

Who is more  
persuasive in the  
letter correspondence  
between seaver and  
herbert? e...



In 1970, Grove Press used the slogan “ it’s the real thing” in an advertisement for Diary of a Harlem Schoolteacher by Jim Haskins. The Coca-Cola Company had already been using this slogan and similar slogans for approximately 28 years, and as a result a Coca-Cola Company executive, Mr. Ira C. Herbert and Mr. Richard Seaver, who was a representative of Grove Press, have a two letter correspondence in which the use of this slogan is discussed. Although both letters contain similarities in regards to word choice and the use of details and examples, the overall tone and persuasiveness of each letter varies greatly.

In the letter from Ira C. Herbert to Richard Seaver, Herbert uses specific words and examples to convey his argument of why Grove Press should discontinue their use of the slogan “ It’s the Real Thing”. The first thing Herbert does is use certain words to undermine the idea of both companies using the same slogan. Herbert speaks of how if both companies were to use the same saying for their advertising, it would cause “ confusion” for the public, it would “ dilute the distinctiveness” of the slogan, and “ diminish its effectiveness”. Herbert uses the words “ confusion”, “ dilute” and “ diminish” in attempt to convince Mr. Seaver that it would be problematic for both companies to use the same slogan. Mr. Herbert then continues to use some examples of why Coca-Cola deserves to be the sole user of this particular slogan. He explains how the slogan was used in advertisements “ for Coca-Cola over twenty-seven years ago” and how they have used the slogan throughout the years. Basically he is saying that Coca-Cola had the slogan first so Grove Press needs to do as they ask. His use of examples and the

fact that he obviously expects Grove Press to comply to his request gives his letter a supercilious and arrogant tone.

In response to Ira Herbert's letter, Mr. Seaver writes a letter in which he parodies Mr. Herbert's writing style. First he mimics Herbert's word choice. Seaver uses many of the same words as Herbert but uses them as he explains a completely sarcastic and opposing view. He says that he does not believe that use of the slogan to advertise *Diary of a Harlem Schoolteacher* will "dilute the distinctiveness" of the slogan but will instead make people who read the ad may "go out and buy a Coke." Then Seaver proceeds use an example of a problem that his company had to parody Herbert's example. Seaver explains that his company published the book *Games People Play* which became "one of the biggest nonfiction best-sellers of all time" and how many different authors used similar titles for their books. He expresses how this was a "far more direct and deadly threat to both the author" and themselves than was their use of "It's the real Thing." Seaver then continues to speak of the First Amendment which allows one to infer that even though there were imitations of the title of *Games People Play*, Grove Press did nothing. Seaver's parody of Herbert's letter gives off a sarcastic tone.

The difference in tone is what causes the difference in persuasive value of each letter. The condescending tone of Herbert's letter causes a feeling of resentment and defiance in Mr. Seaver which ultimately destroys any persuasive value that the letter had in the first place. Mr. Seaver's letter contained a sarcastic tone and the concrete support of the First Amendment.

Mr. Seaver's letter basically says that he and Grove Press will do what they  
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want and Coca-Cola should leave them alone. Even though the two letters are similar in some regards, Mr. Seaver's letter is ultimately more persuasive.

## Bibliography

The letters from Mr. Seaver and Mr. Herbert