

Loss is an unavoidable fact of life, but knowing that makes it no easier to come to terms with. In National Book Award winner Jesmyn Ward's essay "On Witness and Repair: A Personal Tragedy Followed by Pandemic," she recounts her own experience with loss and grief, as well as her outlook on the world after her husband's death. By weaving in elements of persuasive rhetoric, Ward elevated her writing, arguably allowing it to resonate harder with the reader.

Arguably, pathos is the strongest appeal in this essay. It is the basis of her essay after all. From her good times with her husband and children, to her husband's death, to her experiences after his passing, there is no passage that goes without a trace of pathos within it. Ward describes the little details about who her husband was, and just as the reader got to know of her husband, he was gone. Her entire world felt different, as in her anecdote of buying the last disinfectant spray at the pharmacy, her first thought when asked where she found it was that the clerk wanted to deprive her of it, rather than making conversation. She might have found humor in Cardi B chanting "coronavirus" once, but not anymore. Her children vocalize their longing for their father, and their lifestyle deteriorates, from messy hair to poor eating habits. Dreading that she might return to the ICU and have to watch another loved one go. Channeling her grief into her novel, she resonates with the injustices faced by black Americans and their efforts to fix this broken system, and feels solidarity as she realizes she is not alone, as well as recounting two cases of racial injustices faced within her own family. Ward does not hold back in her descriptions, allowing the reader to follow along by visualizing each passage in vivid detail.

Logos, in contrast to pathos, is under-utilized in Ward's essay. As her essay speaks to her grief, it is only natural that pathos would outshine logos and ethos in this writing. Ward relates to the larger problem of black Americans facing racial injustices with her own family's experiences. It can be difficult to visualize the plight of others, but by relating to stories within her own

family, Ward shows that the problem is closer to home, and demonstrates that what you see on the news is more than just stories, but is actually happening to people.

Ethos is a bit more commonly found in this essay. With the article stemming from the loss of her husband, Ward is more than qualified to talk on grief. She witnessed her husband's rapid physical decline, and lived on, raising her family alone, though as a shell of her former self for a time. As she writes her novel on a woman who loses her mother and lover to slavery, but even she herself was enslaved, Ward begins to relate to the movement pushing back against the racial injustices faced. What horse does she have in this race? She herself is black, her own brother was killed by a white drunk driver who got off scott-free, her great-great-grandfather was left to die by white revenue agents who shot him and left him to die in the woods. She can relate to the movement demanding that the system be fixed, because she too had suffered under the system, and known others whose lives were lost without meaning.

Over all, there are an abundant amount of examples of each rhetorical technique, besides being a little weak on logos. Ward's essay is a heartfelt one, and it really shows through in her usage of pathos and ethos. As she navigates through her own loss, she eventually identifies with a movement of people who are pushing back against systemic injustices, and people who are witnesses to this injustice.