AP* English Language and Composition
Rhetorical Analysis
Visual Rhetoric: Daisy Girl vs. Willie

Student Packet
Introduction

Visual rhetoric is a form of persuasion that uses images to create meaning or prepare an argument. Like traditional rhetoric, visual rhetoric attempts to persuade its audience to reach a desired conclusion. Unlike traditional rhetoric, visual rhetoric relies on language and graphic imagery to convey meaning.

The picture below is of a second century BCE, Roman, bronze statue of the Etruscan statesman, Aule Metele. “The Orator” became the archetype of the noble rhetor, or public speaker, in Classical Roman times. Augustus Caesar, around 20 BCE, imitated the pose in his own official portrait, *Augustus of Primaporta*, and subsequent Roman statesmen and Caesars followed suit. Examine the picture closely, and note in the space provided the physical features of the statue that suggest “trustworthiness.”

Aulus Metellus (The Orator)
Bronze. Ca. 100 BCE
Florence, National Archaeological Museum.
http://library.thinkquest.org/20868/ang/cat/l236.htm
Ethos

We tend to believe people in whom we trust. One of the hardest tasks for you, the modern writer, is to convey to the reader the sense that you are trustworthy and have the audience’s best interests at heart. Your choice of words, your sentence structure, even your examples and anecdotes, all form your Ethos, or the embodiment of your credibility. This is both the disadvantage and advantage of the modern writer: on the one hand, you are limited to only your selection of printed words; on the other hand, you do not have to worry about how you are dressed, what your hair looks like, where you choose to perform your speech, or whether or not you can be heard by your intended audience.

Logos

In spite of clichés about pictures saying more than mere words, we tend to believe the printed word more often than not. Logical proofs, deductive and inductive reasoning, the citation of recognized sources and the recitation of facts make up Logos, the appeal to your audience’s sense of logic. Because digitally altering photos has become so easy, you would think that the average person would not fall prey to such obvious ploys, yet the power of visual rhetoric lies in the combination of printed text and visual image. For example, a grainy photograph of a silver blur in the sky and a quote from an Air Force pilot saying, “I cannot identify that object,” is, for a shocking number of people, proof positive that UFOs regularly visit our planet. The logic is not that complex: I am not an expert and I cannot identify that flying object, but he is an expert and cannot identify that flying object either; therefore, there are Unidentified Flying Objects.

Pathos

Anytime you stir the passions of your audience, you employ Pathos, more commonly called the emotional appeal. In crafting your argument, the emotional appeal requires knowing your audience and recognizing that which trumps their logic and makes them follow their hearts in spite of what their brains may say. Pictures of puppies and kittens make it easier to convince parents to adopt from an animal shelter. Pictures of young models in bikinis standing next to convertibles make it more difficult for men to choose a sensible four-door sedan. The emotional appeal can also move an audience to do things they should do. People can rationalize inaction—there are many instances where it may appear to be wiser not to get involved—until they feel some kind of sympathy or empathy for the issue. For example, pictures of carnage in war-torn Africa can rouse a complacent public to pressure their government to intervene.
Archetype vs. Stereotype

In visual rhetoric, the message is often immediate and to the point, and therefore it must rely on certain conventional images that the majority of its audience will instantly recognize. The easiest way to go about this is to use archetypes and stereotypes.

- Archetype (n): the original type or model upon which all subsequent models are based or copied
- Stereotype (n): a standardized mental image held in common by a group or community, usually representing an oversimplified, prejudiced or otherwise negatively biased opinion

To say that archetypes are good and stereotypes are bad is a gross simplification. Archetypes represent the essence of a type, or that which everyone, regardless of culture or teaching, would recognize. Stereotypes, on the other hand, represent the more openly skewed opinions held by a particular set of people. For example, the archetypal crusading knight is valorous, loyal, pious, and fights for divine causes; the stereotypical crusading knight is a religious fanatic in a tin can wasting time and money in the hot Middle Eastern sun.

Fill in the chart below with the accoutrements and mannerisms commonly associated with the archetypal and the stereotypical images of each profession:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Archetypal</th>
<th>Stereotypical</th>
<th>Archetypal</th>
<th>Stereotypical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Police Officer</td>
<td>Blue Uniform</td>
<td>Doughnut</td>
<td>“Mwuh-ha-ha!”</td>
<td>Thick Glasses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evil Scientist</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Shaping the Commentary

All forms of analysis have two distinct functions: to name and to explain. The first, naming, is the easiest form of analysis and does not require a whole lot more than finger pointing. The second function, explaining, is far more complex, and requires that you draw conclusions based on the text. For example, “The author uses a simile to get his point across.” This kind of commentary only proves two things:

a. You know the definition of “simile.”
   b. You can find the words “like” and “as.”

It does not, however address three more important questions:
   c. Which simile do you address?
   d. What is the author’s purpose?
   e. How does the simile sustain the author’s purpose?

A better example would read:

“The author compares the young man’s utter lack of reaction to stone when he says, ‘he stood there like a statue.’ The expectation is that an ordinary person would react emotionally to death of a parent, but the young man hides his reaction; the author later refers to his face as “enigmatic,” “wooden,” and “chiseled,” further sustaining the idea that the young man’s emotions were as unreadable as carved stone.”

Look back at the notes that you wrote on “The Orator,” and choose one feature that you believed portrayed the concept of “trustworthiness.” Identify that feature in a complete sentence and suggest how that feature accomplishes its purpose. Remember to be as exact as possible in describing the detail.

Follow up that sentence with another complete sentence that further explains how it conveys “trustworthiness.” Again, be as exact as possible.

One of the reasons that students struggle with commentary is that they begin to feel like they are pointing out the obvious or, even worse, that they are being repetitive. A good rule of thumb is to explain as fully as possible, even at the expense of personal comfort. Just about the time you feel like you have said too much, you will have finally fully explained your point. Anyone can find the words “like” or “as,” but the diligent student will not require the audience to do all of the thinking.

We will come back to this idea in practice in a moment.
The Daisy Girl Ad

On the evening of September 7, 1964, the Democratic National Committee ran a television advertisement in support of President Lyndon B. Johnson during NBC’s “Monday Night at the Movies.” Though run only once by the DNC, the ad is considered a major factor in Johnson’s landslide victory over the Republican Presidential candidate, Barry Goldwater, and it remains one of the most controversial political ads ever.

As soon as “Peace, Little Girl” ran, Johnson’s re-election committee received harsh criticism for using the threat of nuclear war (and the implication that Goldwater would start one) to persuade voters. Though the ad was immediately pulled, its effect lingered on as news shows and political pundits continued to refer to it, often replaying it in its entirety.

What follows are stills from the original advertisement, but the video itself is available online at the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library and Museum courtesy of the Democratic National Committee.

Activity—Part 1

As you read and view the stills, annotate the text with an eye for the appeals—ethos, logos, and pathos. Be very specific, underlining the rhetorical devices and writing down the specific effects on the audience.
“Peace, Little Girl” (Democratic National Committee, 1964)

Little Girl (*picking petals off a daisy*): One… two… three… four… five…

Girl: …seven… six… six… eight…nine…
(Freeze frame)
Man’s voice (booming, as if over a loudspeaker at a test site): Ten…nine…

(Camera moves into extreme close up of Girl’s eye)
Man: …eight… seven… six… five… four… three… two… one…
(Atom bomb exploding, reflected in Girl’s eye)
LBJ (voiceover): These are the stakes—to make a world in which all of God’s children can live, or to go into the dark. We must either love each other, or we must die.

Announcer’s voice: Vote for President Johnson on November 3rd. The stakes are too high for you to stay home.
**Activity—Part 2**

Now that you have examined the text as it was spoken, go back to the first slide and examine the visual imagery in the stills. Again, be very specific, circling objects or drawing arrows as appropriate and writing down the specific effects upon the audience.

**Activity—Part 3: Short Answer**

Citing specific evidence from the political commercial, identify the ethos that Johnson establishes, and briefly describe how the visual rhetorical devices in “Peace, Little Girl” support that ethos.
The Willie Horton Ad

In the 1988 Presidential campaign, attack ads were used with great success by George H. W. Bush, the Republican candidate and sitting Vice President, against Democratic candidate Michael Dukakis, then governor of Massachusetts. While the Bush campaign itself did not pay for the ad, the idea of the “revolving door” for criminals became a centerpiece of subsequent attack ads against Dukakis.

A group called the National Security Political Action Committee (NSPAC) began running a television campaign ad called “Weekend Passes” in September of 1988. The ad focuses on a controversial program giving convicted felons weekend furloughs. The law had been passed prior to Dukakis taking office, but the incident with Horton happened on Dukakis’ watch. While serving a life sentence for murder without the possibility of parole, William Horton (dubbed “Willie” by the Bush campaign) received a furlough, during which he committed armed robbery and rape. After the election, during Dukakis’ final term as governor, the furlough program was cancelled, but the idea of liberal Democrats being soft on crime lingers to this day.

What follows are stills from the original advertisement, but the video itself is available online at the Museum of the Moving Image’s “The Living Room Candidate” website.

Activity—Part 1

As you read and view the stills, annotate the text with an eye for the appeals—ethos, logos, and pathos. Be very specific, underlining the rhetorical devices and writing down the specific effects on the audience.
Male Narrator: Bush and Dukakis on crime.

Narrator: Bush supports the death penalty for first degree murderers.
Narrator: Dukakis not only opposed the death penalty…

Narrator: …he allowed first degree murderers to have weekend passes from prison. One was Willie Horton…
Narrator: …who murdered a boy in a robbery, stabbing him 19 times. Despite a life sentence…

Narrator: Horton received 10 weekend passes from prison.
Narrator: Horton fled, kidnapped a young couple, stabbing the man and repeatedly raping his girlfriend.

Activity—Part 2

Now that you have examined the text as it was spoken, go back to the first slide and examine the visual imagery in the stills. Again, be very specific, circling objects or drawing arrows as appropriate and writing down the specific effects upon the audience.

Activity—Part 3: Short Answer

Citing specific evidence from the political commercial, identify the ethos that NSPAC establishes for Bush, and briefly describe how the visual rhetorical devices in “Weekend Passes” support that ethos.

Writing Prompt

Carefully read and review the “Peace, Little Girl” and “Weekend Passes.” Then write an essay in which you analyze how the distinctive images of each advertisement reveal the purpose of its sponsor. You have 40 minutes to complete your essay.