

Being a man: rhetorical analysis



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Being a Man, by Paul Theroux, delineates the negative effects of being a man According to himself. Theroux, in his piece, argues that a man is oppressed by gender expectations, despite living in a society where women are belittled in comparison to men. Theroux attempts to explain the gap between genders which cause bad marriages, social misfits, moral degenerates, sadists, and latent rapists. Theroux proposes that the idea of manhood in America has caused some men to feel like they dislike being a man, and caused them to reject part of their own identity deep down inside.

His overall purpose is to bring awareness to both genders that oppression is happening to American society due to gender. Theroux tries to create understanding between the two opposing genders and find common ground against the same type of oppression both genders face, “ This version of masculinity is a little like having to wear an ill-fitting coat for one’s entire life (by contrast, I imagine femininity to be an oppressive sense of nakedness)”.

Theroux uses parenthetical comments in order to widen the range of theme to his essay. He not only writes about man, but about women too and how they both have become affected by the gender constructs put in place from living in an American society. This allows his target audience (both men and women) to become understanding of his purpose in the essay. Not only are men able to relate, but women too as they are reminded in the fact that they face the same oppression as the one described by Theroux.

This rhetorical effect is repeated to reemphasize Theroux’s purpose, “(The paradox in American letters is that it has always been easier for a woman to write and for a man to be published)” Theroux is able to not only give the message that the gender constructs oppress only men, but also women,

gender in general for that matter. Theroux is able to successfully convey his message (to both genders) that this society is harmful to both genders. Theroux appeals to the audience's sense of emotion as he applies his arguments soundly to gender oppression, an emotion felt with both members to his target audience.

His argument is that gender constructs lead to an oppression that leaves one feeling a displeasure with their own identity. This feeling of self-loathing appeals to people's sense of emotion. This appeal allows the readers to engage and relate, which captivates them into realizing Theroux's message. Theroux is effective in his proper use of pathos without having to consult much with the author branches of persuasion, credibility and logic. Personally I am not able to relate much with the American gender construct. Seeing as I was raised in a more Mexican household, I was raised to believe in a stricter gender construct.

One that doesn't apply much to Theroux's description of the male gender construct setup by American society. Mine has roots in a one that emphasizes absolute respect for women and realizing that her body is nothing less than sacred. You'd think that this would be a better way of thinking, but this kind of thinking still implies that a woman is in need of more respect, which creates a kind of sexual inequality. Although making sense and persuading me in his argument, I was not able to relate to his argument, which was part of his purpose.