Persuasive Prose

ENG2602

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Persuasive Prose

What to be careful of

- Straying from the source – Only use the given source do not add extra information you may know about the person/situation. (If the source is from a story you know – still stick to the extract given.

- Conflating genre specific jargon
  - lead and headlines = are for news reports/articles
  - catch phrases and slogans = advertisements
  - titles = speeches

- Vague responses - explain the significance of any particular feature that you find in the text – do not make observations without discussing their function in the text.

How to treat the scaffolding questions

- Group first three questions into the introduction
- Use the body to discuss the rhetorical devices for persuasiveness

Look out for

Pronoun usage

Use of comparative degrees

Figures of speech

Emotive language

Diction

Repetition

The key in the discussion of these is to:

- explain the significance of any particular feature that you find in the text – do not make observations without discussing their function in the text.

- relate the discussion of this device back to your purpose.

Speeches and articles

- tend to appeal to:
    - Logic: The reader is positioned to think it is only reasonable (logical) to react in a certain manner (usually one suggested by the speaker or writer)
    - Emotions: Speeches appeal to emotions overtly, while articles do it subtly.
    - Credibility: This can be through the inclusion of statistics or historical facts. (A number of opinions are presented as facts thus positioning the reader to believe them as the absolute truth.)
    - ❖ Consider diction (word choice) when arguing the above.

Discussing persuasiveness

- In your discussion do not keep writing that the text persuades and leave it at that; be specific on what the text persuades the audience to do, or think / feel.

- The different genres have different ways in which the persuasive techniques can be applied – do not keep saying that the text or device used attracts.

- Below are some key aspects that pertain to the advertisements. (This does not mean that they are not applicable in others – they are just common under the genre they are being discussed.)

Advertisements

Try to vary your discussion by looking at techniques that persuade according to the AIDA principles.

- Attract

- Interest

- Desire

- Action

This means that in your discussion, you will differentiate between diction, figures of speech, style or other techniques according to how they apply to the AIDA principles. (see examples below)

Attract

- A big/bold/all caps/coloured font will attract (draw attention) so that the reader becomes aware of what is being advertised.

- The name of the product and brand will usually be in a unique font – this also helps to attract the reader but further keeps the name in the reader's memory.

- ❖ If the name of the product keeps being repeated – you cannot limit it to attraction, but you must extend the discussion to recall (keep it in the reader's memory).

Interest

- Find claims about the product that hold the reader's interest.

- Discuss how by holding the reader's interest, these claims position the reader.

Desire

- Find emotive language that creates a desire for the product.

- Advertisements tend to appeal to people's weaknesses.

- Think along the seven deadly sins – but do not limit your thinking to this.

The Seven Deadly Sins

- Pride is excessive belief in one's own abilities, that interferes with the individual's recognition of the grace of God. It has been called the sin from which all others arise. Pride is also known as Vanity. The reader is positioned to feel exclusive/special/prettier/trendy etc.

- Envy is the desire for others' traits, status, abilities, or situation. The mention of celebrities may create a desire for the product because of envy. Statements like "limited stock available" positions the reader to want the product before others get to it which does somehow relates to envy.

- Gluttony is an inordinate desire to consume more than that which one requires. Think of statements like "Eat as much as you like"/ "Bottomless soda"

- Lust is an inordinate craving for the pleasures of the body. Look for statements with sex appeal.

- Anger is manifested in the individual who spurns love and opts instead for fury. It is also known as Wrath. This is hardly appealed to in advertising, unless it is in relation to services that will help one deal with anger issues, e.g. if one manages anger through drugs or alcohol, the rehabilitation service could be offered (however, it would not evoke anger).

- Greed is the desire for material wealth or gain, ignoring the realm of the spiritual. It is also called Avarice or Covetousness. Look out for text that makes readers feel as if they will be saving money (although it is not always avarice- there is a connection). "Buy one get one free"/ "bargain"

- Sloth is the avoidance of physical or spiritual work. The reader is positioned to feel that by using the product s/he will be working less. (Think of ads where words like "easy"/ "effortless" are used. Holiday packages tend to use this strategy, enticing the reader to: "relax"/ "get away" (usually from work)

Adapted from http://www.deadlysins.com/

Useful Link

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2saVIGp9ZWM

- The link above has information that you can use to argue reader positioning – see the slide titled Manipulation.

Action

- The ultimate intention of any advertisement is to prompt you to act and buy the product. You cannot, however, keep repeating this in your discussion. You need to look at how you are being prompted.

- Usually advertisers will use the imperative mood to subtly command you to act.

- Look out for words like: call/visit/buy/order/

- Other phrases prompt you to act because you do not want to miss out, e.g. "while stocks last"/ "now"

Thank you

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