

Introduction  
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## **Introduction**

The task of writing is tough but the most demanding aspect of writing is connecting with the reader.

Convincing or persuading the reader to believe what the author has written is always tough and this is due to the fact that different readers have different opinions and perspectives about life. For many centuries now, the world has seen many great writers who were or are able to hold the reader spellbound persuasive writing. The ability of a writer to use moral ideas and attitudes that belong to a particular society to convince his/her reader is described as ethos. Ethos is generally used by authors to capture the attention of readers by writing reputable or credible essays, poems or articles. This essay will consider specifically the use of ethos, or display of personal character in the rhetorical strategies and practices of Sidney, Blake and Dubois. William Blake was described as an author that was radically

innovative and politically engaged while, Sir Philip Sidney was described as an author who wrote fully within the classical tradition.

W. E. B Du Bois on the other hand exemplified the humanistic liberal arts education and advocated for all who were able to engage in intellectual pursuits. The essay will show how these three writers also employed ethos and other forms of persuasion like; logos and pathos in their writings.

However, persuasive forms like logos and pathos will be brought in only as far as they are relevant to clarifying how ethos is used by Sidney, Du Bois and Blake.

## **An Apology for Poetry**

“ An apology for poetry” was written by Sir Philip Sidney in 1579 but it was published after Sidney’s death in 1595. Sidney was renowned for his defense of poetry and he did this by combining philosophy and history.

He was also known to be a critic of bad poetry. In all his works, Sir Philip Sidney used ethos to gain a reputation for himself. “ An apology for poetry” analyses the reason for the existence of poetry, its essence and beauty are vividly explained. Sidney describes a poet as a creator then he highlights the beauty of poetry in his usual classical traditional manner. (Sidney, 211) The ability to capture the reader’s attention and earn a reputation due to an author character can be termed or described as ethos. In the book “ An apology for poetry” Sidney appeals to the reader’s conscience by critically analyzing the good and ugly sides of poetry. (Sidney, 266) Throughout the course of the work, Sidney communicates directly to the reader by explicitly explaining how poetry is an art and skill. He explains to the reader so that

he/she can understand that, the poet is an original creator and is therefore not tied to any subjection.

(Sidney, 514) Sir Sidney also employs other modes of persuasion like pathos and logos which enable him win the reader's confidence and trust. The reader is at this point left with no choice but to fully comprehend Sidney point of view as the correct perspective about poetry. Usually, the public tend to respect and believe people whom have earned themselves an impressive reputation. (Sidney, 465) This is no different from Sir Sidney as his massive readers totally support his views about poetry. In his book "an apology for poetry," Sidney explains that a poets mind usually has concepts that are not limited to nature. (Sidney, 615) Literally, this means that, poetry creates or is capable of creating things better than they appear naturally.

This is an example of the author persuading the reader by the use of logic reasoning and this can be described as logos. All through the book, Sir Sidney is able to capture the reader's attention with different modes of persuasion which he employs.

## **The Marriage of Heaven and Hell**

William Blake is an English poet, play writer, essayist and an author who was able to build a reputation for himself through his outstanding works. Blake's works or books always seem to have some religious convictions and his book "the marriage of heaven and hell" is no different. But the most unique character of Blake is his ability to persuade or convince his readers through different persuasion modes to understand and believe in his opinion about righteousness or religion.

(Blake, 353) "The marriage of heaven and hell" is a book about Blake's view of hell. Contrary to the general perspective of hell as a place of punishment, Blake portrays hell as rather a source of energy and he explains this point using different modes of persuasion. (Blake, 614) The book is widely believed to be his most influential work and he shows great character here by describing his visit to hell. While describing his visit to hell, Blake is able to persuade the reader by appealing to the reader's emotion and urging such a reader to break free from religious oppression. (Blake, 815) Due to Blake's convincing character which impresses a reader because of his unique view of hell, he is able to convince the reader by use of ethos. His ability to show strong moral character makes him endearing to the reader.

It is very unusual for a reader to write about hell in such positive light and people tend to appreciate the new twist. The fact that he used himself as the visitor to hell makes William Blake absolutely outstanding and the manner which he describes his visit to hell is also impressive. It is worthy of note that, very few authors will have the courage to write about or even use themselves as the character that visited hell. People tend to shy away from things which they believe to be bad and hell has always been termed as a bad place for bad people. So, Blake willingness to be the character that visited hell earns him the respect of readers and they tend to appreciate his view. The book also, persuades the reader to break free from the bonds of oppression in any form be it political, or religious.

(Blake, 453)

## **The souls of Black Folk**

“The souls of black folk” is written by William Edward Burghardt Du Bois. The book addresses the issue of racism in the twentieth century. Racism has been a global issue for many centuries but without using the right modes of persuasion to explain its magnitude, a reader will not fully comprehend the extent which racism has reached. (Du Bois, 622) In Du Bois’ book “the souls of black folk,” he is able to explain and describe vividly how it felt like to be an African American 40 years after the civil war in the United States of America. (Du Bois, 414) Being African American or coming from any other race is a natural thing which no human being has control over but other people tend to think differently.

Oppressing and harassing somebody who has little or no control over his/her race is highly inhuman and totally unnecessary. Unfortunately, skin color was a serious issue in America after its civil war and the then American government showed laxity towards this issue. (Du Bois, 233) By combining his personal experience with poetry, history and sociological data, Du Bois is able to convince the reader by appealing to the reader’s emotions, his/her sense of reasoning and Du Bois uses his personal character to make the reader understand the problem of racism. (Du Bois, 299) By narrating his personal experience, particularly the loss of his first son, Du Bois convinces the reader through the use of ethos and by describing the ordeals or dilemmas of African Americans, he persuades the reader by simultaneously appealing to his/her sense of reasoning and emotions.

## Conclusion

Sir Philip Sidney, William Blake and W. E. B Du Bois are all great writers and all three writers have respectively used ethos at one point or the other to express their views to readers. For Sidney, he defends poetry and gives the highlights of how a poet is supposed to think and act.

(Sidney, 415) While for William Blake, it is about convincing the reader that hell is rather energetic instead of the traditional believe that it is a place of punishment. (Blake, 330) Lastly, Du Bois is able to show his readers the pain and sorrow that Africa Americans encountered in the 20th century 40 years after the US civil war. (Du Bois, 266) Using ethos and other modes of persuasion like pathos and logos, these three authors were able to establish their points effectively. Writing could be a tasking and demanding work particularly the aspect of convincing or persuading readers to understand the author's point of view.

To enable a writer effectively capture the attention of readers and to earn a reputation, it is advisable for a writer to employ any mode of persuasion to bridge the gap between the author's work and the reader.

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