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Rhetorical Analysis Essay

In the reality of the world today where information can be processed by technology quicker than our minds can think, many have wondered whether the general public is actively in control of technology and if it is harming or benefiting us. Making use of rhetorical language in writing is a tool that can help authors reach and appeal to a certain audience. Nicholas Carr's 2008 article, "Is Google Making Us Stupid?" uses ethos to build credibility as he warns the audience of the dangers that come with overusing search engines such as Google. Naomi Baron's 2017 essay titled "Reading in a Digital Age" uses logos as she explains how technology changes the way people process information by presenting evidence through graphs, data, and statistics. John Perry Barlow's 1996 passage, "A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace" uses pathos to actively connect to the reader's emotions while persuading them to want an online world free from government control. Using unequivocal rhetoric these three texts by Nicholas Carr, Naomi Baron, and John Perry Barlow all convey their different underlying perspectives regarding technology in society.

When reading an essay, article, passage, etc., it is important to assess who the target audience is, so you can make sense of the specific ideology and methods the author intended behind the text. This also helps make sense of what the passage is trying to accomplish. Carr's article was written with the intention of informing all technology users and frequent readers of The Atlantic. Baron aimed to warn people in the field of education along the lines of school

boards, principals, teachers, and students. Barlow's passage consciously persuaded government leaders and internet users concerned with the independence of government control over the internet.

Each passage was able to hit the nail in the head, speaking out to their audiences before the issues presented became major problems. "A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace" was written in 1996, which was right when the internet was created and started being used by the public. The government helped create the internet in the mid 1990s, but it was mainly run by privately owned companies. Barlow was able to predict the positive impact technology would have on society before it was truly established and expanded in society. Similarly, "Is Google Making Us Stupid?" was published in 2008, when people spent a significantly less amount of time searching online than today. Carr recognized some of the benefits that technology presents to society, but largely explained how he and other sociologists, scientists, and experts have come to the conclusion that technology reshapes the way people's minds interpret instruction and worsens not only concentration but also the ability to think deeply. Naomi Baron's essay, "Reading in a Digital Age" was published as schools started to implement computers, personal laptops/chrome books, smart boards, and other forms of technology into curriculums. The research presented in the passage was introduced before the implementation of these devices with ambitions to make educators aware of the dangers of reading and overall online learning preliminary to the progression of poor test scores.

Another useful tool authors use in their writing is rhetorical appeals like ethos, pathos, logos, and kairos. Ethos establishes credibility for the reader, while pathos connects to the reader's emotions. Logos presents the reader with facts, statistics, and/or logic, and finally kairos establishes which appeal is best to use in the correct time and place. Such rhetoric is displayed in

the passage “Reading in a Digital Age.” Naomi Baron uses logos as she exhibits a bar graph titled, “Teachers’ views of the broad effects of today’s digital tools” to back up her claim. Throughout the text she also puts statistics across, such as in paragraph 15 where she says, “More than four-fifths of the participants said that if cost were the same, they would choose to read in print rather than onscreen. This finding was particularly strong for academic reading and especially high in Germany (94%).” (Baron 15). This not only provides facts, but helps the audience visualize these specific reasons. Carr utilizes ethos to build trust in the company of his audience. An example of this is represented in the text as he mentions, “As we use what the sociologist Daniel Bell has called our “intellectual technologies”-the tools that extend our mental rather than our physical capacities-we inevitably begin to take on the qualities of those technologies. The mechanical clock, which came into common use in the 14th century, provides a compelling example. In *Technics and Civilizations*, the historian and cultural critic Lewis Mumford described how the clock “disassociated time from human events and helped create the belief in an independent world of mathematically measurable sequences.”” (Carr 4). Carr refers to two separately mentioned sources within the same paragraph. This showcases the research and expertise he used to find the information, reinforces legitimacy to further validate his point, and shows that the author is aware of the bigger pictures connected to technology’s impacts rather than having a secluded opinion. Barlow conveys pathos as he elicits the senses of passion, pride, and unity throughout the passage. An important thing to take note of is the use of “them” versus “us” language. This allows the audience to view government officials as “weary giants of flesh and steel,” in contrast to the people of cyberspace, who are painted as innovative and highminded. The author wanted the audience to view the government in a pushy, overly

controlling way. John Perry Barlow includes his own personal opinion that the government should rid itself of jurisdiction over cyberspace.

Along with their use of rhetorical appeals, the three authors strategically use figurative language to reinforce and make their arguments deeper. Carr uses metaphors and vivid imagery throughout his passage to make his key points more concrete and resonate emotionally with the reader. He is able to humanize the internet; depicting it as a force that “reshapes” or “reprograms” the brain allowing for a more relatable, reflective response. Likewise, Naomi Baron uses comparisons between traditional books as opposed to screens to create framework for a more thorough understanding of the main idea. She demonstrates the drawbacks of digital learning, while comparing the positives of learning on print. Barlow packs metaphors, hyperboles, imagery, and tone throughout “A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace” which adds to the resonating rhetorical approach pathos. The imagery paints a sympathetic view of the unfortunate future if the internet remains under government jurisdiction.

In conclusion, Nicholas Carr’s 2008 article, “Is Google Making Us Stupid?”, Naomi Baron’s 2017 essay, “Reading in a Digital Age”, John Perry Barlow’s 1996 passage, “A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace” communicate the bigger picture of the impression the internet has on humanity. When examined collectively, these observations emphasize that the authors’ uses of rhetoric, word choice, tone, and evidence shape their messages about technology, reading, and the fabric of the digital world.

Works Cited

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