Introduction to Rhetorical Writing

 Rhetoric is the art of using language with persuasive effect. Rhetoric is the ability to speak or write to move audiences with logic, emotion, and credibility. A rhetorical device is a technique that is used to persuade an audience to consider a subject from the speaker’s point of view. When used properly, rhetorical devices can have both logical and emotional appeal, and thus be very effective.

Three terms with which to be familiar (these are the three categories of rhetoric):

Logos: the use of logical ideas to appeal to the audience

Pathos: an appeal to the audience’s emotions

Ethos: an appeal to the author’s credibility; an appeal based on the character of the speaker

Rhetorical devices are used within these three categories to achieve their desired effect. Some examples you are already familiar with and can identify:

Irony Allusion Epithet

Metaphor Analogy Hyperbole

Simile Appositive

Alliteration Oxymoron

Assonance Understatement

Onomatopoeia Parallelism

When evaluating a piece of writing using Rhetoric, evaluate how the author did in writing the piece; you are NOT giving your opinion of his/her writing. You will identify logos, pathos, and ethos of the piece and within those evaluations identify rhetorical devices used.

Your assignment:

1. Reread Romeo’s speech from Act II, Scene ii (reprinted here). You will be evaluating this speech using the rhetorical process.
2. Identify an example each of logos (a logical appeal), pathos (an appeal to the audience’s emotions), and ethos (an appeal to the author’s credibility). You are allowed to use outside knowledge (for example, you should be able to explain why Shakespeare is a great writer).
3. Identify at least three rhetorical devices within the speech.
4. Write a paragraph evaluating the speech based on all of the above. Make sure the paragraph has a topic sentence and ends strongly.

*Romeo sees Juliet at her Window*

But, soft! what light through yonder window breaks?

It is the east, and Juliet is the sun.

Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon,

Who is already sick and pale with grief,

That thou her maid art far more fair than she:

Be not her maid, since she is envious;

Her vestal livery is but sick and green

And none but fools do wear it; cast if off.

It is my lady, O, it is my love!

O, that she knew she were!

She speaks yet she says nothing; what of that?

I am too bold, ‘tis not to me she speaks:

Two of the fairest stars in all the heaven,

Having some business, do entreat her eyes

To twinkle in their spheres till they return.

What if her eyes were there, they in her head?

The brightness of her cheek would shame those stars,

As daylight doth a lamp; her eyes in heaven

Would through the airy region stream so bright

That birds would sing and think it were not night.

See, how she leans her cheek upon her hand!

O, that I were a glove upon that hand,

That I might touch that cheek!

1. Identify an example of logos:
2. Explain why you believe this to be a good example.
3. Identify an example of pathos:
4. Explain why you believe this to be a good example.
5. Explain Shakespeare’s credibility as an author (ethos):
6. Give an example of a rhetorical device you found. Also state which device it is and how it was effectively used.
7. Give a second example of a rhetorical device you found. Also state which device it is and how it was effectively used.
8. Give a third example of a rhetorical device you found. Also state which device it is and how it was effectively used.
9. Write a detailed paragraph evaluating the speech (do NOT give your opinion) based

on the above information. You must have a topic sentence and a strong conclusion.