

Persuasion

Definition of Persuasion

Persuasion is a literary technique that writers use to present their ideas through reason and logic, in order to influence the [audience](#). Persuasion may simply use an [argument](#) to persuade the readers, or sometimes may persuade readers to perform a certain action. Simply, it is an art of effective speaking and writing in which writers make their opinions believable to the audience through logic, by invoking emotions, and by proving their own credibility.

Types of Persuasion

Persuasion has three basic types:

1. Ethos

It is linked with morality and ethics. In this method of persuasion, writers or speakers convince their audience of their goodwill and present themselves as trustworthy. In order to determine whether a writer is credible or not, the audience needs to understand his intention and his strong understanding of the subject.

2. Logos

[Logos](#) comes of logic, therefore writers use logic, reasoning, and rationality to convince audiences of their perspectives.

3. Pathos

The third method is [pathos](#), which invokes and appeals to the emotions of the audience. This is contrary to logos, as it presents arguments without using logic or reasoning. Many writers consider love, fear, empathy, and anger as strong factors to influence the emotions of their audiences.

Examples of Persuasion in Literature

Example #1: *A Modest Proposal* (By Jonathan Swift)

[Ethos](#):

In, *A Modest Proposal*, Jonathan Swift uses ethos to prove that he is a credible source due to his conclusive research concerning infantile consumption, as he writes:

“I am assured by our merchants that a boy or a girl before twelve years old is no saleable commodity, and even when they come to this age, they will not yield above three pounds.”

Swift builds his credibility by assuring that, prior to creating this proposal, he had discussed the issue with merchants. Swift attempts to make clear his point that selling infants as food would be profitable, and would help financially impoverished parents.

Example #2: *Of Studies* (By Francis Bacon)

Logos:

“STUDIES serve for delight, for ornament, and for ability. Their chief use for delight, is in privateness and retiring; for ornament, is in [discourse](#); and for ability, is in the judgment, and disposition of business.”

In the above excerpt, Bacon employs logic to describe how we can use studies for various purposes. He gives logic that in aloofness and retirement, reading gives pleasure, and adorns a person’s conversation as

an ornament. Hence, we can know the ability of a learned man through his judgment.

Example #3: *Jane Eyre* (By Charlotte Bronte)

Pathos:

In *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte Bronte brings pathos when Jane leaves Mr. Rochester as they were about to tie the knot. Jane, however, finds out that Mr. Rochester already has a wife, who is actually alive, though mentally disturbed living with a nurse in the attic. These circumstances arouse the emotions of readers, in that Jane had already faced a difficult and sad life with her aunt and her children, and now when she was about to finally find happiness, she feels dejected once again.

Example #4: *Campaign Speech*, November 3, 2008 (By Barack Obama)

Barack Obama made a public speech a night before his election campaign in Virginia on November 3, 2008, saying:

“This country is more decent than one where a woman in Ohio, on the brink of retirement, finds herself one illness away from disaster after a lifetime of hard work...This country is more generous than one where a man in Indiana has to pack up the equipment he’s worked on for twenty years and watch it shipped off to China... We are more compassionate than a government that lets veterans sleep on our streets and families slide into poverty; that sits on its hands while a major American city drowns before our eyes...”

This emotional speech plays on people’s sense of guilt, making it a good example of pathos. Although Obama employs snob appeal [fallacy](#) in his argument, it is a very influential and emotional appeal.

Function of Persuasion

Persuasion is the most common literary technique. We not only find it in literature, but also in political speeches, conferences, courtrooms, and

feelings and opinions by appealing to the audience emotionally and rationally. Hence, it is a very effective technique to win over the readers or audience. In addition, it helps students to unearth certain reasons in favor of their points of view, and gives them a chance to research facts linked to their views. While developing an understanding of how writing can change and influence their thoughts and actions, students can understand the nature of persuasive work.