

The good the bad and the ugly



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After the defacing of the walls of Patrick Berger's East Park café, debate surfaced regarding the impact of graffiti on communities. The editorial, in the 16 July issue of The Daily Tribute, contends in an emotional and didactic tone that local governments and councils should be supporting prideful citizens and adjudge graffiti as vandalism. In contrast, the letter by Michaela Whitehouse, a representative of the East Park Council, controverts in a scathing yet conciliatory tone that certain places should be dedicated for graffiti and solidly defends the council's position by addressing several inaccuracies in the editorial. The title of the editorial catches our attention straight away. It establishes a sense of moral values and appeals to ethos. The "good" in the title refers to the 'self-respecting' citizens; the "bad" refers to the graffiti artists and the "ugly" refers to graffiti itself. This serves to separate the principled and upright members of society from the graffiti artists. The demoralizing effects of graffiti are strengthened by the accompanying picture. The picture is dominated by disfigured tags and a suspicious looking man riding on a bicycle. This indicates a lack of consideration for the owners of the defaced wall. The 'artistic' elements of the graffiti are obscure and this suggests to the reader that the graffiti artists are not interested in how people perceive their work; hence they will continue to vandalize other properties at their own consent. The opening paragraph utilizes emotive imagery and strong language to juxtapose between the irresponsible graffiti artists and the hardworking owners of the café. By labeling the graffiti artists as "thugs" who "desecrated the freshly painted walls" arouses feelings of anger and enmity towards the graffiti artists. This is further enhanced and supported by comments from the locals. In contrast, sympathy is expected for the Bergers through anecdotes, "...his

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heavily pregnant wife spent the majority of one day...restoring the wall". The reader also realizes that the Bergers are very earnest, "...diligently kept up with their repayments". This serves to appeal to pathos and conjures up a sense of commiseration for the Bergers. The editorial then attacks the East Park Council. Through the use of hyperbole, "...dragging its heels", the editorial diminishes the role of the council. This is effective in illustrating the council's lack of concern regarding its responsibilities. The council is portrayed to be carefree as it "refused to offer any support". The piece concludes by combining an attack on the graffiti artists and the council. This leaves the reader sharing the editorial's solid and firm point of view.

Whitehouse responds on behalf of the East Park Council in a cogent and rational letter to the editor. She directly opens up her letter by dismissing the editorial assessment of the issue and candidly says that she will address some of the editorial's "less enlightened remarks." This straight away lends Whitehouse a sense of authority and provides her following argument with strength. She then uses a pertinent and well-grounded argument by saying "... have no legal recourse to council assistance for maintenance" and "Our budget is only just able to cover the claims of hundreds of leaseholders." This is a direct appeal to logos and it is an effective way of grabbing the attention of leaseholders and householders. Whitehouse then uses two very powerful rhetorical questions which allow the audience to critically analyze the issue. It also implies that the answer is obvious and anyone who disagrees would be foolish. The effect of this is also strengthened by the fact that Whitehouse uses these rhetorical questions immediately after her logical argument, hence we can expect that many people would have no choice but to share the same viewpoint as her. Whitehouse then criticizes

the editorial in a scathing yet scrupulous tone. She undervalues the editorial by completely discarding their remarks about the council " dragging their heels. " Again this lends her a sense of authority and it shows to the audience that she is well-informed and cognizant of her position. She then addresses the issue of graffiti in a benevolent and sapient fashion. She uses inclusive language so that the audience is not alienated and it creates a sense of solidarity. Also by saying that "... with the aim of providing public spaces dedicated to the expression of this skill" shows that she is not against graffiti in any way. It also illustrates that she is aware of both sides of the situation and instead of completely dismissing the other side; she tries to find a mutual solution. This is effective in encouraging most of the audience to share this legitimate and sensible stance. The editorial mainly uses strong language, emotive imagery and appeals to communal values to consolidate its point of view. This would likely appeal to an audience which does not welcome graffiti. Whitehouse's letter presents the audience with a logical and coherent argument. She also attempts to find a mutual solution for the issue of graffiti. As a result, she is likely to persuade and gain the support of forbearing readers and even some graffiti artists themselves.