**11AP**

**Determining Effective and Ineffective Rhetoric**

I. Not every attempt at effective rhetoric hits its mark. A famous example of humorously ineffective rhetoric is the proposal of Mr. Collins to the high-spirited heroine Elizabeth Bennet in Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen. Mr. Collins, a foolish and sycophantic minister, stands to inherit the Bennet estate; thus, he assumes that any of the Bennet sisters, including Elizabeth, will be grateful for his offer of marriage. So he crafts his offer as a business proposal that is a series of reasons. Following is a slightly abridged version of Mr. Collins’s proposal:

**From *Pride and Prejudice***

**JANE AUSTEN**

``My reasons for marrying are, first, that I think it a right thing for every clergyman in easy circumstances (like myself) to set the example of matrimony in his parish. Secondly, that I am convinced it will add very greatly to my happiness; and thirdly -- which perhaps I ought to have mentioned earlier, that it is the particular advice and recommendation of the very noble lady whom I have the honour of calling patroness…But the fact is, that being, as I am, to inherit this estate after the death of your honoured father (who, however, may live many years longer), I could not satisfy myself without resolving to chuse a wife from among his daughters, that the loss to them might be as little as possible, when the melancholy event takes place -- which, however, as I have already said, may not be for several years. This has been my motive, my fair cousin, and I flatter myself it will not sink me in your esteem. And now nothing remains for me but to assure you in the most animated language of the violence of my affection. To fortune I am perfectly indifferent, and shall make no demand of that nature on your father, since I am well aware that it could not be complied with; and that one thousand pounds in the 4 per cents, which will not be yours till after your mother's decease, is all that you may ever be entitled to. On that head, therefore, I shall be uniformly silent; and you may assure yourself that no ungenerous reproach shall ever pass my lips when we are married.''

1. Which of the rhetorical appeals does Mr. Collins use in this excerpt?

2. Where did he go wrong?

II. Let’s look at another example. This is an advertisement from PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals).



Determine how this advertisement can be an example of both effective AND ineffective rhetoric.

III. Let’s turn to an essay, an op-ed piece that appeared in the Washington Post in 2011 after Japan was hot by a massive earthquake and tsunami that severely damaged nuclear reactors. Columnist Anne Applebaum uses this devastating situation to argue against further use of nuclear power. As you read the article, annotate it, analyze it rhetorically, and discuss if she is likely to achieve her purpose or if her strategies miss the mark.

**“If the Japanese Can’t Build a Safe Reactor, Who Can?”**

**ANNE APPLEBAUM**

In the aftermath of a disaster, the strengths of any society become immediately visible. The cohesiveness, resilience, technological brilliance and extraordinary competence of the Japanese are on full display. One report from Rikuzentakata - a town of 25,000, annihilated by the tsunami that followed Friday's massive earthquake - describes volunteer firefighters working to clear rubble and search for survivors; troops and police efficiently directing traffic and supplies; survivors are not only "calm and pragmatic" but also coping "with politeness and sometimes amazingly good cheer."

Thanks to these strengths, Japan will eventually recover. But at least one Japanese nuclear power complex will not. As I write, three reactors at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power station appear to have lost their cooling capacity. Engineers are flooding the plant with seawater - effectively destroying it - and then letting off radioactive steam. There have been two explosions. The situation may worsen in the coming hours.

Yet Japan's nuclear power stations were designed with the same care and precision as everything else in the country. More to the point, as the only country in the world to have experienced true nuclear catastrophe, Japan had an incentive to build well, as well as the capability, laws and regulations to do so. Which leads to an unavoidable question: If the competent and technologically brilliant Japanese can't build a completely safe reactor, who can?

It can - and will - be argued that the Japanese situation is extraordinary. Few countries are as vulnerable to natural catastrophe as Japan, and the scale of this earthquake is unprecedented. But there are other kinds of extraordinary situations and unprecedented circumstances. In an attempt to counter the latest worst-possible scenarios, a Franco-German company began constructing a super-safe, "next-generation" nuclear reactor in Finland several years ago. The plant was designed to withstand the impact of an airplane - a post-Sept. 11 concern - and includes a chamber allegedly able to contain a core meltdown. But it was also meant to cost $4 billion and to be completed in 2009. Instead, after numerous setbacks, it is still unfinished - and may now cost $6 billion or more.

Ironically, the Finnish plant was meant to launch the renaissance of the nuclear power industry in Europe - an industry that has, of late, enjoyed a renaissance around the world, thanks almost entirely to fears of climate change. Nuclear plants emit no carbon. As a result, nuclear plants, after a long, post-Chernobyl lull, have became fashionable again. Some 62 nuclear reactors are under construction at the moment, according to the World Nuclear Association; a further 158 are being planned and 324 others have been proposed.

Increasingly, nuclear power is also promoted because it safe. Which it is - except, of course, when it is not. Chances of a major disaster are tiny, one in a hundred million. But in the event of a statistically improbable major disaster, the damage could include, say, the destruction of a city or the poisoning of a country. The cost of such a potential catastrophe is partly reflected in the price of plant construction, and it partly explains the cost overruns in Finland: Nobody can risk the tiniest flaw in the concrete or the most minimal reduction in the quality of the steel.

But as we are about to learn in Japan, the true costs of nuclear power are never reflected even in the very high price of plant construction. Inevitably, the enormous costs of nuclear waste disposal fall to taxpayers, not the nuclear industry. The costs of cleanup, even in the wake of a relatively small accident, are eventually borne by government, too. Health-care costs will also be paid by society at large, one way or another. If there is true nuclear catastrophe in Japan, the entire world will pay the price.

I hope that this will never, ever happen. I feel nothing but admiration for the Japanese nuclear engineers who have been battling catastrophe for several days. If anyone can prevent a disaster, the Japanese can do it. But I also hope that a near-miss prompts people around the world to think twice about the true "price" of nuclear energy, and that it stops the nuclear renaissance dead in its tracks.

**Response:**

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IV. ACTIVITY

Examine the following advertisement sponsored by the Federal Highway Administration, a branch of the U.S. Department of Transportation. Analyze the rhetorical situation and appeals used in the advertisement, and determine whether you think this ad is effective or ineffective. Write your response on a separate piece of paper.



The text on the bottom-right reads: In the time it takes to look for someone in the crosswalk *and stop for them*, **you could save a life….or change your forever.**