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Letter to the Portfolio Assessment Committee

Dear members of the Portfolio Assessment Committee,

I am writing to express my positive experience with the Emory University first-year writing programs, in particular English 181 “Hoaxes and Humbugs.” As a student, I understand the importance that critical thinking and proficient writing has on my future success in both higher level courses and the professional world. For many students, writing papers can often seem like a challenge, much like climbing a mountain; there is always a route to be mapped or an outline to be devised. Every step of the way includes obstacles or a revision and reorganization of ideas. However, at the closing of this semester, I am pleased to say that I was able to reach the top of the mountain and return with a newfound understanding of the learning outcomes provided specifically for this course: rhetorical awareness, writing as a process, critical thinking, and hoax-related expertise.

In order to become a proficient, well rounded writer, it is critical to demonstrate an understanding of audience, genre, and purpose in a variety of media forms. The Barnum selections, Edgar Allen Poe short stories, and newspaper articles discussed in class are sources that provide a foundational understanding on rhetorical techniques authors use to reach an audience; however, they lack some important techniques utilized in other forms of media that help establish a greater sense of authority and credibility. Therefore, incorporating radio broadcasts and films into the curriculum allowed me to consider the additional methods people use to persuasively convey a message. Using inspiration from Orson Welles’ famous radio broadcast, *War of the Worlds*, I was assigned to create a trademark podcast about a hoax and incorporate strategies, such as sound effects, interviews from eye witnesses, background information. I decided to base my podcast off of a famous 1845 hoax in which a Japanese runner supposedly runs for 26 days. I created a unified brand, *SportsAtlanta* with realistic features, such as a Gatorade commercial and interviews from “spectators.” Although I crafted a podcast brand based on sports news, I did not take into account its appeal to a hypothetical audience. As mentioned in my podcast revision report, I could revise my podcast and create it into a series of unusual sightings or happenings in the sports world with personal interviews from athletes. The podcast, discussing unique events, would serve a specific purpose rather than being just another ordinary sports show. It would give listeners a reason to tune in instead of attaining the information from an article or word of mouth. By creating this podcast, I gained a greater understanding of the podcast genre and took into greater consideration the value and purpose of rhetorical appeals to engage listeners.

Much like life is a continuous process of learning from mistakes, writing a paper is a process of drafting, editing, and revising. The final project assigned this semester was a seven to nine page research and analysis paper about a literary hoax. The paper required me to incorporate research information while keeping my ideas centered on the author’s use of rhetorical techniques to construct a persuasive argument. My research paper was based on “The Blood Runs like a River through My Dreams,” a fictional memoir published by Timothy Barrus. Professor Grubbs did not assign us a specific topic to write about; instead, she had us propose a few topics, which was the first step in a long process. We were assigned to write a prospectus in which I gave a background of the hoax and a detailed description of the research question. I explained the significance of the topic and how it could relate to broader areas of research, in my case healthcare on Native American reservations. After we had sufficient time to begin drafting

our paper, Professor Grubbs had us write an explanatory essay. This was my opportunity to showcase the research I found and explain the process I would go about writing the paper. I discussed how my topic might evolve and the difficulty incorporating evidence. The last step before our final draft was a detailed outline in which we included specific quotes or pieces of evidence. This was my chance to present my thesis and topic sentences and receive feedback on how I could improve my argument. The major area Professor Grubbs recommended I focus on was the volume of research information. She gave me suggestions that would help me emphasize my paper on the rhetorical rather than research aspects (refer to Exhibit 1). Although my original paper ended up being too research oriented, I revised my thesis and topic sentences to demonstrate a better understanding of rhetorical analysis. Exhibit 2 and Exhibit 3 are examples of my revised topic sentences that were initially poor introductions into the main points of the paragraph; however, I revised them to not only indicate factual information but also to portray specific rhetorical strategies the author uses. Professor Grubbs did not require us to sit down and write a paper in a few days without any feedback along the way; instead, she broke down the paper into assignments that would eventually culminate towards the final draft. From proposing a topic to performing a close readings and writing detailed outlines, my research paper evolved into an analytical piece discussing the cultural significance of a hoax while also demonstrating my ability to utilize secondary information.

I have been developing and improving my critical thinking skills since elementary school. As the material became more complex throughout the years, I have grown in my abilities to evaluate and challenge the ideas of others as well as to take on higher levels of inquiry and scholarship. This course was another opportunity in which I could work on improving my critical thinking skills; I was introduced to the idea of a close reading, in particular, analyzing the syntax, word choice, and sentence structure. I performed close readings for a variety of passages written by many different authors. For example, I performed a close reading on a sentence from “The Blood Runs like a River through My Dreams,” the primary source for my research paper (refer to Exhibit 4). I remark on the contrasting adjectives and relate the sentence to a greater theme. After evaluating the words of the author, I was able to produce my own thoughts to reach a conclusion.

Rather than reading stories written by prominent authors who have high levels of authority, literary hoaxes push students to question the motives of authors and not rely on binary thought. The works of Shakespeare or Christie, for example, were written mostly for entertainment. Hoaxes, on the other hand, do not always have clear motives. I was assigned a rhetorical analysis paper that challenged me to identify hoax strategies and make my own evaluations and claims about the text. I used Poe’s scientific account “The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar” and analyze his techniques to appeal to his audience’s ethos, pathos, and logos. In Exhibit 5 I make a claim about Poe’s descriptive writing to support his credibility and appeal to the reader’s pathos. By writing this paper, I acquired expertise in rhetorical writing and the ability to form clear, persuasive arguments.

I hope that I have successfully expressed my own persuasive argument that English 181 “Hoaxes and Humbugs” has helped me achieve a better understanding of the first year writing outcomes. With rhetorical acumen, I was able to create stronger, more persuasive essays. Overall, I have developed valuable skills that I will continue to use to transform my writing from ordinary to extraordinary.

Exhibit 1:

“Moving forward, you’ll want to be careful not to let the researched pieces take over your paper. Because you have so many concrete sources, this could easily transform into something resembling a research paper on healthcare on reservations more than one performing and contextualizing a reading of a text” (Professor Grubbs)

Exhibit 2:

Original: The town Tommy Nothing Fancy grew up in, Gallup, New Mexico, is notorious for the yearly deaths due to alcohol and related accidents.

Revised: The many references to specific Native American traditions or landmarks further strengthens the memoir’s credibility while also providing specific examples of the lack of government attention given to reservations.

Exhibit 3:

Original: One of the leading causes for the lack of attention given to Native American healthcare is due to the complications arising from the large, growing population of Native Americans on reservations

Revised: Barrus’ memoir is exceptionally convincing because it provides emotionally invoking descriptions of Nasdijj’s simple yet irreplaceable moments with Tommy Nothing Fancy, his son.

Exhibit 4

“He was so flawed. But his fishing tackle was sublime.”

Although the sentence is a simple statement contrasting the son, Tommy Nothing Fancy, with his fishing tackle, it conveys a sense of both despair and revelation...Fishing becomes the one reliable thing in Tommy’s world... that will always be a source of light and beauty...sometimes it is the smallest, most ordinary things in life that bring people the greatest joy.

Exhibit 5

The intense visuals Poe provides his audience enables them to create a picture that supports the narrator’s claims and enhances the possibility of such an absurd occurrence.

Debunking “The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar”

Throughout the nineteenth century, America was experiencing a plethora of revolutionary changes pertaining to science and medicine. Beginning during the Industrial Revolution and continuing well into the Victorian Era, a popular form of pseudoscience, hypnotism, emerged and appealed to both the credulous and educated alike. Edgar Allen Poe, a prominent nineteenth century gothic author, portrays the power of pseudoscience in his notorious 1845 hoax, “The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar.” The narrator, curious about the effects of hypnotism, recounts his attempt at suspending a chronically ill individual between life and death. Due to the rapid scientific advances and discoveries, which left many areas open to inquiry, the public undoubtedly believed and took interest in Poe’s account despite its inaccuracy and improbable details. Although “The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar” was eventually revealed as a hoax, its credibility and success can be widely attributed to Poe’s rhetorical use of direct quotations, scientific jargon, and emotional appeal to justify a seemingly illusory idea.

Hypnotism appealed to not only uneducated citizens but also rational individuals, which created a wide and varied audience for Poe’s work. Both scientists and the general public showed an interest in Poe’s writing if not merely because it provided evidence based on extraordinary facts that sparked people’s interest. Revolutionary ideas, such as astrology, mesmerism, and hypnotism were becoming increasingly popular in the nineteenth century, and mainstream medicine was often disregarded; instead, people were looking for ways to connect to the supernatural world for healing. Poe, aware of the public’s lack of knowledge, creates a credible story by including not only detailed accounts but also direct quotes from M. Valdemar, the unfortunate patient undergoing the narrator’s hypnotism. Valdemar’s breathing was not only described in meticulous detail, “stertorious, and at intervals of half a minute,” but the narrator

also recounts Valdemar's wish to be mesmerized but fear that he "[has] deferred it too long." The firsthand account from the narrator may seem convincing; furthermore, the public disregarded the short disclaimer concerning the narrator's best intention to comprehend the facts as accurately as possible. However, significant minor details are often either disregarded or miscommunicated, distorting the accuracy of the story. In addition to describing Valdemar's responses verbatim, the narrator also reports his exact tone and emotions. Valdemar engages in a few bits of conversation in an attempt to gain energy but responds only "very faintly, almost inaudibly." Poe not only provides direct quotations but also captures the tone and nature of his characters. By making it appear as though the narrator was present and attentive at the time, Poe cunningly incorporates unreliable but convincing sources that strengthen his credibility.

Poe also incorporates scientific jargon into his account, which not only demonstrates his medical knowledge but also provides a false credibility to those unfamiliar with science. Because the scientific theories of the nineteenth century were open ended and left room for inquiry, Poe's use of medical jargon was left unquestioned. Poe adds to the plausibility of the account by describing in vivid detail Valdemar's hypnotic trance, which begins with a "partial descent of the iris...accompanied by the profuse out-flowing of a yellowish ichor." The intense visuals Poe provides his audience enables them to create a picture that supports the narrator's claims and enhances the possibility of such an absurd occurrence. Because the public had probably never encountered or heard about such gruesome and uncommon circumstances, the narrator's descriptions were the only source of information they could base their opinions on. The narrator, portrayed as a reliable doctor, further distorts the line between fact and fiction when he describe the condition of Valdemar's "left lung... [that] had been in a semi-osseous or cartilaginous state." Usually information of this kind is not available until a person is dead and the body can be

dissected and observed. A logical person today may realize this impossibility, but because of the lack of scientific knowledge in the nineteenth century, many people were oblivious to this now obvious fact. The medical descriptions of Valdemar's condition provide a sense of authenticity, which appealed to both scientists and the common people at the time.

Finally, Poe constructs his plot around the idea of death, a subject that conjures fear from his audience. Poe is known for his Gothic short stories and foreboding view on death, so it is no surprise that his scientific account on M. Valdemar is unquestionably gruesome. The inevitableness of death draws a sense of dread and submission from the public. Poe startles his audience "into positive disbelief" with his explicit descriptions of Valdemar's disintegrating body. Death was rarely a subject to be publicly challenged, and because "no person had as yet been mesmerized in *articulo mortis*," the public had nothing to compare Poe's story to. They were presented with such convincing and graphic evidence that makes it almost impossible to believe anything else. When Valdemar's condition takes an unfortunate turn of events, death is essentially personified as a superior being with unrivaled power even under the influence of pseudoscience. Hypnotism, initially viewed as a harmless approach to cure Valdemar, ultimately comes with more gruesome consequences compared to those of a natural death. By incorporating his usual themes on mortality and impermanence, Poe raises the question about the mysterious line between life and death, an unfamiliar subject that helped create an interest in the account.

By integrating a careful balance of ethos, pathos, and logos, Poe develops a plot that introduces the spiritual realm of hypnotism. Although Poe wrote the account with the intention for entertainment purposes, his audience took the story to heart. By using a variety of rhetorical devices, Poe effectively persuades his audience that death is inevitable, even in the hands of

pseudoscience. The account was eventually debunked and exposed as a hoax; however, it helped form the interest in the future of medicine and disproved the popular idea of mind over body.

<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/POE/fact.html>

Rhetorical Analysis Paper Revision Report

Composing a successful rhetorical analysis of a piece of literature is a process requiring careful consideration into a number of important components. In order to effectively convey and support the persuasive nature of Edgar Allen Poe's 1845 hoax, "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar," I had to consider a variety of basic questions that would help me compose both a logical and convincing essay. Some important areas included the historical context of the hoax, Poe's intended audience, and the word choice. My first draft revealed a basic understanding of the various rhetorical devices; however, it not only lacked persuasive analyses and sufficient evidence but also could improve in terms of organization.

An introduction should take the form of an upside down triangle; it begins with a broad idea and gradually leads into the thesis statement, which establishes the organization and argument for the essay. Effective introductions should not only be enticing to the reader but also establish a tone and give a background on the topic of the essay. Although my initial introduction began with a somewhat pertinent question, a technique that can be effective if used appropriately, it was too broad in the context of the essay. As observed in Exhibit 1, I initially referenced the 14th century, a time period much too broad to introduce Poe's hoax. In the revised essay, I narrowed the time period to Poe's lifetime, circa mid 1800's and focused solely on the general topic, pseudoscience. The thesis was also not stated clearly and I misunderstood the meaning of "ethos, pathos, logos." As Professor Grubbs explained, they "aren't exactly things that someone has-they are closer to descriptions of types of appeals an author might use." My revised thesis (refer to Exhibit 2) mentions specific rhetorical devices Poe uses to persuade his audience and gives an overall better representation of my knowledge on rhetorical devices.

In the first body paragraph of both my original and revised essay, I identify Poe's audience, those interested in scientific accounts. After careful reflection, however, I decided to modify the audience so that it encompassed both scientists and common people. The medical aspects of Poe's account sparked interest in doctors and scientists; however, the mere inclusion of extraordinary details gained the general public's attention. By not limiting Poe's audience, as I did in my revised paper, I provided stronger reasoning for the success of Poe's account. Another aspect I changed was the organization of my paper. Instead of organizing the paragraphs by ethos, pathos, and logos, I used my revised thesis as guidance; as a result, "Poe's rhetorical use of direct quotations, scientific jargon, and emotional appeal" became the foundation for the organization of my paragraphs (refer to Exhibit 2).

My body paragraph describing the direct accounts and quotations lacked cohesiveness as well as sufficient evidence to support my claims. I incorporated additional quotations, which provided concrete evidence on Poe's use of direct accounts. Exhibit 3 provides one example of a quotation I decided to integrate into the first body paragraph, giving my paper a stronger argument and better evidence. Because my paper lacked commentary on the few quotes I did include, Exhibit 4 provides an example I added of an analysis and commentary on the overall first body paragraph. Whereas my original paper did not give an explanation as to why the hoax was so successful, my revision provided a closing statement with an explanation as to how the direct accounts made Poe's account so convincing.

Surprisingly, my original essay did not provide any quotations on specific scientific jargon. Instead, it was disorganized and many of the ideas I discussed did not pertain to how Poe was persuasive but rather the shortcomings of his hoax. Therefore, my first revision to this paragraph was to find quotations that add to the plausibility of Poe's account (refer to Exhibit 5). In addition to finding new quotations, I also decided to take a quote describing Valdemar's "left lung...[that] had been in a semi-osseous or cartilaginous state" that had previously been used in a different paragraph and incorporate it into my second body paragraph, which gives it a more thorough portrayal of Poe's medical knowledge.

Finally, the topic sentence for my third paragraph did not adequately introduce the main points of the paragraph. As portrayed in Exhibit 6, I alter my topic sentence and mention a specific rhetorical device rather than providing a basic definition of pathos. My topic sentence explicitly defines my argument and as recommended by Professor Grubbs, "drives my argument forward."

KEY

Original

Revised

Exhibit 1:

Hoaxes date back all the way to the 14th century when references to April Fool's Day were made. Beginning during the Industrial Revolution and continuing well into the Victorian Era, a popular form of pseudoscience, hypnotism, emerged and appealed to both the credulous and educated alike.

Exhibit 2:

One of the most famous hoaxers of all time is Edgar Allen Poe; his notorious 1845 hoax "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar" gained the public's attention with its successful efforts to appeal to one's ethos, pathos, and logos.

Although "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar" was eventually revealed as a hoax, its credibility and success can be widely attributed to Poe's rhetorical use of direct quotations, scientific jargon, and emotional appeal to justify a seemingly illusory idea.

Exhibit 3:

Valdemar's breathing was not only described in meticulous detail, "stertorious, and at intervals of half a minute".....

Exhibit 4:

From the mouths and notes of the medical students to the words of Valdemar before his death, the narrator ultimately end sup recounting the majority of events with his own interpretations.

Poe not only provides direct quotations but also captures the tone and nature of his characters. By making it appear as though the narrator was present and attentive at the time, Poe cunningly incorporates unreliable but convincing sources that strengthen his credibility.

Exhibit 5:

Poe adds to the plausibility of the account by describing in vivid detail Valdemar's hypnotic trance, which begins with a "partial descent of the iris....accompanied by the profuse out-flowing of a yellowish ichor."

Exhibit 6:

Pathos, a feature that conjures emotions, is another rhetorical device Poe uses to develop his hoax.

Finally, Poe constructs his plot around the idea of death, a subject that conjures fear from his audience.

Exhibit 7:

Without any photographic proof, however, these claims and descriptions may seem unrealistic.

By incorporating his usual themes on mortality and impermanence, Poe raises the question about the mysterious line between life and death, an unfamiliar subject that helped create an interest in the account.

Hypothetical Podcast Revision Report

Throughout the semester I have gained valuable experience analyzing and evaluating the works of different authors and their use of rhetorical devices to convey a message or evoke certain emotions. I was able to process hoax material in a number of different genres, including stories, pictures, movies, and radio broadcasts. Although reading a variety of short stories and articles provided a basic foundation for my understanding of how people establish authority through words, creating my own podcast allowed me to attain a more complex understanding on how to utilize strategies, such as background noise, tone, music, and sound effects. I created my own podcast brand, *SportsAtlanta*, which appeals to a specific audience and is engaging from beginning to end. However, because writing and revising is an ongoing process, there are some areas in which I could definitely improve my podcast. In order to make my podcast seem more representative of a real world broadcast, such as War of the Worlds, which gained widespread attention, there are a few small and large scale revisions I could consider.

A successful podcast includes elements that will immediately hook the listeners and keep them either engaged or on edge for the entirety of the show. In order to achieve this level of creativity and entertainment, I decided to include a short, distinguishable music introductory as well as a Gatorade advertisement and a couple of interviews. If I had more time to improve my podcast, I would include some background noise or interruptions to create suspense or curiosity. For example, if my podcast were to have been during Kimo's race, I could include cheering or sounds of running feet in the background of interviews and while the anchor is reporting. To further improve the podcast's credibility, I could include fake statistics on Kimo's running history, giving the audience background information and evidence indicating his past accomplishments. For example, the anchor could introduce Kimo with lines similar to: "Kimo began running at age four and continued to excel throughout middle and high school. As a young athlete, Kimo excelled in running longer distances. His personal marathon record was during the Boston Marathon with a time of 90 minutes. There were a number of things that contributed to Kimo's success, so here he is right now to talk about some tips and strategies to be the first to cross the finish line." Rather than assuming the audience is familiar with Kimo and his achievements, I introduce him and give the audience something to base their opinions on. In addition to incorporating more evidence, I noticed that some of editing could be improved. During interviews, I would sometimes cut off the speaker too soon or alter his voice, making it too fast or too slow. If I had more time, I would definitely recruit different speakers and give them time to become familiar with the script. As a result, I could avoid editing errors. Another area I could revise is the doctor's portion. Instead of simply stating obvious elements that might attribute to his running capabilities, I could include dialogue on traits that make his physiology so unique and unusual. As a result, the audience would be much less likely to question the doctor's accuracy. This would debunk any doubt on why other elite athletes could not accomplish the same feat.

Some larger changes I might make to the podcast is create it into a series of unusual sightings or happenings in the sports world. *SportsAtlanta* might have been an ordinary radio show reporting on everyday sports events or scores; by making it into a show about unusual happenings, it would attract a wider audience and keep them continually excited for the next show. In addition to Kimo, I could include swimmers who are able to stay under water for bizarre time periods, tennis players who can serve a ball at an extremely fast rate, or even baseball players who hit home runs every single game.

Research Paper Revision

Navajo or Navahoax?

The famous idiom “Don’t let your struggle be your identity” reveals the tendency for many people to use the obstacles in life to shape their beliefs and values. Timothy Barrus, an American author, is most notorious for using his unfortunate financial circumstances as a reason to impersonate different writers in hopes of gaining fame and recognition. His most prominent work, “The Blood Runs like a River through My Dreams” is a fictional memoir describing the hardships of a Navajo Indian with an adopted son who has fetal alcohol syndrome, a major health concern among Native American reservations. Barrus portrays the the injustices and sufferings that devastated many tribes through his impersonation of the main character, Nasdijj. Although Barrus consciously deceives his audience for personal gain, there are accurate observations regarding the environmental, social, and economical shortcomings of Native American healthcare. By identifying and eliminating the ambiguities Barrus creates with various rhetorical strategies, one can uncover the truth behind this hoax and better identify the line between fact and fiction.

At the time of its publication, the memoir was mistaken as a heartfelt and passionate piece written by an authentic Navajo. It initially received positive reactions and feedback because readers were emotionally touched by the intimate details of the hardships Nasdijj encountered. Barrus’ audience had never before read an article in Esquire written by an American Indian author, so “The Blood Runs like a River through My Dreams” was an innovative and poignant piece in contrast to the tasteless articles the magazine usually publishes. Two years later, however, Barrus’ real identity was discovered through scrutiny and investigations; as a result, the majority of his readers became upset and offended by Barrus’ use

of Native American stereotypes and hardship to his advantage. Despite the immorality of his writing, Barrus depicts the prejudice Native Americans face as well as the trouble they have in accessing healthcare. Barrus is a white man racially insensitive towards many ethnicities, but he ironically makes valid points about the insufficient attention given to the Native American healthcare system.

Barrus' memoir is exceptionally convincing because it provides emotionally invoking descriptions of Nasdijj's simple yet irreplaceable moments with Tommy Nothing Fancy, his son. He is able to convey, through elegant and vivid prose that generate emotionally appealing mental images, his views on Native American healthcare. Using metaphorical words and phrases, such as "beast" and "demon," Barrus contrasts the angelic demeanor of Tommy to detestable figures. Before fetal alcohol syndrome begins to control his life, Tommy was supposedly a "small, underweight, and premature" baby "wrapped in his diaper and his blankies, with his tiny fist in his mouth" (Barrus). By manifesting images of an innocent newborn, Barrus' audience might develop feelings of pity or sympathy. This strong emotional appeal creates sensitivity that is vital in securing the reader's support for Barrus' claims.

By using Tommy's innocence to portray a contrasting idea on the deadly effects of fetal alcohol syndrome, Barrus is able to expose the limitations of the Indian Health Services. Barrus attempts to insinuate that Tommy's condition is a result of the ineffectiveness of the IHS. By having fetal alcohol syndrome, a deadly condition if left unnoticed, left undiagnosed until its most critical stage, Barrus presents one of many problems with the Native American healthcare system. According to Barrus, both the doctors and social workers "seemed helpless in the face of the damage that had been done" and were unable to diagnose the fetal alcohol syndrome at its most critical stage (Barrus). Because the Indian Health Services is the primary federal care

system for Native American reservations and is comprised of only 7,400 full time workers who serve a growing “435,000 American Indians, belonging to more than 250 tribes,” doctors may lack sufficient training or experience (Guyon 688). Therefore, doctors and workers often become helpless in the face of adversity, resulting in unnecessary and preventable deaths. Native Americans are already behind in medical advancements and experience greater rates of easily preventable diseases, such as diabetes and tuberculosis. His audience may begin to question the logistics of healthcare and become aware of prevalent issues facing some Native reservations.

The many references to specific Native American traditions or landmarks further strengthens the memoir’s credibility while also providing specific examples of the lack of government attention given to reservations. Tommy grows up in an actual Native American town, Gallup, New Mexico. Gallup is notorious for its yearly deaths due to alcohol and related accidents. Coined not only “The Indian Capital of the World” but also “Drunk Town, USA,” Gallup has 19 times more chronic alcoholism related deaths per capita than the U.S. rate (Teret 252). Although a falsified memoir, Barrus describes the many big signs “downtown that encourage Navajo to drink wine,” which are actually evident in Gallup, Nasdijj’s hometown (Barrus). Barrus might have purposefully decided on this setting to emphasize the prevalence and raise awareness of alcohol abuse in some Native communities. Influenced by either the Europeans, media, or market, the tendency for Native Americans to act irrationally is very prevalent in Barrus’ writing. Even under false pretenses, Barrus is aware of the ongoing problem with excessive drinking and, therefore, provides credible evidence of a well-known area for those who might have initially questioned his identity and accuracy of his writing. The Eagle Claw fishing rod Nasdijj presents his son and the old truck named Wanda might conjure feelings

of familiarity or even sentimentality. Fishing in the Asheweig River might also produce feelings of longing or remembrance from childhood. The Asheweig River is an actual natural landmark which his readers can reference if they are in doubt. Finally, when Tommy begins to show symptoms of fetal alcohol syndrome, Nasdijj has the Navajo hataalii come to his house for healing. Barrus' portrayal of traditional Native methods show his cultural awareness of the Navajo and provide him with greater authority. The traditional healing methods, however, raise another issue with the current healthcare system on reservations.

The conflict in allowing Tommy to die peacefully within his community rather than in a hospital undoubtedly conveys the stark contrast between traditional Native American medicine and modern healthcare. In comparison to modern healthcare, which is based on scientific evidence, traditional Native practices “are inseparable from religion and concerns with spiritual issues” (Johnston 198). Many Native Americans take pride in their methods, which provide them with an outlet to express their cultural identity. When a member of the family falls ill, the healers are usually the next best alternative after home remedies (Johnston 197). Barrus presents federal healthcare and hospitals, in the eyes of Nasdijj and his community, as “analogous to torture” (Barrus). Hospitals are supposed to provide curative measures rather than feelings of dread and agony. This harsh representation of hospitals portrays Barrus' own view on healthcare. He might have had a bad experience with hospitals or wanted to enforce his proposition for change. Tommy's mother supported modern hospitals and fought for the right to have Tommy die in a hospital under a professional doctor's care. Tommy's mother wanted him to “die surrounded by his family and by a medical community with its own agenda” because “it was the normal, modern thing to do” (Barrus); on the other hand, Nasdijj had other plans for Tommy. He wanted “Navajo hataalii come to the Hogan for sings” so that Tommy could be

“surrounded and nurtured by his culture” (Barrus). There is evidence that tribal leaders and healers actually have “about an 80 percent success rate in bringing comatose patients to consciousness” (Johnston 204). This high success rate may be attributable to the placebo affect or the fact that patients are more likely to comply with the healer’s recommendations because they do not feel threatened by foreign methods (Johnston 207). Nadjij would often take Tommy fishing because it provided an outlet where they could relax and forget about the hardship and tension back home.

Barrus also provides a different perspective on Native American healthcare, one in which the Navajo are to blame. Alcohol abuse, in particular, is a growing problem among reservations and the lack of education and corporal influence may be responsible for irrational behavior that causes alcohol related deaths. Native American reservations and towns experience 5.6 times more alcohol-related deaths than the general U.S. population (Teret 251). In the winter, frozen people dead on the street from drunk driving is so commonplace, the city dubs them “popsicles” (Teret 252). This might attribute to the fact that many U.S. citizens are aware of the dangers of alcohol and have many resources to deal with excessive drinking. However, the lack of alcohol regulations and incentives to comply on many Native American reservations can lead to fatal consequences. Some Native Americans view alcohol as a learning experience and are not fully educated in the consequences that may follow. Many beer companies take advantage of Native American’s vulnerability and post advertisements around towns advocating alcohol as a fad or a means to reduce stress during tough economic times (Teret 251) . Native Americans not only admire alcohol’s mystical powers but advertisement also tend to “be highly successful because ethnic minorities rarely see their own cultures represented in the media and are likely to feel as though the advertisements are a recognition and a validation of their cultures for the entire

country to see” (Teret 253). The difficulty enforcing regulations and some Native American’s misunderstanding that “such drinking is inappropriate” serves as concerns that Barrus highlights (Barrus). By providing a two-sided argument, Barrus is able to appeal to a wider audience. He appears non-biased and demonstrates ways in which both parties could improve health outcomes.

There are many solutions for the healthcare issues Barrus depicts throughout his fictional memoir. Maintaining sufficient staff and good relations with the Native Americans could be achieved through outreach programs and better management of staff. Unless a new system of management is created, the current organization will continue to leave many Native Americans of all ages in dire need for medical attention. In terms of funding, the IHS does not have sufficient subsidies to support alcohol regulations or purchase upgraded equipment and facilities. The funding for the large population of Native Americans can be difficult, especially when “IHS beneficiaries do not pay premiums, deductibles, or co-payments for their IHS health coverage regardless of personal or family income level” (Noren 24). As a result, the annual appropriations cannot be increased despite the rising need for health and treatment services. Some individuals, unless it is a medical emergency, are dismissed from the healthcare services because treatment and resources are too expensive. Increasing the annual budget might account for the absence or shortage of certain programs and staff. Also, improving fundraising efforts or creating charitable organizations with the aim to raise money could be vital in the effort to improve healthcare. With his loyal and widespread audience, Barrus exposes the government’s lack of help to some Native Americans and uses it to enforce “the fact that...this horrible affliction must be articulated” (Barrus).

“The Blood Runs like a River through my Dreams” presents the powerful life experiences of Nasdijj and his son, Tommy Nothing Fancy. Although it was eventually

uncovered as a hoax, the memoir brought important healthcare issues to attention. Before Barrus' identity was exposed, many readers admired his sense of sympathy and heartfelt experiences. However, once his true identity was discovered, Barrus turned to the center of many reader's criticism and harsh opinions. Barrus, through his authentic portrayal of a Navajo and graceful prose, implicitly depicts the many areas in which Native American healthcare could use improvement. The real question is why did Barrus' memoir receive such negative reviews? There are many authors who impersonate other races, and do not receive the attention given to Barrus. Although there are some fact discrepancies, the public is always looking for a scandal and ways to feed their gluttonous appetite for excitement. A number of credible authors even warned Barrus' publisher that he was not to be trusted. The blame must not merely be put on Barrus; the publishers, one could argue, are in the same position to blame. They did not want to spend the additional money to have his fictional piece fact-checked by a secondary source. In addition, people are often in denial of the real meaning behind someone's actions or creations, and the hoax may have just been a realm for people to express their politically correct opinions. A white person impersonating an ethnic minority could offend many a people in this age. Barrus produced a piece of fiction with exceptional prose and emotional fulfillment. Regardless of how he produced his plot and acquired his information, Barrus created a memoir that portrayed the shortcomings in many realms of Native American healthcare. Many people could argue on the morality of his story, but the benefit from the public's entertainment is undoubtedly greater than the costs to society.

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Research Paper Revision Report

The research paper was a long process that included close readings, explanatory essays, research, peer review, and many drafts. The key to a successful research paper is to focus on analyzing the authors work while incorporating historical and factual details to support an argument and provide background evidence. Submitting a paper overloaded with facts and superfluous information while lacking sufficient explanations or analyses will be very boring to read as well as demonstrating failure in understanding rhetorical awareness and composition. Admittedly, my paper did just that; however, after many revisions and organizing my paper around a different viewpoint, I believe I was able to create a more cohesive paper that demonstrates my hoax expertise, rhetorical awareness, and critical reading and evaluating skills. In addition to making small scale revisions, I made major revisions pertain to organization, audience, and implementing relevant quotations and detailed analyzations.

I began revising my paper by making some technical changes. I included page numbers in my citations and corrected minor grammar mistakes. In addition, I made sure to emphasize the fact that Barrus' is an unreliable source, and his memoir is a fictional piece literature. Exhibit 7 shows a quotation I used from Barrus' memoir and cited it as though it were a factual, reliable source. The revised quotation is integrated in such a way as to explain the falsified memoir while backing the evidence up with research, which is explained more thoroughly in the analysis.

My original paper was much too research-oriented. The paragraphs were organized by specific areas in which Native American healthcare needed improvement. Although it provided a great foundational map to follow, I did not have enough information on how it attributed to a successful hoax. The majority of my information came from my research sources, and I found myself arbitrarily mentioning facts and statistics that were unnecessary to prove my point. Professor Grubbs recommended that I could improve my paper by "expanding [my] analysis, and condensing some of [my] background research." As a result, I decided to reorganize my paper and focus it more on specific techniques the author used to create a persuading memoir. Exhibit 1, my revised thesis, shows a better representation of the essay's purpose as well as my understanding of rhetorical strategies. Professor Grubbs had also noted that my "topic sentences tend to be about healthcare, not about Barrus' essay." Although I revised all of my topic sentences, Exhibit 3 is the best representation on how I introduce the main topic while keeping the essay structured around the techniques Barrus utilizes. Instead of a very vague and broad sentence about healthcare, my revised topic sentence is stated in a clear and cohesive manner that provides a foundation for further analysis rather than solely research.

I actually did not identify a specific audience in my original paper. Exhibit 2 describes a reason why Barrus' essay might have appealed to Esquire readers, and Exhibit 6 further describes why Barrus' writing and claims were so persuasive to a wide variety of readers. I also often generalized the Native American population, so as to address the whole population when making my claims. In my revised essay, I use words such as "most" or the "majority of" to avoid generalizations.

As discussed previously, I revised my paragraphs to show my rhetorical awareness rather than research capabilities. I decided to change the thesis from mentioning social, cultural, traditional, and logistical shortcomings of healthcare and instead mentioned techniques Barrus uses to appeal to his audience while simultaneously portraying the shortcomings of Native American healthcare. One paragraph I decided to add was about the specific landmarks and traditions Barrus uses to build credibility. Exhibit 5 describes a well-known Indian town, Gallup,

New Mexico, that receives a lot of attention for its bad reputation for alcohol abuse. By mentioning recognizable or relatable aspects of Native American society, I was able to expand on my analysis to discuss the importance of this strategy. In terms of quotations, I had very little relevant quotes in my original essay. The majority of the quotations came from my research article rather than my primary source. The second paragraph I revised discusses Barrus' tone and appeal to pathos. Exhibit 4 provides a relevant quote followed by an exemplary analysis. It provides evidence on how Barrus' writing is emotionally appealing and adds to the persuasiveness of his memoir. I describe the ways in which his audience might feel and how it might raise awareness and shape their views on healthcare.

Overall, the revised paper is a much better representation of my ability to analyze a hoax while integrating both a primary and secondary sources to support my arguments. The research is no longer overwhelming, and the paragraphs are broken down to create a more cohesive and understandable argument. I integrated relevant quotes and expanded on my analyses while also introducing new ideas that are critical in demonstrating my rhetorical awareness and composition.

KEY

Original

Revised

Exhibit 1:

Through eloquent and emotional diction, Barrus utilizes his writing prose to not only support himself financially but also to convey the logistical, environmental, social, and economical shortcomings of Native American healthcare, specifically the Indian Health Services.

By identifying and eliminating the ambiguities Barrus creates with various rhetorical strategies, one can uncover the truth behind this hoax and better identify the line between fact and fiction.

Exhibit 2:

Barrus' audience had never before read an article in Esquire written by an American Indian author, so "The Blood Runs like a River through My Dreams" was an innovative and poignant piece in contrast to the tasteless articles the magazine usually publishes.

Exhibit 3:

One of the leading causes for the lack of attention given to Native American healthcare is due to the complications arising from the large, growing population of Native Americans on reservations

Barrus' memoir is exceptionally convincing because it provides emotionally invoking descriptions of Nasdijj's simple yet irreplaceable moments with Tommy Nothing Fancy, his son.

Exhibit 4:

Before fetal alcohol syndrome begins to control his life, Tommy was a "small, underweight, and premature" baby "wrapped in his diaper and his blankies, with his tiny fist in his mouth" (Barrus). By manifesting images of an innocent newborn, Barrus' audience might develop feelings of pity or sympathy.

Exhibit 5:

The town Tommy Nothing Fancy grew up in, Gallup, New Mexico, is notorious for the yearly deaths due to alcohol and related accidents.

The many references to specific Native American traditions or landmarks further strengthens the memoir's credibility while also providing specific examples of the lack of government attention given to reservations.

Exhibit 6:

Although there are many realms in which healthcare could be improved, some Native Americans take it onto themselves and make irresponsible decisions.

By providing a two-sided argument, Barrus is able to appeal to a wider audience. He appears non-biased and demonstrates ways in which both parties could improve health outcomes.

Exhibit 7:

The majority of Native American reservations, including the Navajo, are already low in professional staff, and many social workers are “overwhelmed with children who have FAS” (Barrus)

Although a falsified memoir, Barrus describes the many big signs “downtown that encourage Navajo to drink wine,” which are actually evident in Gallup, Nasdijj’s hometown (Barrus).

Blog Post 1

Everyone is capable of falling into the hands of persuasion. Whether one is extremely gullible or particularly inquisitive, a persuasive hoax is capable of fooling even the most credible people. People commonly take into account their audience, available evidence, and tone in order to compose a successful hoax. The legendary Feejee Mermaid, claimed to have been caught, was a fantasy come true to the public. P.T. Barnum, a showman and businessman, was aware of the public's irrational beliefs and took advantage of everyone's curiosity. He advertised the mermaid with brochures and posters and portrayed it as a beautiful, elegant creature worthy of paying money to view. Because the public was aware of the existence of sea dogs and sea wolves, the evidence brought to them by Barnum caused them to make false inferences that supported the plausibility of a mermaid. In the past, hundreds had even reported mermaid sightings, which only makes Barnum's claim more believable. Because no one had been given any reason to doubt the existence of a mermaid, the first "real" evidence was accepted. Finally, Barnum's tone about the reality of the mermaid is very persuasive. He uses scientific language to wave away any doubtful thoughts. Many people will believe an idea or claim if they either do not have enough evidence or do not have a complete understanding. Barnum took advantage of people's ignorance and was ultimately given the attention he craves. Hoaxes can be very successful but must be believable and not completely impossible. Because many hoaxes serve as a false hope to some people, it is easy to manipulate them with effective rhetorical devices. One must be careful, however, to generate enough interest to spark curiosity but prevent uncertainty.

The question at hand was "What tactics do people commonly rely on to persuade others that their hoaxes are the real deal?" I illustrated my claims with examples from Barnum's famous Feejee Mermaid hoax. I identified the three main rhetorical devices, audience, evidence, and tone, Barnum used to successfully persuade the public. There is not only an explanation into Barnum's ulterior motives but also reasons as to why his audience was so susceptible to the hoax. I evaluated the workings of Barnum's hoax and produced my own argument as to why it was so successful. By demonstrating my rhetorical awareness and understanding of Barnum's manipulative strategy, I created a convincing argument that portrays the tactics Barnum used to persuade his audience of the authenticity of the Feejee Mermaid.

Blog Post 2

In the short video “Domino’s Scientists Test Limits of What Humans Will Eat,” scientists ridicule American’s for their absurd eating habits. Using authority, false scientific evidence, and emotional appeal, the video satirically conveys the idea that many individuals consume foods that are almost as harmful to one’s body as eating garbage. According to Domino’s, the grosser and unhealthier pizza looks, the more likely consumers will be to pay money and consume the product. The video is presented in a very professional format, much like Fox News or CNN. It presents a professional commentator reporting on a Domino’s experiment demonstrating the eating habits of humans. By having a credible source dressed in professional attire, the public will be much more susceptible to the false information. The video also includes shots of a scientific lab with scientists creating the pizzas, which gives the video a sense of professionalism. By including graphs, scientific data, and pictures, the video presents the information in a logical manner. Finally, the video appeals to one’s emotions, or pathos, by relating the experiment to those done on animals. Despite the ethical concerns, Dominos is trying to prove that the food most people put into their body is comparable to animal food and garbage. At the end of the video, the reporter emphasizes the extremity of unhealthy eating by satirically equivocating it to the deaths of five American in Afghanistan. This exaggerated comparison gives the viewer a sense as to how serious the issue of unhealthy eating is in America.

The purpose of this blog post was to take a satirical piece of work from The Onion and discuss the rhetorical devices used to make it appear credible. Rather than choosing a newspaper article or picture, I decided to choose a video and discuss both the visual and verbal aspects of the hoax. I provided concrete examples on how the video might be logically appealing; it shows a news reporter in a professional setting and displays scientific-looking graphs and charts. I also explain how the video might evoke emotions of astonishment or sympathy by comparing the hoax to lab experiments done on animals and comparing it to horrific deaths. The many examples I give from the video and explanations for how it affects the audience portrays my understanding of the various forms of persuasive strategies.

Blog Post 3

One way in which I might approach my podcast is in a live sports newscast format. I would include real time updates on Kimo's progress as well as various interviews from spectators. My audience would include those who often watch sports on television as well as people flipping through channels who happen to see the broadcast and are naïve enough to believe the situation. I will provide a source of credibility by including a reporter with a professional voice as well as establishing a tone for Kimo: tired, breathless, and exhausted from running. Another way I could present my podcast is in a radio newscast reporting on a past event rather than one during the race. I would include descriptions of The Daily Mail's reports and pictures and utilizing rhetorical devices such as interviews from people who watched part of the "marathon." The audience, rather than people who often watch sports television, would include a broader range of people, including those who listen to the radio in the mornings or on their way to work.

This blog post was one of the initial steps in the process of producing my final podcast hoax. It served as a way to brainstorm the various methods and techniques I could use to create an entertaining yet convincing podcast. The two forms my podcast could have taken was a live sports newscast or a radio show discussing the events as though they happened in the past. I identified my intended audience and gave a couple of different options that would not limit the range of my podcast listeners. I also gave in depth descriptions on how I could establish credibility; for example, I mentioned how I could include interviews from Kimo, the main subject, as well as from spectators. I gave a couple examples on how my podcast would differ if presented from a different standpoint, which demonstrates my expertise in implementing various strategies to compose a convincing hoax.

Blog Post 4

He was so flawed. But his fishing tackle was sublime.”

“The Blood Runs Like a River Through My Dreams” is a memoir written by Nasdijj, a Native American man eventually discovered to be a fraud, describing his experiences living in harsh conditions with a son diagnosed with fetal alcohol syndrome. Although the sentence is a simple statement contrasting the son, Tommy Nothing Fancy, with his fishing tackle, it conveys a sense of both despair and revelation. Nasdijj introduces Tommy to fishing as an outlet where he can act himself and enjoy the time away from the harsh Native American lifestyle. Fishing becomes the one reliable thing in Tommy’s world of constant struggles with seizures and uncertainty that will always be a source of light and beauty. Describing fishing tackle as “sublime” may at first sound questionable; however, when considering Tommy’s diagnosis and his unfortunate circumstances, the fishing tackle may be interpreted as one of the few “perfect imperfections” that highlight the beauty of life. One of the underlying themes of the story may be the idea that despite the unfortunate circumstances of one’s life, there is always something, even if to a small degree, that will bring someone joy. In other words, sometimes it is the smallest, most ordinary things in life that bring people the greatest joy.

The purpose of this blog post was to perform a close reading of a sentence from my research paper source and thoroughly dissect it, looking at syntax, word choice, and perspective. The post was organized clearly, having almost an hourglass figure; I gave a brief summary of the story from which the quote was taken from, broke it down, and related it to a common theme evident in everyday life. I took apart the sentence, comparing two very different words, “flawed” and “sublime,” and related them to the context of the story. There are actually quite a few important comparisons I make in this blog post; for example, “despair” and “revelation,” “uncertainty” and “beauty,” and “perfect imperfections.” There is an extensive analysis after each comparison linking it to a bigger picture but always connected to the plot. Because the author wrote his memoir with such elegant prose, this sentence further supports the emotional appeals it may have on the audience. This blog post is an exceptional example on how I evaluated an author’s work, incorporated his ideas, and produced my own arguments that led to inferences applicable to a wider audience.

Weakest Blog Post

My podcast will be based on the 1981 26-day marathon hoax. Kimo Nakajimi, a Japanese long distance runner, misinterpreted the directions as running for 26 days rather than 26 miles. The director knew very little Japanese, so his translation had taken on a whole different meaning to Kimo. In 1981, The Daily Mail had even published pictures, concrete evidence, of Kimo running. In a sports radio show, I will follow the runner in a car and “interview” him every few day on his progress and how he is feeling. In order to make it seem more credible, I will interview a few spectators on their struggle to urge him to stop running and their rare sightings of him throughout the 26 days. I will try making whoever is Kimo to sound breathless and exhausted in order to make the audience seem as if the hoax is real. The realistic dialogue and tone will hopefully effectively convey a sense of disbelief and awe

My weakest blog post was a tentative topic for my podcast hoax. I decided to base it on a famous 1981 hoax in which a Japanese runner accidentally ran for 26 days instead of 26 miles. Although I provided techniques I would use to make the podcast seem real, I did not take into account the many technicalities that had to be executed almost perfectly. I mention how I want to interview Kimo every few days, but I did not explain how those gaps might be filled in the podcast. The breathless tone in which I wanted Kimo to speak would be very difficult to achieve without many sound effects and voice changes. Also, because the blog posts are on a public forum, incorporating links to The Daily Mail would be helpful for referencing the pictures of Kimo I mention. Furthermore, there are a few careless spelling mistakes, “throughout” and “dialogue,” which are minor details but would definitely improve the post if fixed. Although the post provided a basic summary of possible ideas, many of them were not practical and lacked sufficient explanations on they might contribute to the development of the podcast.