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Malcolm X's Strategies Example

Malcolm X was civil rights activist, born in Omaha Nebraska in 1925. He wrote many essays to inform citizens in the United States of the struggles and difficulties that African Americans face while simply attempting to get an education. He also wanted to persuade African Americans to take action in the civil rights movement. In this essay, I will be exploring Malcolm X's article Learning to Read looking more deeply into techniques and strategies like pathos, ethos, logos, and tone used in writing that helped convey his message.

Malcolm X wanted to stress the importance, especially to African Americans, of reading and writing. He states that In the streets, I had been the most articulate hustler out there- I had commanded attention when I said something. But now, trying to write simple English, I not only wasn't eloquent, I wasn't even functional (Malcolm 107). When Malcolm was only in the eighth grade he became involved in organized crime and could not read or write. When in prison he changed his life for the better. He dedicated his time and energy teaching himself to read and write. He made an important point that it doesn't matter how weak your rhetoric skills are you can always advance them.

Malcolm X uses many rhetoric devices, but one that is very evident is his use of tone. Tone is established when

one puts the language together. The first part of the language is punctuation. Malcolm's uses dashes to help support his point. An example of when he uses dashes is when he says that between Mr. Muhammad's teaching. My correspondence, my visitors usually Ella and Reginald-and my reading books.. (Malcolm 108). This dash emphasizes the words 'reading books' and the importance behind them. Another factor that contributes to the language is his use of quotation marks. For example, when he talks about skin game he puts quotation marks around the phrase because he wants to stress the significance of the tension happening in the United Nations through sarcasm with quotation marks (Malcolm 113). The next factor in language is when Malcolm uses italicized words. He says how is a black man going to get civil rights before first he wins human rights (Malcolm 114). The italicized word immediately catches the reader's eye. In this specific example, he italicize 'human' to show how ridiculous it is that people believe if they give people equality based on skin color it will somehow make up for the loss of their human rights, to be treated with respect. Although the tone in the essay changes multiple times throughout the essay from anger to passive to formal, I believe the overall tone is passion.

In Malcolm X's essay Learning to Read he uses pathos, ethos, and logos to make his argument stronger by persuading the reader. The main point he is trying to make is that formal education is good but not needed because you can become educated through other options. He says that the most important rhetoric skill to advance you in society is reading, writing and persuasive speaking. Malcolm taught himself to read and write in prison by asking for a dictionary, paper and something to write with. Next, he copied down every single word in the entire dictionary. When talking about the process he says I woke up the next morning, thinking about those words-immensely proud to realize that not only had I written so much at one time, but I'd written words that I never knew were in the world. Moreover, with little effort, I also could remember what many of these words meant (Malcolm 108). He uses logos by explaining his advancement to his readers by saying I suppose it was inevitable that as my word-base broaden, I could for the first time pick up a book and read and now begin to understand what the book is saying (Malcolm 108). Another techniques he uses is pathos, by explaining how reading has been very beneficial by saying I knew right there in prison that reading had changed forever the course of my life. As I see it today, the ability to read awoke inside me some long dormant craving to be mentally alive (Malcolm 113). This helps establish a connection between him and his audience emotionally. Another key

part of pathos is using high vocabulary, like Malcolm X does. When he gets to a subject he feels extremely passionate about, he uses words that represent the emotion he feels. Again helping readers connect to the piece. Malcolm proves his credibility by stating that he was contacted by an English journalist from London. The journalist asks him about his experiences and asks about Malcolm's alma mater. He responds that his alma mater was books (Malcolm 113). The significance of the interview between the two, is proving that Malcolm sounds intelligent, so the journalist makes the assumption he went to college. This helps prove his point that even if you aren't a college graduate you can still make a difference in society.

In Malcolm X's essay Learning to Read he persuades his audience to support his beliefs and ideas by the use of rhetorical strategies. His argument is supported through logos, pathos, ethos and tone. At the start of the essay Malcolm X was a drop out and imprisoned, but with motivation and dedication he has changed his life completely. He argued that his studies in prison are more valuable than a college degree. Malcolm X was so angered by the inequality toward African Americans he established an organization. He demonstrates his rhetoric skills that he acquired in his prison studies to become a very well respected and intelligent civil rights activist in the world. Malcolm X uses his rhetoric style in his autobiography to express his thoughts and beliefs about education and inequality, and the style he uses is why this essay is still very popular today.