

A rhetorical analysis  
of david foster  
wallace's "this is  
water" essay sample



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## **A Rhetorical Analysis of David Foster Wallace’s “ This Is Water” Essay Sample**

David Foster Wallace was born in Ithaca, New York on February 12, 1962, his parents, both teachers; his father, a professor at the University of Illinois and mother; a professor at Parkland College. Wallace’s speech “ This is Water” targets three audiences; parents, grad students, and faculty. Parents think that the speech applies to them and their everyday life, grad students think deeper about themselves and their choices while faculty thinks the speech is beneficial for the students transitioning from their college journey to the real world. Each audience has a goal; for students it is working towards graduation, parents is to see their children graduate, and faculty is to change the way they teach. Wallace employs possible motive, consequences, and contradictions. Many of the things he talks about such as our “ default setting” of self-service and how any real education should give us freedom to make choices other than those based on this default setting.

“ The really important kind of freedom involves attention and awareness and discipline, and being able truly to care about other people and to sacrifice for them over and over in myriad petty, unsexy ways every day.” He talks about right thinking and a lot of what he says about being well-adjusted in the society is parallel to external considering. Wallace’s speech also suggests that the overall purpose of higher education is to be able to consciously choose how to see others and act appropriately in everyday life. Possible motive for a student to read the speech is to enlighten them. Parents’ possible motive could be to relate to their children as well as other young

people. Faculty would possibly read the speech to get in touch with the students.

Consequence for students would be losing focus and failing. Parents' consequence would be losing their children from lack of bonding with them. Faculty's consequence would be seeing all their hard work creating lesson plans go to waste due to the students failing or dropping out. A contradiction of students would know what they want for themselves but knowing how to get it. Parents want their children to receive the best education possible but aren't willing to pay for it. Faculty expects excellence but they let students slide by on assignments.