

Luigi Pegoraro

English 11000

Dr. Wiggins

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Rhetorical Analysis Essay

Cover Letter

The use of rhetorical strategies is an important and essential part of writing. This became clear to me after reading “Mother Tongue” by Amy Tan, “Theme for English B” by Langston Hughs, and June Jordans personal essay. Out of these three pieces of literature, June Jordans essay was the one that stood out most. I was not only inspired by her use of rhetorical strategies but also by her passion towards her work as an educator. In this essay I want to analyze the rhetorical strategies used by June in order to send her message out to the audience while also finding the deeper meaning behind what using these different rhetorical strategies means to June, as the writer.

The rhetorical strategies I will examine are Pathos, Logos, and Ethos. My introductory paragraph gives a brief introduction to June Jordan and ties who she was into what she wrote. My body paragraphs present text examples and detailed reasoning into the different uses of rhetorical strategies by June Jordan in her writing. The conclusion paragraph summarizes what the reader/audience is left with after experiencing the different rhetorical strategies.

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Rhetorical Analysis of

“Nobody Mean More to Me Than You And the Future Life of Willie Jordan”

My Intended Audience: My teacher and class

June Jordan a Jamaican American poet, playwright and essayist. Known for her passion towards the politics of human rights. June Jordan’s personal essay, “Nobody Mean More to Me Than You And the Future Life of Willie Jordan,” is an example of her commitment to the cause and commitment to those around her. Originally published in *On Call: Political Essays* by June Jordan (Boston: South End Press, 1985) and reprinted by *Harvard Educational Review* August 1988. With the civil rights act of 1964 lawfully ending the discrimination of racial groups, the effects of such injustices were still very real. Despite the laws it is hard to change the minds of people and during the life of June Jordan there was still the presence of racial injustice that affected people in a multitude of ways. This was the purpose of her passion, one way that people were affected was in the way they spoke or used the English language. In June’s personal essay she starts her story teaching a new course, “In Search of the Invisible Black Woman” June is teaching her students to use their true voices in the form of “Black English” despite what the world

may say about their use of language. Considering June includes the rules to Black English in her personal essay along with the use of the other two rhetorical strategies Pathos and Ethos we can see June wants to teach the audience as if they were the students in her class, thus keeping this personal essay focused on the young impressionable audience of those who are willing carry her passion for justice into the future.

In the personal essay “Nobody Mean More to Me Than You And the Future Life of Willie Jordan,” June Jordan uses multiple rhetorical strategies. The first rhetorical strategy I will cover is her use of logos. June uses the rhetorical strategy logos to convey logically supported ideas onto her audience. For example, in the essay it states, “there are five countries, or 333,746,000 people, for whom this thing called “English” serves as a native tongue. Approximately 10 percent of these native speakers of “English” are Afro-American citizens of the U.S.A. I cite these numbers and varieties of human beings dependent on "English" in order, quickly, to suggest how strange and how tenuous is any concept of "Standard English." Obviously, numerous forms of English now operate inside a natural, an uncontrollable, continuum of development. I would suppose "the standard" for English in Malaysia is not the same as "the standard" in Zimbabwe. I know that standard forms of English for Black people in this country do not copy that of Whites. And, in fact, the structural differences between these two kinds of English have intensified, becoming more Black, or less White, despite the expected homogenizing effects of television and other mass media.”(June, page 2) with this paragraph, the reader is logically comprehending what June is saying. By using specific numbers and percentages June engages the reader's brain into the conversation of her topic. She also

includes other supporting facts in this paragraph that out of all these countries the use of English varies and this ultimately helps the reader logically connect the dots between June's personal idea and the reader's world. This kind of attention to the audience and reader in itself can give June credibility in the eyes of a detailed reader.

Leading to our next rhetorical strategy "Ethos". June uses ethos to better meet the needs of her reader. Ethos gives the reader confidence in what June is saying. Without June's credibility readers would be hesitant to listen to her statements. This strategy can be seen in the text stating, " This story begins two years ago. I was teaching a new course, "In search of the Invisible Black Women," and my rather large class seemed evenly divided among young Black women and men."(June, page 2) June is showing her credibility to the reader by using her position as a professor in college. June describes her class as "rather large" further pushing her popularity to the reader/audience. Lastly; June's description of her class as " young Black women and men." Breaking this down the use of the word "young" still allows the target audience of young individuals to relate to this statement but there is a disconnect when her class is only "Black women and men" rather than women and men. Let us say this is the first time the audience has ever heard anything about the use of the English language and its connection to race and societal norms. To the inexperienced reader This could raise questions as to why they are all African American students. It may be unlikely that people are this ignorant to such important ideas but in the time of June due to the fairly recent implementation of the civil rights act there were many instances where people had never seen or even thought about

the effects of language and race. This in total can bring out an emotional reaction from the reader leading to our next rhetorical strategy.

Pathos, June's personal essay to many, can be a political topic just as much an emotional one. With the racial injustice of the time instances of dehumanizing events was unfortunately something that many people of color shared. One of the many people being June's student Willie Jordan. The story of Willie Jordan is an emotional one. Willies loses his brother to a police killing, his brother was unarmed and the police failed to give a proper investigation of the murder. In June Jordan's text she states "I asked Willie Jordan to write an essay pulling together everything important to him for that semester. He was still deeply beside himself with frustration and amazement and loss. This is what he wrote, un-edited, and in its entirety:"(June, page 12) June then includes Willie's essay into her text. Including such an emotional story into the text gives the reader something to emotionally connect too. June includes this to further deepen the meaning of her message to the reader/audience. There are many different ways to reach a reader but emotion can really bring things closed circle and June uses this rhetorical strategy to close her personal essay.

After the reader is guided through the different levels of rhetorical strategies. They are left with an empathy towards the work derived from the rhetorical strategy of pathos, secondly they have learned to trust June through her use of the rhetorical strategy ethos, and thirdly the reader was able to understand and make sense of what June is saying with the help of the rhetorical strategy logos. In total the young and impressionable audience is left inspired by June, inspired to find the truth and push June's dream into the future.

Works Cited

Jordan, June "Nobody Mean More to Me Than You And the Future Life of Willie Jordan" On Call: Political Essays by June Jordan (Boston: South End Press, 1985)