

The burning of rome

literary analysis



**ASSIGN
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While reading *The Burning of Rome*, any person with simple observation skill may perceive Tacitus' purpose. The readers should take what he says against Nero, and try to believe everything he says so they turn against Nero. Tacitus believes the readers should think that Nero started the fire that engulfed Rome. He wants reader to think of Nero as a corrupt, manipulative human being, and overall the worst, most evil leader that ever ruled over Rome. Tacitus uses the rhetorical strategies of pathos, description, and narration as ways to help him persuade readers to believe his point.

Tacitus puts pathos to good use on a number of statements and explanations. To turn readers against Nero, Tacitus evokes the emotions of hatred, pity, and sympathy when he says "The shrieks of panic stricken women, the weakness of the ages..." (Tacitus 327). Writing that and other sentences, the author targets the audience's emotion of pity.

He wants them to feel piteous toward the women and old men; by feeling that way, they feel hatred against Nero and somewhat convert against him; therefore they will more readily believe that he started the inferno. Tacitus also uses pathos when he says "...The most cruel tortures upon a body of men." (Tacitus 327). This sentence and the more descriptive details appeal to the reader's emotion of sympathy. The readers should feel terrible that he punished the Christians merely because they follow a disliked new religion; Nero merely used them as a scapegoat, as an effort to try and take some blame off of him.

In addition to pathos, Tacitus also uses this plentiful description to influence readers to think of Nero as a corrupt, manipulative human being. He writes small stories with such vivid images, such as “...so much as lawn and lawns and mock wilderness.” (Tacitus 324). The author portrays Rome in all its beauty in effort to give the reader an idea of what was lost. Although mainly description, it also incorporates pathos. The readers should imagine how beautiful and lovely Rome looked before the fire, and then believe that Nero burned it down and destroyed everything they had.

Tacitus’ narration of the story is more effective than his descriptions. He tells the story of the burning of Rome, while explain to reader why exactly Nero should take the blame. For example, he says “ Furiously the destroying flames swept on...” (Tacitus 327). Tacitus narrates the burning of Rome so that the readers actually know what happened, and don’t guess at any details. He effectively tells how the fire destroyed Rome using description. The readers can imagine the entire city up in flames, and it makes them even more so against Nero, the only one accused in Tacitus’ writing.

Tacitus effectively uses the rhetorical strategies such as pathos, description, and narration to persuade readers to fall into his writing objective of making readers believe that Nero started the fire. He effectively appealed to emotions, created vivid images, and told stories to move the readers on his side, making his point.