

Rhetorical Appeals: Ethos, Pathos, and Logos

a supplemental resource to the Rhetoric Support Document

Rhetorical Appeal: A rhetorical appeal is a strategy that a writer, author, or speaker uses to achieve a specific purpose. Rhetorical appeals can be present in the written word, spoken word, and in visual images. The rhetorical appeals are **ethos**, **pathos**, and **logos**.

The Standards: The rhetorical appeals of *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*, enter the language of the 2024 SC CCR ELA Standards in ELA.6.AOR.5.3.

Overarching Standard ELA.AOR.5: Evaluate and critique how an author uses words, phrases, and text structures to craft text.

ELA.6.AOR.5.3	ELA.7.AOR.5.3	ELA.8.AOR.5.3	ELA.E1.AOR.5.3
Trace the development of an author’s argument while identifying the types of reasoning used and/or the rhetorical appeal of ethos, pathos, or logos in an informational text.	Trace the development of an author’s argument while explaining the types of reasoning and/or the rhetorical appeal of ethos, pathos, or logos in an informational text.	Trace the development of an author’s argument while analyzing the types of reasoning and/or rhetorical appeals used in an informational text.	Analyze an author’s argument while evaluating the effectiveness of the types of reasoning and/or the rhetoric used in an informational text.

[For more insights into these grade-level indicators, click here.](#)

Ethos

Definition
<i>Ethos</i> is a technique used to persuade the audience based on the speaker’s credibility, social standing, and/or knowledge.
Examples
In an advertisement: <ul style="list-style-type: none">“As a doctor, I recommend that you try this product.” This is an example of how an advertisement may try to build trust between the speaker and the audience and establish the credibility of the speaker.
In a memoir <ul style="list-style-type: none">Consider how many athletes release memoirs (written or video). Many times, these memoirs describe how an athlete had to overcome obstacles or barriers before finding success in his/her sport. This creates credibility.
In a social media post <ul style="list-style-type: none">During election cycles, how often do we see posts by candidates that contain facts or information about their accomplishments? Or perhaps we see posts that share a candidate’s education, work, and/ or military background. This is a candidate who is trying to establish credibility.

Examining Ethos

Below are some possible questions to consider when examining an *author's ethos. Teachers are reminded that the format and purpose of the text or image will indicate which questions are appropriate to use. Some of these questions can be used with other rhetorical appeals. ***This is not intended to be a prescriptive or exhaustive list.***

Possible Questions to Consider for Examining Ethos	
The Topic	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does the *author provide complete information on the issue or topic?• Is this information accurate?	
Language	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is the language biased or unbiased? How can you tell?• Why might the author choose to use biased language?	
Other Perspectives	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does the author acknowledge other opinions and perspectives?• Why might the author choose not to acknowledge other opinions and perspectives?• Why might the author choose to acknowledge some other opinions and perspectives but not others?	
Credibility	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does the author provide their education or experience?• Is this education or experience relevant to the topic?	
Citing Sources	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does the author cite sources?• Are the sources cited correctly? Can the reader/audience access the sources?• If the sources are not cited, why might the author have chosen not to include them?• If the sources are cited but are incomplete or inaccessible, why might the author have chosen to include them in this manner?	

**Use of the word author also means speaker or creator depending on the medium being examined. A medium can be a printed text, oral presentation or speech, image, or video.*

Pathos

Definition
<i>Pathos</i> is a technique used to make the reader or audience feel a certain way by creating or eliciting an emotion(s).
Examples
In a courtroom <ul style="list-style-type: none">A defense attorney may describe a hardship faced by his client to sway the emotions of the judge and jury.
In politics <ul style="list-style-type: none">A senator trying to get a bill passed may tell a story about a tragic event that took place. This is to sway the vote to pass the bill.
In advertisements <ul style="list-style-type: none">Think of the advertisements that show images or videos of malnourished animals in cages. These images and stories are used to pull on the heartstrings of the audience in hopes they will give money to the organization.
In literature <ul style="list-style-type: none">In many young adult novels, a protagonist must face insurmountable odds to save their family or community. Stories such as these may evoke an emotional response of hope or pride within a reader.

Examining Pathos

Below are some possible questions to consider when examining pathos. Teachers are reminded that the format and purpose of the text or image will indicate which questions are appropriate to use. Some of these questions can be used with other rhetorical appeals. *This is not intended to be a prescriptive or exhaustive list.*

Possible Questions to Consider for Examining Pathos
Personal Stories
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Does the *author use the story of an individual who faced hardship?Why might the author include the story?What emotion is the author trying to elicit from the audience by including the story?
Images
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Does the text include images?What do the images depict?What emotion is elicited by the image?If the presentation is a video: Is music included? What type? What feelings are elicited by the music?
Language
<ul style="list-style-type: none">How descriptive is the language? Does the author use vivid details and examples?What is the connotation of the words and phrases?What images are created by these connotations?
Values and Beliefs
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Does the author appeal to the values or beliefs of the reader/audience?Does the author use examples related to the reader's/audience's values or beliefs?

Possible Questions to Consider for Examining Pathos
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Why does the author appeal to the values or beliefs of the reader/audience?

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Logos

Definition
<i>Logos</i> is a technique that uses facts, logic, and reasons to appeal to the reader or audience's rationality. An *author's use of logos can also be used to persuade a reader or audience and provide support for the subject matter.
Examples
In a newspaper, magazine, or on social media <ul style="list-style-type: none">Citing a study to support one's claim on a topic is using logos. For example, a call to reduce classroom size may cite or include study showing the increase in student learning when there are fewer students in a class.
In a drama <ul style="list-style-type: none">In <i>Romeo and Juliet</i>, Juliet says, "A rose by any other name would smell as sweet." Here, Juliet is reasoning that the name of someone doesn't determine who that person is. This is also an example of where logos can strengthen the impact of pathos on the reader or audience.
In an advertisement <ul style="list-style-type: none">Using a logical argument to persuade the audience to purchase a product is often seen with medicine, toothpaste, automobiles, etc.... Consider all the car advertisements citing the result of safety studies.

Examining Logos

Below are some possible questions to consider when examining an *author's use of logos. Teachers are reminded that the format and purpose of the text or image will indicate which questions are appropriate to use. Some of these questions can be used with other rhetorical appeals. *This is not intended to be a prescriptive or exhaustive list.*

Possible Questions to Consider for Examining Logos
Types of Reasoning
<ul style="list-style-type: none">What type or types of reasoning does the *author use?Is the reasoning logical? Does it connect in a way that makes sense?Does the author avoid logical fallacies?
Quality of the Facts
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Does the author use facts and/or statistics to support their point(s)?Does the author cite the sources of these facts and/or statistics?What is the quality of these sources? Are they reputable? For example, citing data from a blog is different than citing data from a study.
Quality of the Argument
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Is the thesis and/or claim clear and specific?Is the thesis and/or claim supported by strong reasons and clear evidence?Is the argument logical?Is the argument presented in a logical order?Is the evidence sufficient?Is the evidence accurate?

Possible Questions to Consider for Examining Logos
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is the evidence relevant?

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For more information about the Types of Reasoning, [click here](#).