To: CEC panel of judges

From: Joseph Peck

Date: 12th October 2023

Subject: Chosen example of good persuasive writing

Regarding the selection between the two shortlisted articles of which is the better example of a good persuasive article, I have chosen the article by Johnson ‘Why a meaningful life is impossible without suffering’ as the better article.

In order to decide which article was better I used the following criteria: The chosen article has to clearly set out and justify its claim, using strong arguments and better evidence.

**Clarity in thesis statement and structure**

The first and biggest strength of the article by Johnson was its clarity in thesis statement and structure. An effective thesis statement provides a roadmap for the rest of the article, allowing readers to easily follow the authors thought process and argument, Johnson’s being in the title “Why a meaningful life is impossible without suffering” (Johnson, 2022). Although it may come across as assertive, the thesis is very clear and concise providing readers with Johnson’s stance from the very beginning of the article. The inclusion of the word “Why” also assures readers that he will be explaining his assertive stance on the argument, providing good set up for the readers to be persuaded by his arguments later on in the article.

Additionally, Johnson effectively includes signposting within his article in the form of headers such as – The lure of the negative, Chosen suffering and Happiness and meaning. These headers provide the reader with concise introductions to the theories that are about to be mentioned while also providing a clear distinction between the ideas that are being talked about. In combination with the clearly laid out thesis statement in the title Johnson’s readers are able to easily follow his argument and are more likely to be persuaded by him.

In contrast, the article by Bloom has its thesis statement in the end of the 7th paragraph of the article, “there seems to be a sweet spot of intermediate suffering where we do best” (Bloom, 2021). By this juncture of the article Bloom has brought up 4 different sources, each with their own complex theory and evidence while Bloom also provides an additional counter argument for every source. This creates a back-and-forth nature for the article whereby the reader is unable to formulate their own opinion as they are being fed information from both ends of the argument evenly. Had Bloom mentioned his thesis statement clearly in the start of the article readers would be able to understand what he wants them to think and would be more likely to be persuaded by his thoughts. Bloom’s readers confusion may also be amplified by the lack of signposting used throughout the article as the arguments are all presented within adjacent paragraphs with no clear way of distinguishing when he has moved on to a new concept.

**Use of Logos**

Another strength of the article by Johnson is his effective use of logos to persuade the readers of his arguments. After each concept or piece of evidence has been explained Johnson includes an analogy that is easily understood by any reader, “why a dip in the hot. Tub feels especially good after a frigid winter day” (Johnson, 2022). These analogies provide the reader with a simplified explanation to the complex concepts that Johnson brings up during the article. By simplifying the theories, Johnson makes the article easy to understand for any reader no matter their level of understanding within the field, resulting in readers being more likely to be persuaded by his argument.

Importantly, the analogies used by Johnson are also free of logical fallacies, as they are all well linked to the theories being discussed. This provides a great example for students and competitors of how to use logos within their own persuasive writing that is not found within Bloom’s article.

**Use of Ethos**

Effective use of ethos can also be seen in Johnson’s writing as he creates credibility for every one of his sources, he does so by mentioning how they are all psychologists and for some including how they had contributed to the specific field of psychology that was being discussed. An example of this being when he quoted Paul Bloom, “In his book The Sweet Spot: The Pleasures of Suffering and the Search for Meaning, Bloom explores a handful of theories” (Johnson, 2022). Having already introduced Bloom as a psychologist earlier in the article, Johnson strengthens his credibility by citing a book in which Bloom wrote about suffering and meaning. With this strengthened credibility, Johnson’s readers are less likely to doubt the information they are being given and more likely to be persuaded.

On the other hand, Bloom’s article has several mentions of sources with no elaboration on who they are or how they might be experts within the field of suffering, this can be seen when he cites – C.S Lewis, Judith Mangelsdorf and Nicholas Nassim Taleb. The lack of credibility creates doubt within the readers mind of who these people are and makes them less likely to be persuaded by Bloom’s argument.

Additionally, there is also the presence of a false credibility fallacy. Both C.S Lewis and Nicholas Nassim Taleb are not psychologists or experts in the field of suffering. C.S Lewis was an author famous for the popular fiction series Narnia and Nicholas Nassim Taleb is a statistician whose work mainly surrounds probability and randomness. Although this fallacy can also be seen in Johnson’s article through the inclusion of a quote by Theodore Roosevelt in his conclusion, the overall credibility of Johnson’s sources is much stronger than Bloom’s.

**Use of Pathos**

However, the area that Bloom’s article does well in is its use of pathos, with the premise of the article being the world has suffered through the pandemic or is still suffering after it. This premise is well weaved throughout the article, especially seen in its introduction and conclusion allowing the reader to feel like Bloom understands their suffering. This emotional connection makes it so that the readers that feel connected are more likely to be persuaded by Bloom’s arguments, providing students and competitors with a good example of how to use pathos that cannot be found in Johnson’s article.

In conclusion, both articles have their strengths and weaknesses as persuasive writing. However, I believe that the article by Johnson would provide a better example of persuasive writing to the students and competitors.

**Reference List**

Bloom, P (2021, November 29) *They Say Suffering Will Make You Stronger – But It’s Not That Simple.* Time.

Johnson, S (2020, June 24) *Why a meaningful life is impossible without suffering.* Big Think.