

***Protest Song Analysis***

Rhetorical analysis is used by writers to try to persuade their audience to believe what the writer is trying to convince them to believe. Writers use evidence to support their statements and follow them up with rhetorical appeals to help sell their claims. The rhetorical appeals are what help the reader believe what the writer is telling them. The song “*Pumped Up Kicks*” by Foster The People was released in 2011. “*Pumped Up Kicks*” describes the dark thoughts of a troubled teen, Robert, struggling with everyday life. The pop band sings about the dangers of isolated and neglected children, and how their emotions can build up and explode, wreaking havoc on the world around them.

Starting in the beginning moments of the song, the artist uses edgy intro music to give you a rebellious and upbeat feeling. The video graphics flipped through various short clips of young adults dancing, hanging out, and having a good time. Then with the beginning verse the pop band grabs your attention by singing a sort of suspenseful lyric, “He’ll look around the room, he won’t tell you his plan. He’s got a rolled cigarette hanging out his mouth,” As listeners we have no idea what is going through Robert’s head or what will happen next. We are persuaded by the use of Pathos, into believing the teen is becoming unhinged and pushing boundaries. Robert is showing signs of no remorse for smoking right out in the open, with no care in the world. They also are using Ethos as well, by helping precede the listener to begin to not trust Robert and what he may have planned. I believe this sets the scene for the song by explaining the moments before Robert went crazy.

In the next lyric Foster The People goes on to sing, “He found a six-shooter gun in his dad’s closet, with the box of fun things.” The band is using Logos by singing the name of the type of gun Robert found, to grab the listener's attention. The artist then uses Pathos to get the listener to feel scared that Robert has a box of bullets, or fun things, to go along with the gun.

The artist continues with this tactic when signing the next line of lyrics, “but he's coming for you. Yeah, He's coming for you!” The artist again uses Pathos here to precede the listener into feeling like they are the ones being targeted by Robert, and warning us he’s coming for you. This helps remind the listener it could be them getting targeted next, and we never know what someone might have planned in their heads. After that line of lyrics, the chorus then plays. By repeating this chorus throughout the entire song, “All the other kids with the pumped up kicks, You better run, better run, outrun my gun. All the other kids with the pumped up kicks, You better run, better run, faster than my bullet.” the artist uses Pathos and Logos continuously by helping connect you to Roberts feelings and anger towards his classmates that have a good home life and good finical situation. But also keeps you in fear because the listener knows Robert has a gun and that they could be the target.

In verse 2 Foster The People then goes on to introduce Robert’s father, “Daddy works a long day. He is coming home late, and he's coming home late.” This helps the listener get to know Robert’s father isn’t very present in Robert's life and works late a lot. The artist then goes on to describe what a common meal would look like in Robert house, “cause dinner's in the kitchen and it's packed in ice...” The artist then uses Logos by explaining to the listener that Robert eats a lot of TV dinners or frozen meals. This is also an example of Pathos because we as listeners know frozen dinners aren’t special, and to have a child eat them consistently is quite terrible and flavorless. The artist then uses Pathos in his next lyric to leave the listener in suspense, “I've waited for a long time.” The listeners have no idea what Robert has been waiting for, but we know Robert’s father will be home soon and we can feel that it won’t be good. The pop band then goes on to sing, “Yeah the sleight of my hand is now a quick-pull trigger.” Through the use of Logos, we can understand that Robert just used the quick-pull trigger to shoot

his father. We also can see a slight use of Pathos as well by grabbing the emotion of the listener to feel sad about the boys' father but also scared about what Robert might do next. In the next lyric, "I reason with my cigarette," the artist has the listener's full attention and by using Pathos, helps us imagine the regrets and thoughts racing through Robert's head. Robert has just shot his father and with no one to turn to, he consults with his cigarette or the irrational thoughts in his mind. Finishing the verse, "Then say, "Your hair's on fire, you must have lost your wits, yeah?" the artist uses Pathos and Ethos by leaving the listener feeling scared with no sense of authority, knowing Robert's father is dead and he is on the loose. The artist then continuously repeats the chorus over and over throughout the rest of the song. I believe this is another use of Pathos because as the listeners we can only assume from the facts and feelings we got from the first two verses in the song, that Robert is out causing havoc on his community.

After analyzing the song "*Pumped Up Kicks*" I believe the purpose is to spread awareness of troubled teens with mental health issues. The band, Foster The People, are trying to grab the attention of communities all around by telling a story about Robert and the neglect he endures. Robert then goes through a mental episode and goes on to shoot his father as he gets home from work. This connects to families all around, especially parents who own guns. It helps the listener sit back and realize how the small in convinces in someone's could cause a dramatic outcome, and how you never know what a human being is dealing with mentally.