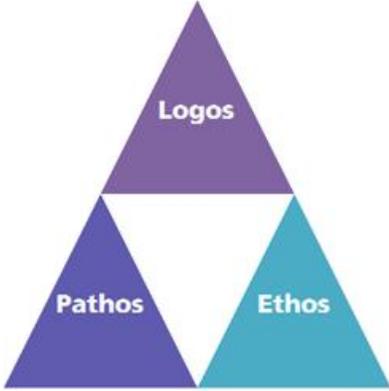


Module 4: Examining Love, Friendship, and Power

Topic 6 Content: The Rhetorical Triangle

Introduction

THE RHETORICAL TRIANGLE



According to Greek philosopher Aristotle, effective persuasion depends on the use of logical appeals (logos), emotional appeals (pathos), and credibility (ethos). The balance of these three components is known today as the **rhetorical triangle**. Although some examples of persuasion may emphasize one appeal over another depending on the purpose and context of the argument, a balance of all three appeals can contribute greatly to establishing an effective persuasive argument.

You should strive to employ a little of each component of the rhetorical triangle in order to make the strongest argument. Take a moment to explore the three appeals that make up the rhetorical triangle. Click on a section of the rhetorical triangle to begin.

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Topic 6 Content: The Rhetorical Triangle

Logos: Description

DESCRIPTION

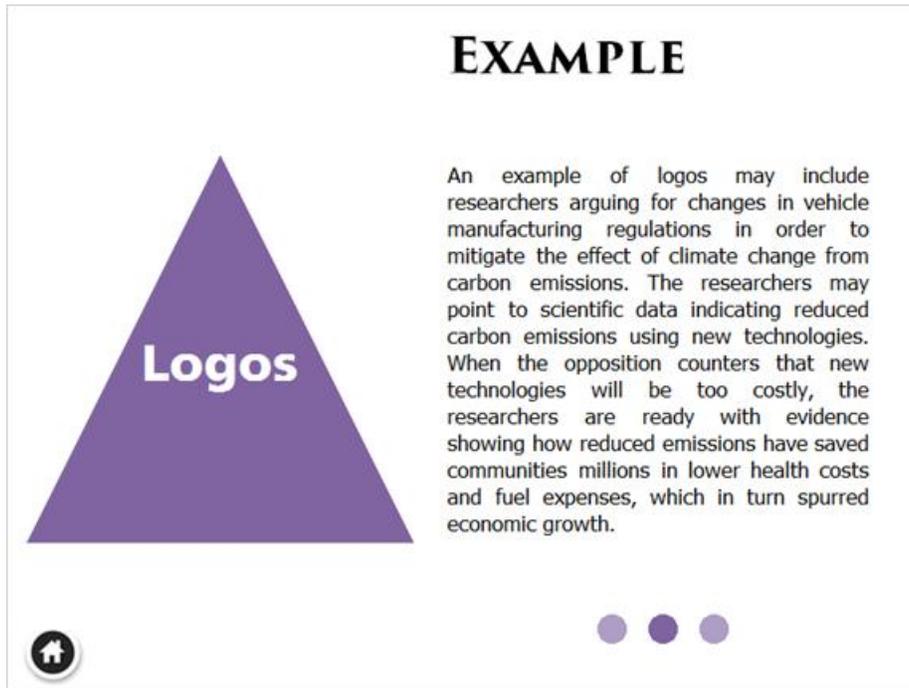
Logos is an appeal to logic. Arguments based on logos use reasoning or offer proof in order to persuade. Cause-and-effect claims, scientific or statistical evidence, and expert testimony can be found in arguments that make logical appeals. In this kind of appeal, the writer often anticipates the opposing argument and is ready to reply with a rebuttal.

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Logos: Example



EXAMPLE

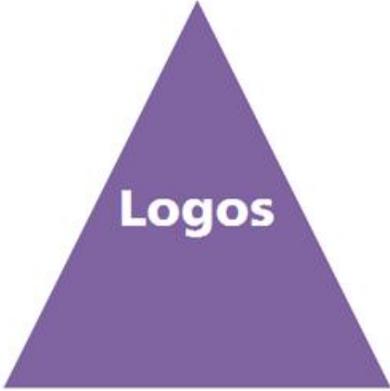
An example of logos may include researchers arguing for changes in vehicle manufacturing regulations in order to mitigate the effect of climate change from carbon emissions. The researchers may point to scientific data indicating reduced carbon emissions using new technologies. When the opposition counters that new technologies will be too costly, the researchers are ready with evidence showing how reduced emissions have saved communities millions in lower health costs and fuel expenses, which in turn spurred economic growth.

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Logos: Questions



QUESTIONS

When analyzing a persuasive argument, ask yourself the following questions to help you determine whether an appeal to logos is being used.

- Does the speaker base her argument on credible evidence?
- Does the speaker use logical reasoning to support her claim?
- Does the speaker examine and identify flaws in the opposing argument?



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Pathos: Description

DESCRIPTION

Pathos

Pathos is an appeal to the emotions of the audience. Arguments based on pathos effectively tap into the emotions, beliefs, and values of the audience in order to connect with them and then sway their opinion. The speaker must be very knowledgeable of his audience in order to use pathos effectively.

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Pathos: Example

EXAMPLE

Pathos

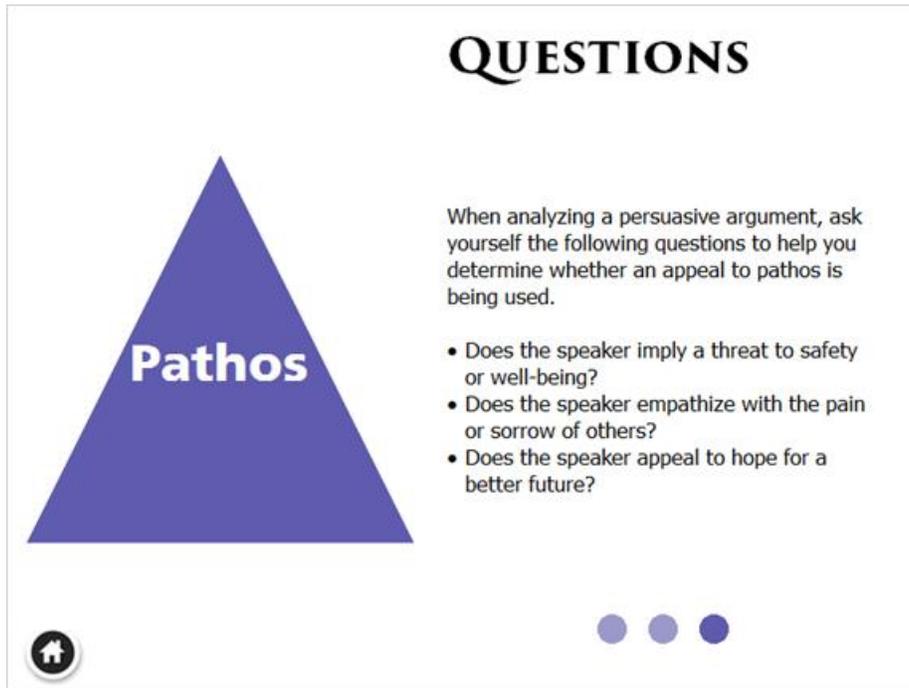
An example of pathos may include a commercial seeking donations to rescue pets that have been victims of animal abuse. The commercial showing images of animals in cages with sad music in the background is shown during a television program featuring pets. Since the audience is likely to take a personal interest in animals, the commercial aims to connect with the viewers' sympathies toward animals.

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Pathos: Questions



QUESTIONS

When analyzing a persuasive argument, ask yourself the following questions to help you determine whether an appeal to pathos is being used.

- Does the speaker imply a threat to safety or well-being?
- Does the speaker empathize with the pain or sorrow of others?
- Does the speaker appeal to hope for a better future?

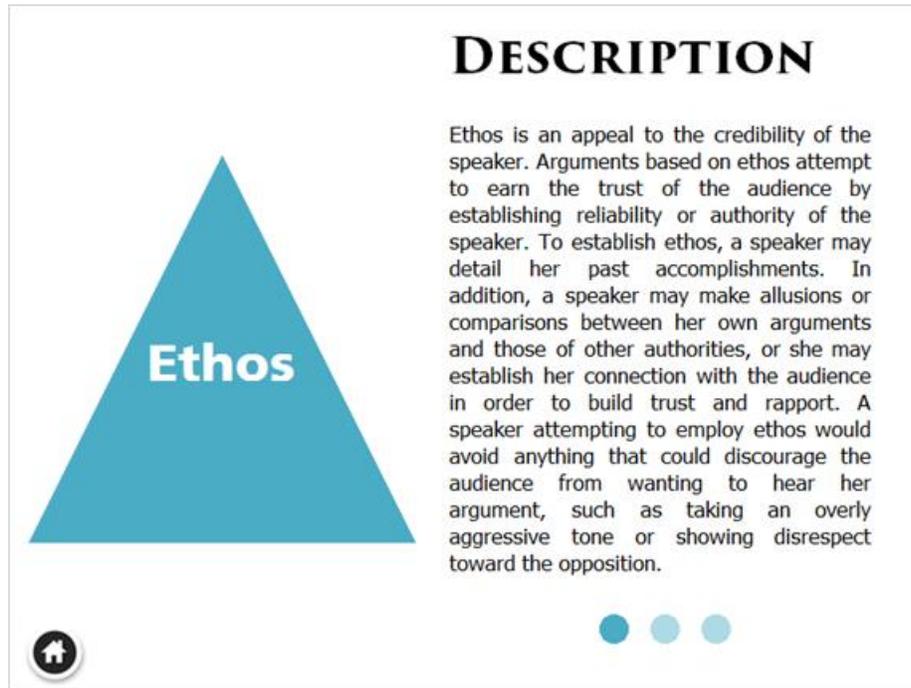
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Ethos: Description



DESCRIPTION

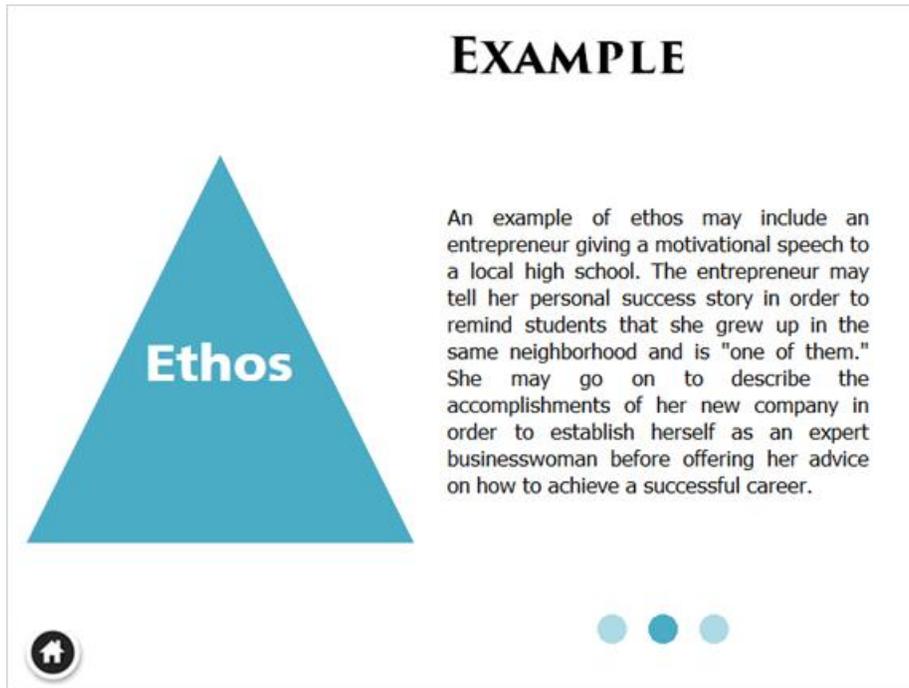
Ethos is an appeal to the credibility of the speaker. Arguments based on ethos attempt to earn the trust of the audience by establishing reliability or authority of the speaker. To establish ethos, a speaker may detail her past accomplishments. In addition, a speaker may make allusions or comparisons between her own arguments and those of other authorities, or she may establish her connection with the audience in order to build trust and rapport. A speaker attempting to employ ethos would avoid anything that could discourage the audience from wanting to hear her argument, such as taking an overly aggressive tone or showing disrespect toward the opposition.

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Ethos: Example



EXAMPLE

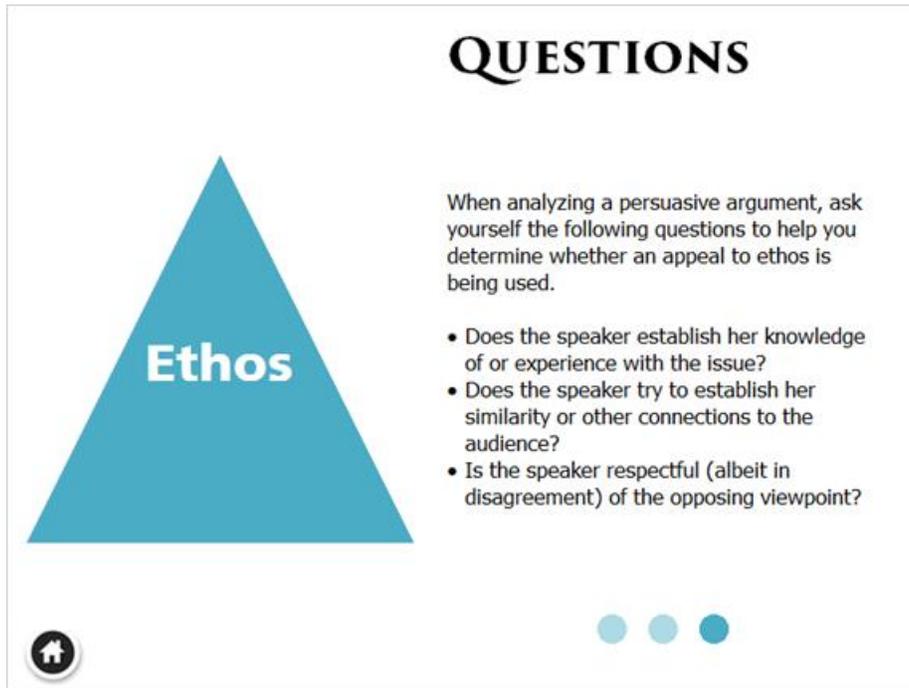
An example of ethos may include an entrepreneur giving a motivational speech to a local high school. The entrepreneur may tell her personal success story in order to remind students that she grew up in the same neighborhood and is "one of them." She may go on to describe the accomplishments of her new company in order to establish herself as an expert businesswoman before offering her advice on how to achieve a successful career.

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Ethos: Questions



QUESTIONS

When analyzing a persuasive argument, ask yourself the following questions to help you determine whether an appeal to ethos is being used.

- Does the speaker establish her knowledge of or experience with the issue?
- Does the speaker try to establish her similarity or other connections to the audience?
- Is the speaker respectful (albeit in disagreement) of the opposing viewpoint?

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Conclusion

THE RHETORICAL TRIANGLE

Often a persuasive argument can be considered a mix of two or more appeals from the rhetorical triangle. Although you may not be able to use logos, pathos, and ethos equally when making a persuasive argument, employing all three appeals to some degree in your argument will strengthen the effectiveness of your persuasion. On the other hand, relying on only one appeal can be risky for a persuasive piece.

For example, if you claim to be an authority on a topic but your argument is unreasonable or logically flawed, then you will likely not persuade your audience. Likewise, if you try to persuade your audience solely by capitalizing on their sympathies, then they may be wary of trusting your argument. You must also avoid relying on logos alone to carry your argument because you risk alienating—or even boring—your audience with a deluge of facts, statistics, and other evidential data.



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