

4. The author's appeals



To “appeal” is a “call for support”: “to make a request; to call attention to”. There are numerous types of appeals through which authors call for your sympathy, understanding and support. For example, water restrictions appeal to a sense of civic responsibility and concern for the environment. An author may appeal to an individual’s right to freedom, or to the state to regulate in the interests of public safety — appeals that have at their core a fundamental concern for others and the public good. (Refer to Table of Appeals pp. 22-23.)

Emotional appeals

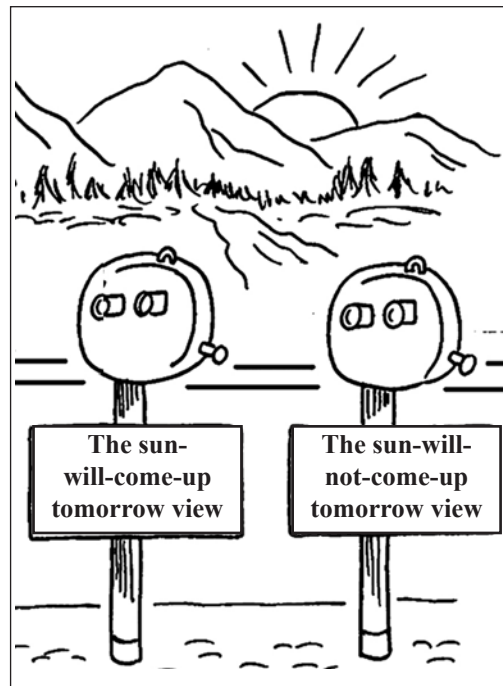
Authors realise that to have an impact, they need to engage our feelings and try to direct our sympathy, compassion and disgust towards the (mis)fortune of others. We like to read about human interest stories, for example the child saved from death through the gift of an organ or the discovery of a child among the rubble of an earthquake. The more sympathetic we are and the closer we can identify with an individual and imagine their plight, the more receptive we are to the author’s views and the more likely we are to respond.

Authors appeal to our emotions to:

- ◆ encourage us to take action;
- ◆ forge a common bond and direct our sympathy;
- ◆ make us “feel” and understand another person’s situation and views;
- ◆ win our trust and confidence;
- ◆ direct our anger towards those who are responsible for another’s suffering or a situation of injustice; and
- ◆ shame us if we are “heartless” or “uncaring”.

Appeal to morality: Our conscience is a powerful motivator. For this reason authors try to realise a story’s moral potential in order to channel our compassion and disgust in the “right” direction. They often adopt the high moral ground and call on members of the public to follow their conscience. It is common for authors to imply that their opponents are not acting or thinking honourably.

Such an appeal seeks to empower those who do the “right” thing, according to the author. It makes us feel reassured and proud and gives us a sense of purpose and wellbeing. After all, who wants to be considered uncaring and heartless?



Appeal to guilt: In matters of conscience, authors are frequently able to induce a sense of guilt if we do not apply the “right” choice. They may encourage us to show a sense of civic or moral responsibility and shame us if we do not. If we feel guilty we are more likely to change our minds.

Appeal to fear: When authors, politicians or “experts” wish to convey a message or win support for an idea, it is common to play upon people’s fear. Fear takes us into unfamiliar territory and plays on our insecurities and anxieties.

For example, drug and alcohol advertising campaigns typically rely on fear. In such instances, its use can be justified because it has desirable outcomes and seeks to change people’s behaviour in positive ways.

However, fear is also used to threaten and overwhelm us and we need to determine whether there is a rational basis for the use of fear. Contrastingly, authors may win our support by seeking to calm our fears.

The language of appeals

“Appealing to” stakeholders: Authors may direct their arguments towards a generalised audience; however, depending upon the nature of the issue, authors may target specific stakeholders. A stakeholder are audience segments who often have an “interest” in the debate or may be affected by policies and outcomes.

1. Mr Orson **appeals** to all citizens to resist the spread of facial recognition technologies.
2. Ms Barton **prevails upon** price-sensitive tax-payers to consider alternatives to the “live animal” trade. (*to prevail upon; to persuade*)
3. Ms Cronton’s **appeals** to fashion organisers to change the BMI rules highlights the need for stricter rules.
4. **Appealing to politicians and trade policy makers**, Ms Barton draws attention to the problems of the live animal trade.
5. **Appealing to members of the duck-shooting community**, Ms Creswick highlights the miserable suffering of the “little balls of fluff”.

“Appealing to” values: an author’s appeals are also a clue to their themes and message. What values do they promote and uphold? Which values lead to conflict?

6. Mr Spry **appeals to common sense and environmental values** when he outlines his plans to introduce four recycling bins.
7. Ms Johnson’s support for pill-testing facilities is based on her **appeal for life-saving measures**.
8. **Appealing to safety concerns**, Mr Trent **implores** councillors to install more CCTV cameras. (*beg earnestly for; entreat person to do*)
9. **Appealing to the idea that all living species have rights**, Ms Creswick contends that duck shooting should be banned.

Exercise 14

Destroying ancient songlines (Rose Mount)

Road construction authorities are plotting the destruction of the The Djab Wurrung sacred trees along the Western Highway. Sadly, in this case bitumen and travel times are more important than connection to the landscape, the spiritual lives of mothers and children and the deep history of Aboriginal Australia.

Despite the thousands of years of history, these 800-year-old trees are earmarked for the axe. Why is it necessary to desecrate the songlines of Indigenous peoples, especially when an alternative cheaper route is available?

1. Explain the author’s appeal to audience segments.

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2. Explain the author’s appeal to values.

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