

# Lesson Skill: Media Literacy and Persuasive Writing

---

## Strand Media Literacy and Writing

**SOL** 9.2, 9.6  
10.2, 10.6  
11.2, 11.6  
12.2, 12.6

### Materials

- Copies of the attached The Three Rhetorical Appeals worksheet
- A box of small classroom items, such as stapler, small flag, pen, roll of tape
- Three index cards with one rhetorical appeal written on each

### Lesson

#### Warm-up

1. Ask students to think of recent TV commercials that are emotional or touching. You may want to give some examples, such as the “Save the Children” commercials or greeting card commercials. Then, ask them about other ways commercials try to persuade viewers to buy products. Help the students make a connection between commercials and persuasive writing.

#### Direct Instruction

2. Distribute copies of the The Three Rhetorical Appeals worksheet. Explain to students that *rhetoric* is a term for writing or speaking effectively. The three rhetorical appeals were defined in ancient Greece as the three different ways to persuade a reader or listener, and these appeals are just as valid today as they were then. In fact, they are used frequently in advertising, but they can also be used in persuasive essays.
3. Explain each of the three appeals to the students, giving examples of each and asking students to give examples to check their understanding. As they come to understand each appeal, ask the students to create a definition of it in their own words and to share their definition with the class.
4. For each appeal, have students develop a class definition that is clear, correct, and easy to remember. Make sure each definition covers the following points, but do not dictate the definitions; the students will more easily remember definitions that they write than ones given to them.
  - **The Emotional Appeal (*Pathos*):** The appeal based on the emotional response of the audience (e.g., anger, nostalgia, pity, or joy) in order to convince or persuade. The speaker or writer attempts to create an emotional connection of some type with the audience in order to convince them.

- **The Logical Appeal (Logos):** The appeal based on the logical response of the audience in order to convince or persuade. This appeal can include inductive or deductive logic. The appeal establishes a clear and reasonable line of argument in which each claim is given logical support.
- **The Ethical Appeal (Ethos):** The appeal based on establishing the credibility or authority of a writer or speaker on a topic. This can be established intrinsically or extrinsically, as follows:
  - **Intrinsic:** The internal credibility established by writing or speaking correctly, knowledgeably, and confidently about a topic. For example, if someone discussing a legal uses legal jargon correctly and uses language in a sophisticated way, he or she would establish credibility with the listener.
  - **Extrinsic:** The external credibility a speaker or writer brings to an argument. For example, top hairdressers would be credible if they were arguing against the use of a certain hair product because of their years of experience in the field of hair care, but they would not have extrinsic credibility giving medical advice. In this case, a doctor from a top university medical center would have greater extrinsic credibility.

### Practice

5. Ask a student volunteer to come up and select an item from the box of small classroom items. Also, have the student select one of the rhetorical appeal cards from the three placed face down. The student should look at the card and show it to the teacher, but not let the rest of the class see it.
6. Challenge the student to make an oral sales pitch, using the rhetorical appeal chosen, to persuade the class to buy the selected item. For example, he/she might describe how happy a good stapler will make the owner as an example of an emotional appeal.
7. Have the class vote to identify which of the three appeals the student volunteer was using and then analyze the effective strategies and words the volunteer used.
8. Repeat the process with other student volunteers to have the class practice using and recognizing the three rhetorical appeals. If students need an extra challenge, you might wish to have the volunteer draw two cards and attempt to use both rhetorical appeals in the sales pitch.

### Wrap-up

9. Ask students to collect, outside of class, examples of the use of the three rhetorical appeals. Use these examples to facilitate a class discussion of how the three appeals are used in our culture to persuade.

### Strategies for Differentiation

- Visual representation for each of the appeals to reinforce understanding
- Show examples of the commercials
- Vocabulary – Word Wall
- Work in collaborative groups or student pairs on practice activity

- Chart Paper – Brainstorming
- Sentence starters to assist students in identifying the appeals – “I think this is an emotional appeal because....”

## The Three Rhetorical Appeals

### The *Pathos* Appeal (Emotional)

Definition:

---

---

Examples:

---

---

### The *Logos* Appeal (Logical)

Definition:

---

---

Examples:

---

---

### The *Ethos* Appeal (Ethical)

#### **Intrinsic:**

Definition:

---

---

Examples:

---

---

#### **Extrinsic:**

Definition:

---

---

Examples:

---

---