

Liking is for cowards.  
go for what hurts  
essay



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We live in a world where the internet and social media plays a big role. There are constantly becoming less and less physical contact, and fewer face-to-face relations. This is demonstrated by the fact that we keep in touch with each other over Facebook, shopping takes place over the internet, we keep up with our economy with online banking and meet friends and lovers over online dating sites. In late modern society, we are always available. But are we really missing out on a lot of important stuff, and is this necessarily a bad thing?

This is also the theme in Jonathan Franzen's essay, "Liking is for Cowards. Go for What Hurts" from 2011. The focus in this essay will be on how Jonathan Franzen uses a lot of different rhetorical methods to engage and convince the young readers with his message. This essay will also discuss if Jonathan Franzen managed to convince the young readers and if the increased use of social media really has such bad consequences? Jonathan Franzen uses a lot of different methods to convince and engage the young readers. Even before you have read the essay you see the title "Liking Is for Cowards.

"Go for What Hurts", this title will engage the young readers because they can recognize the word "liking" from Facebook. This will catch the young reader right away, because Facebook is something almost all young people know and use. In general this subject is just super relevant to almost all young people. The 51-year old author wants to put the young people's daily internet habits into perspective. He focuses on the bad consequences of what they are doing online. But before he starts criticizing and gets to his actual message, he starts with a personal story.

This story is about him and his phone's relationship, ex: "(...) in which my old Blackberry felt sad about the waning of my love for it – our relationship was entirely on-sided?" (p. 8, l. 25-27) – He uses a lot of time comparing his relationship to his old phone, with a romantic relationship to a real human being; he personifications his phone by giving it real human feelings, he uses familiar expressions like "trust issues", "accountability issues" and having "outgrown the relationship". Using a personal story strengthens his ethos, and makes him more trustworthy, which is important from the start.

This story and comparison is also very fun and using humor, irony and jokes about relationships is something the young readers can recognize and will engage them. Starting with a personal story, instead of criticizing from the start is also a good device, if he wants the young readers to read his essay. Jonathan Franzen is aware of the fact that young people is tired of hearing "older" people criticize their media habits, and knows that he will "scare" some readers away by doing that right away, ex: "Very probably, you're sick to death of hearing social media disrespected by cranky 51-year-olds" (p. 10, l. 140-142).

This will again strengthen his ethos because the reader will get more trust to him. By this he is saying in an indirect way that he "understand why the young generation find it annoying". He is talking to the young readers on eye level, and makes sure not to seem too lofty. He then chooses to compare the "real" world with the "technology world". He explains how he thinks that modern media, display love in a wrong way for an example through TV commercials.

Here he again uses a personal story, telling about how he in the real world found a passion, and a love for birds, ex: But then a funny thing happened to me. It's a long story, but basically I fell in love with birds" (p. 11, l. 238-240) – with this personal story he wants the young generation to understand that if they go out in the "real" world and not just live in the world of "liking" and "disliking", they will find something they really love, and not just something the like. This comparison and personal story again strengthen his ethos and by that strengthen his arguments.

Jonathan Franzen writes in a very fun and understandable language. Reading his article you feel that he normally writes fictions stories, because he is very good writing in a non boring way. He makes sure that it is interesting and fun for the young generation to read his essay, he is doing this by the personal stories and fun comparisons, but also by using words and phenomena the young readers can relate to, for an example he uses words as "liking" and "friending", "Liking, in general, is commercial culture's substitute for loving" (p. 9, l. 83-85)- phenomena's from facebook.

On the other hand Jonathan Franzen also uses some foreign words as "carbon footprint", "anesthetized dream" – by using these foreign words he makes sure to seem "smart", so we get the feeling of a person who knows what he is talking about, and on the other hand also a fun and interesting person. This is again something that strengthens his ethos appeal, so it is easier for him to convince and engage the young readers. If he was writing in a way with no humor, only foreign words, and maybe used a lot of statistics facts, instead of personal stories, he would not engage the young readers.

So by writing in this very specific way, he knows that the youngster will find his essay fun and interesting. So as you see Jonathan Franzen uses a lot of different methods to convince and engage the young readers. Jonathan Franzen's main message is that, the young generation should spend more time in the real world instead of the world of "liking". He wants the young readers to understand that even though the life on the internet is more risk-free, liking is far the same as loving. He want the young generation to put themselves out in the real world an start loving, even though they are running a risk of being hurt.

If they keep on living through the internet, they are not really living at all. This is a shout-out to the young facebook generation, and a reminder that real love and happiness can only be found in the "real" world. But is it really true that the youngsters do not know the difference between loving and liking, and dose Jonathan Franzen manages to convince the young readers with this? Jonathan Franzen has an interesting point in his essay. The fact that facebook is becoming such a big part of especially the younger generations lives.

The fact that words as "like" is now a something that we connect with facebook, and not something we see as a state of mind. But saying that young people do not know the difference between "like" and "love", is a bit extreme and naive. To believe that a whole generation do not know what the "real" world is about, and is only "loving" and living their life through the internet is again naive. Love is something everybody knows, and not something you can choose not to do; is a natural part of a human being, and technology is not able to change that.

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On the other hand Jonathan Franzen's point with the younger generation being narcissistic is truer. The fact that young people think, that sharing a self-image of them on instargram is interesting for others to look at, it is not! They are just trying to portray a perfect picture of themselves for the rest of the world, a picture of how they want to be looked at and how the wish to be. In this essay Jonathan Franzen manages to point out, some of the problems, the younger generation have. Some of his points are as mentioned a bit naive, but some of them are also true.

He manages to engage the young readers, by writing in a very fun and interesting way, and by making sure he is trustworthy. But if he manages to convince them truly, is another story. On the other hand this is also, an essay that you have to give a second thought, and maybe some of the young readers will do that. Do we really live in a world where the social media is taking over the real world, and dose social media really have such bad consequences as Jonathan Franzen think? Will the young generation in the future forget what real love is?