

# 'america skips school essay



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

We use rhetoric every day without even realizing it. Correctly using rhetoric on a specific group of people can drastically increase an arguments' strength. Benjamin R. Barber wrote an article conveying his research on the failing school systems in the U. S titled America Skips School published in Harper's Magazine. Barber uses rhetorical elements like ethos, pathos, and logos to build his argument. He establishes his credibility and then emotionally connects with his audience and explains who and what is to blame for the lack of quality education in America.

Once he establishes a solid connection using these rhetorical techniques he effectively inspires the audience to change their ways and raise concern for the education system and construe the weaknesses at hand. Barber's use of ethos is almost unintentional in the extrinsic sense. The sole fact that his article was published in Harper's Magazine builds him enough credibility for people to be willing to read it. It is hard to say much else about his extrinsic ethos besides that he is an accomplished writer and a well-known political scientist. The fact that Barber was allowed to publish his article in this magazine frames his credibility.

The publisher here does most of the work when it comes down to the extrinsic ethos since the magazine is one for subscribers and not just something that'd randomly get picked up by just anyone. Barber may seem to be slacking on this end of the rhetoric but there isn't much else someone could do in this situation. Barber's ethos thus far may not be enough to cut it for some skeptics. However, his intrinsic ethos works marvelously to his advantage. Barber credits himself by his claims from the studies he had

conducted and research he has done. " My sample of forty-seven-year-olds scored very well on the test.

Not surprisingly, so did their seventeen-year-old children... The results of the test reveal again the deep hypocrisy that runs through our lamentations about education" (Barber 460). This displays his intrinsic ethos in that he becomes more credible because he himself has spent the time to research the subject opposed to just going with what he has read. This demonstrates his dedication to the validity of his facts. Another reason he appears trustworthy is that he quotes credible sources in his article like the Department of Education Statistics and the DOE.

Barber's research and studies make him a much more reliable source of information and truly add to his compelling argument. Barber makes use of intrinsic ethos in ways other than his research and studies. His style of writing in this particular article adequately connects with his intended audience. The way he relates to them, as being part of the problem himself. Where he constantly repeats the term " we..." when talking about the American people being responsible for the failing school system. He doesn't point the finger while holding the gun; he reveals that he too, like all of his readers, are part of the problem.

Putting his self to blame makes the reader more comfortable and to read; contra scolding someone and putting them down. Barber also utilizes intelligent writing by making his point clear and concise and avoids beating around the bush. But he also draws on vivid language to remind readers of his level of education in order to amplify his trustworthiness. Barber's appeal

and style of language assists him in affectively sharing his opinion. Barber utilizes other techniques to persuade his audience in agreeing with his personal views.

One of the various tactics he uses is inductive reasoning by means of logos. In the beginning of his article Barber claims "...more than 3, 000 youngsters will drop out today and every day for the rest of the school year, until about 600, 000 are lost by June..." (Barber 457). This quote illustrates how American children have less desire to learn and are fundamentally decreasing the knowledge of the nation as a whole. The audience understands that these astonishing facts reveal that, at this rate, the average American child is destined for poverty and will attain no successful future.

This allows the audience to " take it all in" and get a true understanding of the education system. Barber goes on to suggest that the government regulates its spending barely keeping education in mind. He states "... their government spending up to \$35, 000 a year to keep a young black behind bars but a fraction of that to keep him in school, they will write off school" (Barber 461). This captivates the audience because they determine that the government that is supposedly ran by the people, is doing everything but help its people.

This articular portion helps appeal considerably to the liberal readers because of their strong attitudes on more government spending for public works, such as schools. It may also intrigue those who are strongly patriotic. This may elude them to blame themselves for allowing the government to

regulate spending in this way when we, the people, should be deciding as a country; what is important to spend government funding on. They may argue that the only reason that there are so many criminals in the first place is because of dropouts and lowlifes who lacked an education.

This would lead the activists to band together in order to demand the government to attack the problem at its source and raise educational funding. Barber continues to demonstrate logos through use of deduction. He mentions our conception of values in society to help prove his point. He explains, " If they see a man with a rubber arm and an empty head who can throw a ball at 95 miles per hour pulling down millions of dollars a year while a dedicated primary school teacher is getting crumbs, they will avoid careers in teaching even if they can't make the major leagues" (Barber 461).

To any reasonable reader, this concept is absolutely undeniable; kids put more value into baseball players and other entertainers than any teacher. And so, growing up, kids try to aspire to be one of the great athletes they watch on television and begin to subconsciously believe that if teaching were important, then it would be on television too. Barbers use of this thought is perhaps his most well-played line in the whole article. Its point is so clear that all readers, regardless of their education level or political view, could comprehend it.

From this line one can deduce that, starting at a young age; children will surely be money-driven in life and will discredit any job that seems " not worth it"; including teaching. Unfortunately, this will cause students to take their education in a less serious matter altogether. Barber makes it

unavoidable for his readers to recognize this using deductive reasoning through rhetoric. Perhaps Barber's most affective rhetorical appeal, pathos, will help comprehend the significance of rhetoric in persuasive writing.

Barber influences his audience to empathize with his feeling towards failing education by manipulating their emotions. One of the emotions he deals with is guilt. He emphasizes, "Today I am increasingly persuaded that the reason for the country's inaction is that Americans do not really care about education-the country has grown comfortable with the game of 'Let's pretend we care'" (Barber 458). He proposes that the nation as a whole is to blame for the failure of our schooling system due to lack of personal responsibility and interest.

He enlightens his readers with realization when they come to admit that they... really don't care like they claim to. He adds "so that at the same moment as we are transferring our responsibilities to the shoulders of the next generation, we are blaming them for our own generation's most conspicuous failures" (Barber 458). This is almost like a slap on the wrist to the readers. Barber makes the audience feel ashamed and guilty for the poor educational system that has engulfed today's children.

These comments conjure guilt in the audience but could also conjure sympathy to certain individuals who care about the children more so than the education. These statements evoke ample emotion on their own, but Barber doesn't stop there. Barber feels it necessary to promote other emotions along with guilt and sympathy. One of the more prominent emotions he appeals to is fear. If done correctly, fear can really change

someone's opinion on a certain matter. Barber talks about the scary truth of what goes on at public schools throughout the United States.

He mentions, " the poorer ones seem almost beyond help: children with venereal disease or AIDS... gangs in the schoolyard, drugs in the classroom... playground firefights featuring Uzis and Glocks" (Barber 458). Many people couldn't even fathom such activities going on. But to some of the inner city parents it was all a reality. Barber elaborates, " The education crisis is kind of like violence on television: the worse it gets the more inert we become, and more of it we require to rekindle our attention" (Barber 458).

Barber illuminates realization to many of his readers with these statements to create fear amidst the parents who believe that their child is getting a " good" education. Barber has the audience wonder what would happen if they didn't do anything about their child's education. This mental state of fear troubles the minds of parents and has them biting their nails. Barber's use of pathos is phenomenal, and is especially affective against the readers who are parents. At this point Barber has the audience in a state of disappointment and regret. The audience feels helpless and at this point has no idea what to do.

Fortunately, Barber knows exactly what he's working with and flawlessly uses rhetoric once again. This time he uses a different approach and brings about a positive emotion, hope, out of his readers. Barber preaches, " America, however, has historically been able to accomplish what it sets its mind to" (Barber 466). It's safe to say that every American patriot that exists would be motivated by such an inspiring quote. Barber knowingly does this

to get his readers to make a stand and do more than just read his article and agree with his views.

He continues, “ If we are (serious), we can begin by honoring that old folk homily and put our money where for much too long our common American mouth has been. Our kids, for once, might even be grateful” (Barber 467). This portrays a vision of prosperity and hope for a better future. The audience understands that it is not too late for them to make an impact and change what is currently destined to be. Barber is doubtlessly a mastermind of his trade and truly inspires ambition into the hearts of his readers using his knowledge of rhetorical techniques. Benjamin R.

Barber’s article is an astounding representation of persuasive writing. His use of rhetoric not only pulls the reader in and gets them interested, but it also engages and influences the audience to prompt possible solutions in their own daily lives. At first glance, the readers were probably skeptical and believed that there weren’t a cause of them problem. But with Barbers logical claims, one finds that they truly are more involved than they think. Barber creates eye-opening messages to his readers. Those who originally were looking for a good read are now looking to change the world as they know it.

The fact that Barber established such an argument using his rhetorical expertise is incredible. Barber is so talented in rhetoric and the art of persuasion; to a point where he possesses the ability to convince someone that he’s right, even if he’s wrong and he knows it. Audience Analysis Barber understands that the way he presents his argument will work differently to



different audiences. The fact that this article was published in Harper's Magazine shows that his intended audience consists mostly of liberal adults, probably in or around their thirties.

These people are likely to have a family of their own or perhaps are considering starting one. Chances are they have children of their own in schools across the United States. These people would be drawn to this article in specific opposed to the magazine itself simply because of their worry for their childrens future. It's also quite possible that some of these people are teachers themselves or other important figures in the educational system. This article would attract them because of their interest in knowing more about what happens in the other school districts around the U. S, because some of the things in this article may not be evident in all schools.

The people who would be reading this sort of article are assumed to have an advanced vocabulary due to the adequate word choice in the article. Thus, we can infer that they at least have a high school education, presumably college or higher. The article is featured in a well-known liberal magazine, thus, we can infer that the readers are those who have a strong sense of morals and ethics as well as having a strong passion of patriotism.

More applicably, those who believe in more funding for schools and public works. It is likely that these readers would be sympathetic to such a cause like a failing school system even if they themselves have no children of their own. -honestly, if I write anything else it would just be the same stuff repeated, or I could make it "wordy" as you like to call it. I'm not trying to

bullshit you; this line is to take up space and get it to be the full page  
woohoo.