Persuasion Techniques and Rhetorical Devices in Colonial Advertisement

Advertising is a powerful phenomenon of the modern world, but the techniques and devices used in advertising date back to the ancient Greeks. We examined these techniques and devices in both Patrick Henry's “Speech at the Virginia Convention” and Thomas Paine's “An American Crisis”.

Your task is to use those techniques (Ethos, Pathos and Logos) and devices (Restatement, Repetition, Parallelism and Rhetorical Questions) to create an advertisement that one might have seen in Colonial America. You may use one, two or all three of the persuasive techniques, but you must utilize all of the rhetorical devises.

A review of the persuasion techniques and rhetorical devices...

**Ethos (Ethical):** Relies on building credibility. Might have a celebrity endorsement, some sort of seal-of-approval, or a claim to superior quality.
- Michael Jordan endorses Hanes Undershirts. Why is he more qualified than some random dude off the street? No reason other than he's already famous.
- Several years ago, McDonald's revamped their chicken nuggets to contain all white meat. This became their selling point – meant to make the consumer feel that the new and improved nuggets are healthier than ever, and therefore of a better quality. It made me wonder what they were made of before.

**Pathos (Emotional):** Conjures up strong emotions in its audience: excitement, a promise of appealing to the opposite sex, patriotism, or even anger. Often, **loaded words** are used for added emotional impact.
- Axe products seem to promise that if you wear them, women will put themselves in harm's way to be near you. Is it true? Doesn't matter...sex sells!
- Car commercials show long, sweeping shots of cars driving very fast over deserted country roads – the imagery is meant to evoke a feeling of uninhibited freedom

**Logos (Logical):** Explains what the product is, how it works, and why you should buy it.
- “HeadOn: apply directly to the forehead.” It states what it is and what you do with it. Logos at its simplest.
- Informercials and print ads use Logos quite often – most advertising is short and to the point, and other than the HeadOn commercials, product developers need a bit more time to explain what they're selling.

**Repetition:** repeating the same idea with the same words (happens over a very small amount of text, such as a sentence or two)
- Let us fight! I repeat it, sir, let us fight! (Let us fight is repeated in rapid succession)

**Restatement:** repeating the same idea with different words (again, happens over a very small amount of text, such as a sentence or two)
- The fight does not go to the strong alone, it goes to the vigilant, the brave, the active (Vigilant, brave and active have the same basic denotation, which convey the same idea of “if we are willing and ready to fight, we’ll win” is restated in three different ways.)

**Parallelism:** matching grammatical structures. Remember, this addressed how the text is written, rather than what it has to say.
- Give me liberty or give me death! (“Give me liberty” has the same grammatical structure as “Give me death”)

*Often times, parallelism and restatement can be used together to achieve stronger results...*
those verbs have the same rough denotation “to ask in desperation or to beg” but he restates them three different ways, thus, restatement; also, the repeated use of “we have...” makes it a matching grammatical structure: parallelism.

**Rhetorical Questions:** Questions asked for effect, not for answers

- Are fleets and armies necessary to a work of love and reconciliation? (Henry wasn't opening the floor to questions – it was asked for effect, and he moved on without listening to anyone's responses. Rude.)

For this assignment, channel everything you've learned so far about pre-Revolutionary and Revolutionary America. What sort of life did they live? What struggles did they have? What were their living conditions, and what were their everyday objects? Who were their celebrities?

The advertisement can meant for the radio (a block of text meant to be read) or an advertisement meant for a print medium, like a magazine or a newspaper. However – if you choose print advertisement, think. Would you bother looking at an ad with only a small block of text? Make it pretty, colorful and eye-catching.

Think about the advertising you are familiar with, and start there. Just make sure you are advertising a product that a Colonial American would have needed or used. NOT an iPod.

For your convenience, there is a checklist to guide you on your way.

Product: __________________________________________________________________________

You must use **AT LEAST ONE** of the methods of persuasion, and explain how it is being used.

- Ethos
- Pathos
- Logos

You must use **ALL** of the rhetorical devices, and explain how they are used.

- Repetition
- Restatement
- Parallelism
- Rhetorical Questions

You may work with **ONE OTHER PERSON**, or individually. Your goal is to be mostly finished by the end of the class; I will provide 10 minutes of class time on Monday to work, but that won't be enough time if you did nothing all class period. The assignment is worth 50 points.

**Formatting:** Ad on front, explanations of techniques and devices on back.

**EXTRA CREDIT:**
You will receive extra credit for using figurative language such as metaphor, simile, imagery, alliteration and consonance. Don't know what those are? Look them up in your binder!