

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Greatest moment of time

President Nixon, watching the events on television, described it as "one of the greatest moments of our time." He told Mr. Ron Ziegler, the White House press secretary, that the last 22 seconds of the descent were the longest he had ever lived through.

Mr. Harold Wilson, in a television statement, expressed "our deep wish for a safe return at the end of what has been a most historic scientific achievement in the history of man." The Prime Minister, speaking from 10 Downing Street, said: "The first feeling of all in Britain is that this very dangerous part of the mission has been safely accomplished."

Moscow Radio announced the news solemnly as the main item in its 11.30 news broadcast. There was no immediate news of Luna 15.

At Castelgandolfo the Pope greeted news of the lunar landing by exclaiming: "Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth to men of good will!"

In an unscheduled speech from his summer residence the Pope, who followed the flight on colour television, said: "We, humble representatives of that Christ, who, coming among us from the abyss of divinity, has made to resound in the heavens this blessed voice, today we make an echo, repeating it in a celebration on the part of the whole terrestrial globe, with no more unsurpassable bounds of human existence, but openness to the expanse of endless space and a new destiny."

"Glory to God!" President Saragat of Italy said in a statement: "May this victory be a good omen for an even greater victory: the definite conquest of peace, of justice, of liberty, for all peoples of the World."

President Charles Helou of Lebanon followed the flight and landing with special dispatches from the Information Ministry. A spokesman said he would send an official message later.

In Jordan King Husain sent a congratulatory message to the astronauts and President Nixon.

In Stockholm Mr. Tage Erlander, the Swedish Prime Minister, said he planned to cable President Nixon his congratulations as soon as the astronauts returned to Earth. King Gustav Adolf was watching television at touchdown time and told friends he was "thrilled" by the Apollo performance.

In Cuba the national radio announced the moon landing 12 minutes after it was accomplished.

Sir Bernard Lovell, Director of the Jodrell Bank observatory, said: "The moment of touchdown was one of the moments of greatest drama in the history of man. The success in this part of the enterprise opens the most enormous opportunities for the future exploration of the universe."

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In Event of Moon Disaster

WILLIAM SAFIRE

The following speech, revealed in 1999, was prepared by President Nixon's speechwriter, William Safire, to be used in the event of a disaster that would maroon the astronauts on the moon.

Fate has ordained that the men who went to the moon to explore in peace will stay on the moon to rest in peace.

These brave men, Neil Armstrong and Edwin Aldrin, know that there is no hope for their recovery. But they also know that there is hope for mankind in their sacrifice. These two men are laying down their lives in mankind's most noble goal: the search for truth and understanding.

They will be mourned by their families and friends; they will be mourned by their nation; they will be mourned by the people of the world; they will be mourned by a Mother Earth that dared send two of her sons into the unknown.

In their exploration, they stirred the people of the world to feel as one; in their sacrifice, they bind more tightly the brotherhood of man.

In ancient days, men looked at stars and saw their heroes in the constellations. In modern times, we do much the same, but our heroes are epic men of flesh and blood.

Others will follow, and surely find their way home. Man's search will not be denied. But these men were the first, and they will remain the foremost in our hearts. For every human being who looks up at the moon in the nights to come will know that there is some corner of another world that is forever mankind.

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The July 16, 1969, Launch: A Symbol of Man's Greatness

AYN RAND

The following commentary by novelist Ayn Rand first appeared in the Objectivist, a publication created by Rand and others to put forward their philosophy of objectivism, which values individualism, freedom, and reason.

"No matter what discomforts and expenses you had to bear to come here," said a NASA guide to a group of guests, at the conclusion of a tour of the Space Center on Cape Kennedy, on July 15, 1969, "there will be seven minutes tomorrow morning that will make you feel it was worth it."

It was.

[The launch] began with a large patch of bright, yellow-orange flame shooting sideways from under the base of the rocket. It looked like a normal kind of flame and I felt an instant's shock of anxiety, as if this were a building on fire. In the next instant the flame and the rocket were hidden by such a sweep of

dark red fire that the anxiety vanished: this was not part of any normal experience and could not be integrated with anything. The dark red fire parted into two gigantic wings, as if a hydrant were shooting streams of fire outward and up, toward the zenith—and between the two wings, against a pitch-black sky, the rocket rose slowly, so slowly that it seemed to hang still in the air, a pale cylinder with a blinding oval of white light at the bottom, like an upturned candle with its flame directed at the earth. Then I became aware that this was happening in total silence, because I heard the cries of birds winging frantically away from the flames. The rocket was rising faster, slanting a little, its tense white flame leaving a long, thin spiral of bluish smoke behind it. It had risen into the open blue sky, and the dark red fire had turned into enormous billows of brown smoke, when the sound reached us: it was a long, violent crack, not a rolling sound, but specifically a cracking, grinding sound, as if space were breaking apart, but it seemed irrelevant and unimportant, because it was a sound from the past and the rocket was long since speeding safely out of its reach—though it was strange to realize that only a few seconds had passed. I found myself waving to the rocket involuntarily, I heard people applauding and joined them, grasping our common motive; it was impossible to watch passively, one had to express, by some physical action, a feeling that was not triumph, but more: the feeling that that white object's unobstructed streak of motion was the only thing that mattered in the universe.

What we had seen, in naked essentials—but in reality, not in a work of art—was the concretized abstraction of man's greatness.

The fundamental significance of *Apollo 11's* triumph is not political; it is philosophical; specifically, moral-epistemological.

The meaning of the sight lay in the fact that when those dark red wings of fire flared open, one knew that one was not looking at a normal occurrence, but at a cataclysm which, if unleashed by nature, would have wiped man out of existence—and one knew also that this cataclysm was planned, unleashed, and controlled by man, that this unimaginable power was ruled by his power and, obediently serving his purpose, was making way for a slender, rising craft. One knew that this spectacle was not the product of inanimate nature, like some aurora borealis, or of chance, or of luck, that it was unmistakably human—with "human," for once, meaning grandeur—that a purpose and a long, sustained, disciplined effort had gone to achieve this series of moments, and that man was succeeding, succeeding, succeeding! For once, if only for seven minutes, the worst among those who saw it had to feel—not "How small is man by the side of the Grand Canyon!"—but "How great is man and how safe is nature when he conquers it!"

That we had seen a demonstration of man at his best, no one could doubt—this was the cause of the event's attraction and of the stunned numbed state in which it left us. And no one could doubt that we had seen an achievement of man in his capacity as a rational being—an achievement of reason, of logic, of mathematics, of total dedication to the absolutism of reality.

Frustration is the leitmotif in the lives of most men, particularly today—the frustration of inarticulate desires, with no knowledge of the means to achieve them. In the sight and hearing of a crumbling world, *Apollo 11* enacted the story of an audacious purpose, its execution, its triumph, and the means that achieved it—the story and the demonstration of man’s highest potential.

Transported

HERBLOCK

The following editorial cartoon by the famous cartoonist Herb Lock, or Herblock, appeared in the Washington Post on July 18, 1969.



SOURCE: A 1969 Herblock Cartoon, copyright by The Herb Block Foundation.

Glossary of Rhetorical Terms

Aristotelian triangle See **rhetorical triangle**.

audience The listener, viewer, or reader of a text. Most texts are likely to have multiple audiences.

Gehrig's audience was his teammates and fans in the stadium that day, but it was also the teams he played against, the fans listening on the radio, and posterity—us.

concession An acknowledgment that an opposing argument may be true or reasonable. In a strong argument, a concession is usually accompanied by a refutation challenging the validity of the opposing argument.

Lou Gehrig concedes what some of his listeners may think—that his bad break is a cause for discouragement or despair.

connotation Meanings or associations that readers have with a word beyond its dictionary definition, or denotation. Connotations are usually positive or negative, and they can greatly affect the author's tone. Consider the connotations of the words below, all of which mean “overweight.”

That cat is plump. That cat is fat. That cat is obese.

context The circumstances, atmosphere, attitudes, and events surrounding a text.

The context for Lou Gehrig's speech is the recent announcement of his illness and his subsequent retirement, but also the poignant contrast between his potent career and his debilitating disease.

counterargument An opposing argument to the one a writer is putting forward. Rather than ignoring a counterargument, a strong writer will usually address it through the process of concession and refutation.

Some of Lou Gehrig's listeners might have argued that his bad break was a cause for discouragement or despair.

ethos Greek for “character.” Speakers appeal to ethos to demonstrate that they are credible and trustworthy to speak on a given topic. Ethos is established by both who you are and what you say.

Lou Gehrig brings the ethos of being a legendary athlete to his speech, yet in it he establishes a different kind of ethos—that of a regular guy and a good sport who shares the audience's love of baseball and family. And like them, he has known good luck and bad breaks.

logos Greek for “embodied thought.” Speakers appeal to logos, or reason, by offering clear, rational ideas and using specific details, examples, facts, statistics, or expert testimony to back them up.

Gehrig starts with the thesis that he is “the luckiest man on the face of the earth” and supports it with two points: (1) the love and kindness he's received in his seventeen years of playing baseball, and (2) a list of great people who have been his friends, family, and teammates.

- occasion** The time and place a speech is given or a piece is written.
In the case of Gehrig's speech, the occasion is Lou Gehrig Appreciation Day. More specifically, his moment comes at home plate between games of a doubleheader.
- pathos** Greek for "suffering" or "experience." Speakers appeal to pathos to emotionally motivate their audience. More specific appeals to pathos might play on the audience's values, desires, and hopes, on the one hand, or fears and prejudices, on the other.
The most striking appeal to pathos is the poignant contrast between Gehrig's horrible diagnosis and his public display of courage.
- persona** Greek for "mask." The face or character that a speaker shows to his or her audience.
Lou Gehrig is a famous baseball hero, but in his speech he presents himself as a common man who is modest and thankful for the opportunities he's had.
- polemic** Greek for "hostile." An aggressive argument that tries to establish the superiority of one opinion over all others. Polemics generally do not concede that opposing opinions have any merit.
- propaganda** The spread of ideas and information to further a cause. In its negative sense, propaganda is the use of rumors, lies, disinformation, and scare tactics in order to damage or promote a cause. For more information, see *How to Detect Propaganda* on page 756.
- purpose** The goal the speaker wants to achieve.
One of Gehrig's chief purposes in delivering his Farewell Address is to thank his fans and his teammates, but he also wants to demonstrate that he remains positive: he emphasizes his past luck and present optimism and downplays his illness.
- refutation** A denial of the validity of an opposing argument. In order to sound reasonable, refutations often follow a concession that acknowledges that an opposing argument may be true or reasonable.
Lou Gehrig refutes that his bad break is a cause for discouragement by saying that he has "an awful lot to live for!"
- rhetoric** As Aristotle defined the term, "the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion." In other words, it is the art of finding ways to persuade an audience.
- rhetorical appeals** Rhetorical techniques used to persuade an audience by emphasizing what they find most important or compelling. The three major appeals are to ethos (character), logos (reason), and pathos (emotion).
- rhetorical triangle (Aristotelian triangle)** A diagram that illustrates the interrelationship among the speaker, audience, and subject in determining a text. See p. 4.
- SOAPS** A mnemonic device that stands for Subject, Occasion, Audience, Purpose, and Speaker. It is a handy way to remember the various elements that make up the rhetorical situation.

speaker The person or group who creates a text. This might be a politician who delivers a speech, a commentator who writes an article, an artist who draws a political cartoon, or even a company that commissions an advertisement.

In his Farewell Address, the speaker is not just Lou Gehrig, but baseball hero and ALS victim Lou Gehrig, a common man who is modest and thankful for the opportunities he's had.

subject The topic of a text. What the text is *about*.

Lou Gehrig's subject in his speech is his illness, but it is also a catalog of all the lucky breaks that preceded his diagnosis.

text While this term generally means the written word, in the humanities it has come to mean any cultural product that can be “read”—meaning not just consumed and comprehended, but investigated. This includes fiction, nonfiction, poetry, political cartoons, fine art, photography, performances, fashion, cultural trends, and much more.