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Keeping Up With the Bidens

In Joe Biden's first presidential speech, he made it clear that he wanted to bridge the divide caused by American politics. This was and still is a huge issue, as according to an article by AP News, 77 percent of Americans said that the country is more divided than ever (AP News). The 2024 election proved just that, as politicians relentlessly targeted others for personal gain, sparking fires that burned America's political landscape. Joe Biden's recent actions are an epitome of this sentiment, as he recently pardoned his son from federal gun felonies and tax convictions (AP News). As a result, many Democrats and Republicans were angered and shocked at the fact that Biden was using his power for personal gain before he left the office. This led to multiple news stories criticizing Biden and his selfishness, with two examples being an editorial about Biden, as well as a satire. Ball's Op-Ed, titled "Biden's ill-advised pardon of his son is the tip of the iceberg", focused on Biden's hypocrisy. Specifically, the piece narrowed in on how Biden has promised not to intervene, only to do so a few months after. The satire piece titled "Suspicious? Biden Pardons Hunter For Anything He Might Do Tonight Between 2:30 and 4:17 AM Outside The Capitol Heights Applebee's" by the Babylon Bee argued the same point, utilizing different satirical devices to demonstrate the corruption and unfairness associated with Biden's recent action. However, one piece was much more effective in conveying this message as opposed to the other. Ultimately, while Ball's Op-Ed piece provides factual statements and appeals to empathy that support his argument, Babylon Bee's satire is much more effective in

criticizing Biden's pardon through its usage of imagery and reductio ad absurdum, as well as through its use of a more appealing tone.

While Ball's piece provides factual and emotionally-driven statements about Biden's pardon, its condescending and accusatory tone takes away from the argument that the piece is trying to make. Throughout Ball's piece, he utilizes statistics in an attempt to criticize Biden's actions. For instance, when speaking on Biden's hypocrisy, Ball asserted that, "President Biden denied he would pardon Hunter on 10 documented occasions going back to July 2023, with the latest being in November" (Ball). In particular, this statistic shows the deceit present in this situation; Biden stated multiple times that he would make sure he wouldn't pardon his son, and then went on to pardon his son months later. Furthermore, Ball goes on to add more logic-based statements. To illustrate, he exclaimed how Biden's administration interfered with the election, stating that "fifty-one former US intelligence agency leaders signed a pre-election letter" about how Hunter Biden's laptop was involved in a Russian disinformation campaign. Ball strives to show how major "core institutions" such as the FBI and DOJ are extremely corrupt in Biden's favor, as they wrote off Hunter Biden's wrongdoings as the fault of a foreign country. Clearly, through his use of statistics and logic, Ball is able to advocate for the idea that Biden's pardon was an unfair and corrupt action.

To cement these claims, Ball also portrays his own emotions. For instance, when speaking on the corruption in Biden's administration, he wrote, "Whistleblowers revealed that the DOJ blocked an IRS investigation, and resulting charging recommendations, for Hunter because they assessed that such revelations could hurt Biden's re-election chances. More election interference. Imagine that?" (Ball). Ball portrays his feelings about Biden, specifically citing how the 2020 election was interfered with, a conspiracy theory held by many. Additionally, this

pattern where Ball presents a fact and then follows it up with his own comments is scattered throughout the piece. Ball clearly and succinctly explains how Biden, Hunter, and the rest of the government are made up of corrupt frauds who only serve themselves. As it turns out, both of these choices turn out to be effective, as he is able to make a very convincing argument. However, his tone when conveying this comes off as very aggressive, ultimately adding in a factor that weakens his claims. Ball begins the piece by writing that Hunter Biden is “a narcissistic, sociopathic bum, saved in life by the fact that his father was a senator, vice-president and then president” (Ball). Calling Hunter Biden a narcissistic and sociopathic bum clearly portrays Ball’s anger, and it is obvious that Ball disagrees with the pardon. Nonetheless, the way in which he does so polarizes his audience. He then goes on to refer to Biden and his family as the “Biden crime family”, and writes that the audience should be aware about “a plethora of pardons for political and agency cronies” (Ball). Through his condemnatory language, Ball clearly establishes his views on Biden and the Democratic Party as a whole, but this component of his argument is what makes it much less convincing, especially when considering that a study by the National Library of Medicine found that a clear majority of Republicans and Democrats reported that they enjoy reading more neutral news sources. While Ball is able to get his point across, he does so in an accusatory way, ultimately distancing himself from his intended audience. All in all, while Ball’s logical statements and use of pathos allow for him to make a convincing argument, his overly critical tone reduces his argument’s strength by a substantial amount.

On the contrary, The Babylon Bee’s satire is much more effective in conveying its message through its use of *reductio ad absurdum* and caricatures to effectively convey the criticism of Biden’s pardon in a humorous way. The satire begins by stating that Biden has

pardoned his son again for “what he may or may not do tonight between 2:30 AM and 4:17 AM outside the Capitol Heights Applebee’s” (Babylon Bee). The statement is clearly absurd, as the location mentioned doesn’t seem like a place where anything that could affect the country would occur. The satire then continues, writing that, “Representative Thomas Massie quickly moved to have the president impeached but was talked out of it by colleagues who noted that the President had also just pardoned himself from all future impeachments” (Babylon Bee). Through statements such as these, the satire is able to criticize Biden’s pardon in a way that not only pokes fun at the whole situation but also indicates that this situation is “unfair”. The satire is able to convince the reader that this pardon is hypocritical, showing how this power has been taken advantage of by Biden.

Furthermore, through the use of caricatures, the satire is able to strengthen its main argument. For instance, the mentioning of Applebee’s adds a layer of humor to the joke due to its specificity and relatability. The satire even goes further, stating how Biden proclaimed that, “I hereby exempt my son from anything that may or may not occur at this very specific time behind the green dumpster behind Applebee’s” (Babylon Bee). Through these specific jokes, the audience can imagine the exaggerated scene set by the piece. This serves as a way to further the overall humor, while simultaneously criticizing Biden’s actions. However, the one major factor that sets both pieces apart is the tone. In Ball’s piece, the tone is very biting and critical, essentially isolating the reader from its beliefs. On the other hand, the satire is much more relatable and humorous. In fact, according to an article by the Stanford Business School, humor allows for people to connect with their audience on a deeper level. This tone is much more inviting, allowing readers to enjoy the piece while contemplating the hypocrisy regarding

Biden's pardon. To put it simply, the satire provides a much more digestible argument that is able to get across to the audience.

All in all, it is clear that the satire is much more effective in achieving its goal. While Ball's piece provides logical arguments that express a clear idea, its confrontational tone has the ability to steer an audience away. In contrast, the satire by the Babylon Bee is much more effective at being inviting while also proving its point about Biden's selfishness. Through all of this, it is evident that America's political landscape is about as fragile as a piece of glass; one singular action can be perceived as a declaration of war, further widening the gap between the citizens of the Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave.

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