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Why Satire Succeeds Where Seriousness Falls Short

When addressing issues, authors have a variety of options of how to approach the topic. Some authors may choose to take a technical route, shaping their arguments around hard facts, whereas others lean towards satirical attitudes, appealing to the reader's emotions and personal experiences. The difference in writing style changes how it is taken by the reader, with the difference clearly seen in the two articles, “Tips For Last-Minute Test Cramming” and “Procrastination Dangers: The Negative Effects of Procrastination”. These two articles both address the issues caused by procrastination, such as lack of sleep, inability to produce quality work, and many others. However, they take polar approaches of how to deliver these topics to the reader. “Tips For Last-Minute Test Cramming” (“Tips”) utilizes a satirical approach, relating to the reader’s personal experiences and, on a surface level, seems lighthearted and humorous. On the other hand, “Procrastination Dangers” consists of a much more serious tone, providing the reader with numerous facts and statistics. “Procrastination Dangers” was written by Itamar Shatz in hopes to help people overcome procrastination. Due to the extent to which the reader is able to personally relate to “Tips For Last-Minute Test Cramming” given the lighthearted tone, references to personal anecdotes, irony, and inclusive language, the article is likely much more impactful than more serious texts such as “Procrastination Dangers”.

When reading the articles, readers may feel more compelled to engage with “Tips For Last-Minute Test Cramming” in depth provided its lighthearted tone and diction at first glance in comparison to “Procrastination Dangers”. “Tips” contains many appeals to pathos, emotionally connecting to the reader. The author refers to the students who have procrastinated as “hopeless” and “to enlist [the students] help”, poking fun at the extent of the situation where the only people who may be of help are those who are in the same, poor situation as the reader (1). This may resonate with the reader as it references their situation directly and potentially any past experiences, putting the article into perspective and understanding that the article pertains to them. In contrast, “Procrastination Dangers” educates the reader in an extremely monotone voice, simply consisting of hard facts and definitions. The article begins with the concrete definition of procrastination, “unnecessarily postponing decisions or actions”, immediately followed with an example that does not have any relevance to the reader, using subjects such as “someone” and “that person” (Itamar). This takes the attention of the issue away from the reader themselves, but instead focuses on the issues of other people. Unlike “Tips”, “Procrastination Dangers” does not reference the reader’s personal experiences and does not allow the reader to directly consider their own actions. Due to this, the reader’s desire to fully read the article in depth may be compromised as they deem it irrelevant to themselves. The variance between the diction of the two articles also plays a role in how it is received. Procrastination Dangers is written almost as a list, with repetitive sentence starters such as “furthermore”, “in addition”, and “finally”. This gives the article an extremely monotone voice and does not compel the reader to relate to the writing or even pay much attention (Itamar). “Tips”, however, is written with a casual, friendly voice that the reader may see themselves relating to or seeing how their situation pertains to the one described in the article. However, one may argue that this light-hearted tone

may pose some concern of the reader taking the information as a joke or unseriously. This would be an issue if it wasn't for the satirical devices used in "Tips" to further exaggerate the reader's situation and truly bring to light the extent of the issues at hand.

The author of "Tips" utilizes situational irony, personal anecdotes, and inclusive language to convey the severity of the situation to the reader, in a more impactful way compared to "Procrastination Dangers". At first glance, "Tips" is disguised as a helpful article to reference for readers in a dire situation caused by their procrastination habits. However, as the reader progresses into the article, they may begin to notice the large amounts of irony from the author. The author suggests the reader to "prepare [themselves] for likely answers by writing 'A', 'B', 'C', and 'D' on flash cards", a tactic clearly of no use (1). By proposing these solutions, the author exaggerates the poor situation of the reader, emphasizing the fact that there is nothing they can do to boost their grades with so little time but to memorize useless information.

Conversely, "Procrastination Dangers" does not put into perspective the hole the reader has dug for themselves. Instead, it may even provide some comfort and self-justifying excuses for the reader. Due to this, the reader may not take the information as to-heart as one would while reading "Tips". Additionally, "Procrastination Dangers", instead of choosing to target the reader's specific situation, provides insight on broad categories of the population and lists them off in large paragraphs. Some of these generalized categories mentioned include "students", "employers", "coworkers", and many more (Itamar). "Tips" on the other hand contains small references to personal anecdotes, appealing to the reader's pathos especially in the last tip, claiming that the reader has "had more opportunities, privilege, and support than anyone in [their] family's history" (1). This direct claim may have a significant impact on students who have procrastinated their time away from doing assignments, truly bringing to their attention how

much time was wasted not doing their work despite how much encouragement or support they have received from their community. This would likely motivate them to do better in the future, to succeed in order to not disappoint the people around them who have faith in their success. Given that “Procrastination Dangers” is not able to connect with people on that emotional level, readers may not feel that extra encouragement or push to change procrastination habits, resulting in a continuation of their poor actions. Although “Procrastination Dangers” does appeal to ethos by providing the reader with hard facts and statistics, it is not in a way that significantly resonates with the reader. Simply stating “94% of people...18% indicated that...over 80% of...” does allow the reader to understand the situation as a whole to a greater extent, though it does not mention where the reader may fall within those percentages or what greater implications they may have (Itamar). Though a general survey has been reported on, personal and emotional experiences of people who suffer with procrastination are silenced and readers of the article may not fully comprehend the severity of the situation.

Different approaches at addressing issues result in very different results and impacts on the reader. Satirical articles such as “Tips For Last-Minute Test Cramming” have stronger abilities to connect on a personal level to the reader, allowing the writing to truly resonate. This would likely encourage the reader to change their poor habits as they have been brought to attention and clearly highlighted. “Procrastination Dangers: The Negative Effects of Procrastination” consists of a serious tone, and though appeals to ethos with hard facts, does not call to attention the behavior of the reader. In order to truly resonate with a reader and spark a desire to change, there must be enough emotion for the reader to learn from the mistakes of others. With just facts and statistics, the true depth of the situation is not put into perspective for the reader.

Works Cited

Shatz, Itamar. "Procrastination Dangers: The Negative Effects of Procrastination." *Solving Procrastination*, solvingprocrastination.com/procrastination-dangers/.

"Tips For Last-Minute Test Cramming". (1)