

Why Granny Might Not Be So Sweet and Little.....Or a Granny

Upon receiving a startling email from one Madame Esther Swally, any reader may immediately feel obligated to help fulfill the final wishes of this charitable old woman. Yet, before making such a decision as to the giving away of personal information, one would do well to evaluate Mrs. Swally's argument by means of a Toulmin analysis. After the use of this analytical approach of studying the argument, as well as an application of the rhetorical triangle, it would seem foolish to allow oneself to be convinced by the over-the-top emotional appeal, lack of structure, and questionable qualifications found in Mrs. Swally's argument.

Mrs. Swally's argumentative email is intended to draw the support of the audience through the use of several claims. The main claim of the email is that if the reader distributes Mrs. Swally's money to the less privileged in the world, he would get to keep 30% of the 6 million dollars. All that would be required of the reader to do before receiving the money would be to provide his personal information to this stranger, and because this action can be potentially risky, the author provides some reasons as to why she is doing this.

Esther relates that at one time, her main concerns in life were her business and making money. But after losing her family in a plane crash, she says that she has found a "new desire to assist helpless families." She no longer cares about her wealth and instead wishes to help those in Australia who have lost property and livelihood due to fire. Another reason why she is asking the reader to help her is because she is currently on her deathbed for Oesophagical Cancer and is not

able to complete the task herself. Unable to trust any of her greedy relatives with this great task, and lacking the ability to do it herself, Mrs. Swally is lead to ask the reader for help in this regard. Even with these reasons to back up her claim, Esther's argument still depends on the audience to share in a basic belief.

Mrs. Swally's warrant calls on us as the audience to be able to believe that this old woman is in fact being honest and truthful. And because it is difficult to trust anyone over the internet with whom you are unfamiliar, Esther attempts to back up this warrant with a few reasons to prove her honesty. The main example of backing is found in the first line of the email: "Greetings to you and your family in the name of God." By establishing that she holds a relationship with God, she hopes to instill a sense of honesty as would be found in any God-fearing person. In addition to proving her honesty, she must also prove her ability to back up her claim to provide this money.

One of the best qualifiers that Mrs. Swally is able to provide is through the statement that she "was a merchant and owned two businesses in Dubai." Owning two businesses in a tourist destination such as Dubai could certainly lead to great amounts of money, yet she was unspecific as to what she was in the business of doing. The author also provides her qualifications in donating money when she reveals that she has "been helping orphans in orphanage" and having also "donated some money for humanitarian needs." Even with all of these qualifications and reasons for helping, Esther still provides some additional comfort to the reader who may still be having doubts.

In anticipation of a rebuttal in regards of her offer, Esther Swally reminds the reader that she will allow him "to communicate with the financial company directly" upon receipt of the reader's reply. She offers this condolence to those who still may be unsure of whether or not to

reveal their personal information to this stranger. An additional comfort may be added by the fact that the reader would also be working with a Pastor in the dispersing of the money, which may be used to develop an additional sense of trust and security from this woman. Although most of the analysis so far has seemed to help prove the validity of the argument, a further examination of the rhetoric triangle helps to reveal the less favorable aspects of this argument.

In regards of the element of Logos, the email is largely unclear and inconsistent, as well as her validating reasons and support to be lacking in strength. Early in the email, Esther reveals that she is living in Sierra Leone, a country located in Africa. Yet in the "Current Photograph" of her on her deathbed, provided at the end of the email, it appears that everyone in the photo is Asian rather than African as one would expect. Poor grammar and structure also makes this email difficult to read at times, therefore lessening understanding.

While the argument was lacking in Logos, it seems overabundant with Pathos. The author attempts to bring an emotional appeal into every part of her argument here in this email. She first introduces herself as seeking the readers help in carrying out her last wishes, therefore revealing she is not well. She then describes her story of having only cared about money until one day when her husband and two children are all killed in a plane crash, an image used to create deep sympathy. This event caused her to have a change of heart and she went from only caring about money to becoming a benefactor of orphans and motherless children.

Swally then fully reveals to why she is unwell, she is on her deathbed undergoing treatments for cancer, something that would invoke a strong emotional response from many people. Finally she seeks out our pity as she relates the greediness of her family and friends as a way to try to suck the reader into feeling compelled to help her. While the invocation of Pathos is

often a strong tactic in winning over an audience, Esther Swally greatly overused it, causing a sort of emotional overload in which the audience now finds her story hard to believe.

The final rhetorical element is Ethos. Esther attempts to establish her credibility in several ways. First she establishes her relationship with God as a way of attempting to gain our trust. She also reveals her business background in order to prove her fortune, although her unspecific description leaves it questionable. And revealing her previous donations for humanitarian needs is a way of trying to persuade us into believing that this is an important part of her life.

One other factor of credibility is found in Mrs. Swally's use of grammar, or rather the lack thereof. However, the horrific use of grammar as found in this email could either detract or even aid in this women's credibility. The general lack of grammatical structure is usually something that reflects an "uneducated" person, yet when making an argument as a native of Africa whose first language is not English, it could help establish credibility. Although this factor could act as a positive for her, the abundance of other questionable qualities renders her credibility to be foggy, at best.

The lack of reliable qualifications, overuse of emotional appeal, and general incoherence of Madame Esther Swally's argument makes for the aiding in the distribution of her fortune at the price of the reader's personal information to be too risky and improbable of an act. Rather, the reader should recognize what appears to be a scam to steal one's personal information and identity, a conclusion that could be made even without the use of a Toulmin analysis.