



Helena as Rhetorical Superhero in *Ark Survival Evolved*

Alexander Davis

1. Rhetoric, while the word by itself means implies the use of subtle persuasion tactics to figuratively control an audience, the word has fewer sinister connotations than its definition implies. Much in the same thinking that Drs. Elizabeth Losh and Jonathan Alexander demonstrate in *Understanding Rhetoric* persuasive tactics can be used to encourage people to do great things as well as stimulate new ideas and thinking. Those who can expertly use rhetoric to benefit themselves and entice others to conform to another way of thinking can be considered rhetorical superheroes!
2. As far as rhetorical superheroes are concerned, the individual I consider the best for this role would be an anomaly (if you play the game, you'd understand the reference) if there ever was one. I chose Helena from *Ark Survival Evolved* because of the incorporeal nature of her character and the underlying support she provides throughout the gameplay. Generally, I would consider fictional characters to be more support structures rather than an individualized hero, and while the argument can be made that traditional superheroes all have their own story arcs and backgrounds they always seem to take on a background role when their universes join. Helena however, seems to do the opposite as the player exists within her world of success, failures, and change.
3. To elaborate on this, I think it is important to have a strong understanding as to what kind of game Helena is tied to. That game is, *Ark Survival Evolved* which is a 1-200 player competitive survival game that takes place in a variety of Chapters which can be referred

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to as follows: Chapter 1 - The Island, Chapter 2 - Aberration, and Chapter 3 - Extinction. Each unique chapter varies in space, time, and environment but one factor seems to be constant no matter where or when the story takes place, and that factor is DINOSAURS. Using your enemies-turned-friend prehistoric compatriots and the game's unique level-based knowledge system players are placed into a seemingly boundless world of creativity and freedom. Within this world(s), players can unite themselves in tribes to build bases and conquer this world known as the Ark or attempt to face these challenges alone and become the sole conqueror of the unknown.

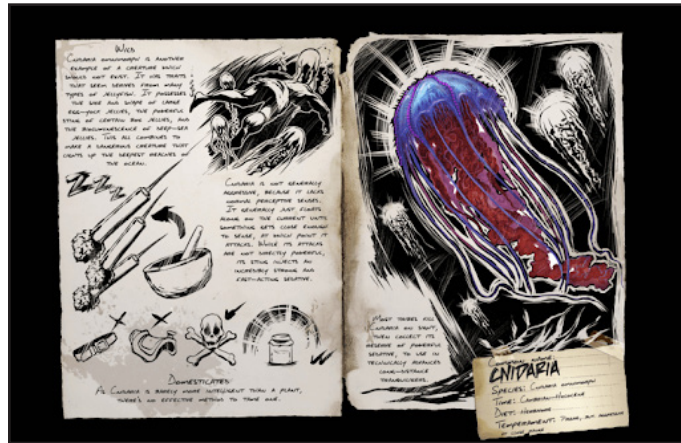


Figure 1: "Screenshot :: Is...is That a Buster Sword? (Don't Worry, Santiago, We'll Be Your Living Legacy!) XD XD XD." Steam Community, steamcommunity.com/sharedfiles/filedetails/?id=1561664726.

4. So how does this apply to rhetoric? That's a great question, and it is most apparent when players explore the pre-existing structures of the map, which begin to reveal some interesting secrets of civilizations and the overall purpose of the Ark. Furthermore, as players explore these structures they can come across sealed vessels containing "Explorer Notes" which contain pieces of history of this world written by survivors of this land who have since disappeared. Now ordinarily this would just be cool information to be collected by players, but upon evaluation of these notes (explicitly from Chapter 1) players can see that the notes are signed by various individuals, and one name seems to be more reoccurring than others. That name is Helena, and her notes provide vital information about the various species of the Ark and the unique history she began to uncover. So while players must take the initiative to find these notes to uncover information about how to pacify the violent dinosaurs and survive

in this harsh environment, Helena quickly proves herself to be an extremely reliable source of information that players do not soon question (Ethos). In my opinion, the most helpful note Helena has provided players within The Island experience is her information about the Cnidaria, which is a terrifying foe for even the most experienced of players. While many players would simply avoid these enemies at all costs, Helena reveals that killing this species of jellyfish and harvesting its bio-toxin can have a variety of applications to further player/human advancement in the game. As seen in Figure 1, this toxicant can be used to form a cure for a deadly disease, which is known as Swamp Fever which otherwise affects the player indefinitely. Considering that this is only one of Helena's 104 notes about local wildlife, I can confidently say that Helena is the most experienced and knowledgeable resource for players which is why her experience is so critical to success in the Arks. The sheer amount of information present in each of her notes, allows even the most novice of players to become well versed in any particular species in the Ark. This level of detail and accuracy, is what establishes Helena's ethos throughout the game.

5. To continue, while most consider this game to be a sandbox (containing no storyline and/or ending) game dedicated players have found a variety of "Bosses" to challenge to further their evolution within the Ark. After overcoming the immense challenges that correlate to the various bosses, players are rewarded with a beautiful cinematic experience in which a bodiless voice begs players to help "save the Arks from the Corruption as you (the player) are their only hope" [1]. This disembodied voice is the player's first opportunity to hear Helena's life story in real-time before she begs players to do what she and her fallen comrades (the authors of the other notes) could not do before players wake up within Chapter 2. Helena's plea serve as a level of encouragement for dedicated and novice players alike, as it allows them to feel that they are serving some greater purpose to benefit somebody else. Helena uses player's empathy as a source of motivation, that is to say that Helena provides players with the perfect opportunity to become a "knight in shining armor" in this story, and very few would pass up such an opportunity.
6. While this plea is seemingly nothing more than enticement for players to continue progressing through the game, the potential for players to become the "knight in shining armor", or to be more

accurate to the game “knight in a monstrosity of blood stained scrap metal” serves as a way to humanize the authors of the notes and establish a common objective for all players. This plea also comes at a critical point for players, as it can be considered their “grounding point”, or rather their tether to humanity. The plea and Helena’s story are the motivation for the player’s progression into Chapter 2, however, this chapter is full of challenging obstacles, inhospitable environments, and biological nightmares. Yet, it is Helena’s story that keeps players going throughout these difficult times. The timing of Helena’s appearance was extremely strategic, as it happened at a time just prior to when players would need motivation the most, Helena’s words gave players a purpose in an otherwise blank world. Helena’s plea and the dramatic transition for the closing of Chapter 1 is a foundation for my belief that Helena expertly uses pathos and kairos to encourage players to continue on this treacherous journey.

7. Chapter 2, much like Chapter 1, has the same goal and “survival tactics” within this new environment known as Aberration. Once again, dedicated players can find explorer notes left by Helena throughout the map to gain a better understanding of the world they are forced to survive within. These notes, however, possess logistical theories about the Arks themselves, about how they exist, and their overall purpose. Once again, Helena establishes herself as an extremely knowledgeable source about the Arks with theories and conclusions that are more in-depth than players could have ever imagined. This information allows players to become well-versed in the issues surrounding this current chapter, and to “test” the reliability of this bodiless ally. This chapter in particular, allows players to test Helena’s theories about the Arks and local wildlife through methods of trial and error, players have the ability to directly test Helena’s theory about surviving the intense radiation found in isolated locations and how to repurpose that radiation into viable power source, and to player’s surprise, it worked! Through the intense testing of Helena’s theories by players, it is apparent that she is extremely credible in most manners (those that can be tested), however, it is also through the testing of these theories that players would eventually come face to face with the boss of this chapter.
8. In a brief summary of Chapter 2 (which does not do this chapter justice as it is by far the most difficult chapter), players once again must challenge themselves to become the most advanced and

adaptable species on this Ark to one day challenge the boss of this Ark which Helena will later reveal to be her incorrigible friend, Rockwell. During an intense battle between the player(s) and Rockwell, Helena once again makes an auditory “appearance” to describe how to overcome this obstacle. Granted, players at this stage in the game would already be in the process of defeating Rockwell, but Helena’s useful advice and tactical thinking can make or break their advancement in the journey of evolution. Then if the player(s) emerge successful, they are once again greeted with a cinematic, where Helena begins to describe the “Corruption” once again attacking another Ark.

9. Once more, Helena takes advantage of the player’s feelings of joy (which are tied to defeating such an immense challenge) as well as the player’s current position of strength to convince players to embark on a quest far more challenging than ever before in Extinction. However, this new Ark (Chapter 3) is unlike the others as Helena describes in detail the challenges that players must overcome, the same one she and her allies faced before their tragedy at the “final” boss, “The King Titan” of Chapter 3. These two chapters (2 & 3) provide many dimensions of support in my theory of Helena being a rhetorical superhero, as these chapters have many occurrences of Helena’s words being the primary force encouraging players’ progression, as well as the crucialness of her notes to player survival. The information detailed in her notes focuses mostly on the events leading up to her battle with the King Titan, which serves as almost a personal challenge to players who would view her warnings as an insult to their capabilities. Furthermore, Helena also crafts the notes of this chapter to resemble challenges and provide strategic information indirectly, which unconsciously affects how players would embrace this new Ark. The best example of this would be Helena’s reference to the MegaMek being the absolute embodiment of power for her tribe, and how its failure led to many losses. Ordinarily, many players would view this as nothing more than background information, but it was intended to be more than that. This reference to such a powerful weapon unconsciously affects a player’s approach to the new chapter, as some would attempt to rebuild this weapon for their own applications, and some would simply look for alternative methods for achieving their goals. The structure of Helena’s notes accounted for both of these thoughts, which is why the mention of this weaponry

would indirectly have players achieving Helena's goal rather than their own. Helena wanted players to become stronger and more advanced than anything else seen on the Arks, which is why she provided players with so much baseline information on how to survive, but references materials that can still be achieved with greater power. Which is why, when considering these two factors as a player, it is clear to see that you are participating in Helena's journey more so than your own and her guidance and "protection" can be attributed to much of your success.

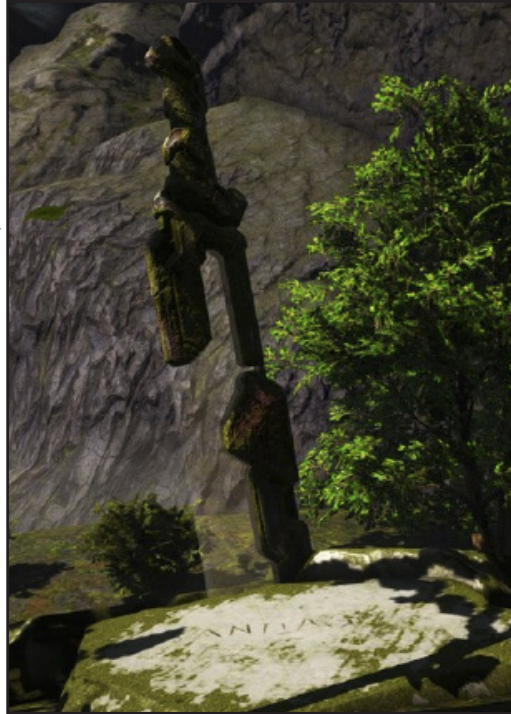


Figure 2. "ARK Dino Dossier & Explorer Note Locations Guide." GameDB, 20 Nov. 2019, gamedb.gg/games/ark-survival-evolved/dossier-explorer-note-locations-guide/.

10. To continue with the storyline, this newest cinematic and Chapter 3's explorer notes force players to develop a personal hatred toward the King Titan as there are many heartbreaking visuals and calculations behind Helena's attack on the boss of this Ark. Within the explore notes, players read about how Helena's closest friend died in the battle against the King Titan while Helena and her tribe only manage to leave a scar on this Titan's chest. Helena's notes and impassioned pleas from earlier chapters have put players in a massive debt to Helena, both physically and figuratively. Without Helena, players would not have reached this point in their journey, so with her disappearance humanity has lost a vital support to its survival. Chapter 3's explorer notes provide a plane of reference for players to understand the kind of challenge they face, as well as to humanize their unseen ally. When notes hint at her disappearance, the hatred toward the King Titan reaches its climax, and a new mission for Chapter 3 is established.
11. This entire chapter uses Pathos and Logos to drive players to build up an army before participating in this taxing battle,

which is otherwise unnecessary to survival. Chapter 3, had players participating in an intense vendetta against a monster they had only ever read about to accomplish nothing more than to allow Helena and her allies to finally rest at ease knowing that their “killer” and theorized source of the Corruption had finally been defeated, a memoir to this can be seen in Figure 2. Helena uses the player’s past reliance on her notes and the information present in her notes, which she new other survivors would have to encounter in order to reach this point in evolution, in order to provide a source of motivation for players. A similar example of this methodology would be, using a guest speaker who has endured a traumatic experience to entice viewers to support/buy a person/product. Helena predicted the survivors reliance on her notes, and used it in order to “drag” players from chapter to chapter with nothing more than segments of her own knowledge and the player’s own strength and strategy . There was no concrete mission for survivors (other than to survive), but due to Helena’s ability to entice and encourage players, there is soon a massive departure on the mission to avenge a fallen friend, which begins without hesitation.

12. Though this would be far too happy of an ending for the story of the Arks, the cinematic that followed this fight had Helena praising players for accomplishing what she could not and thanking them for being the “hero of the Arks” [1], which is yet another embracement of the player’s own feelings of accomplishment. As seen in the paragraphs above Helena expertly used Pathos through her methods of encouraging players to participate in an unnecessary trial, Ethos through her vast knowledge of the various species of the arks, and Logos with her ability to use precise yet encouraging language at key moments in order to have players overcome immense obstacles that they otherwise would not have had any involvement with. Her masterful “hero entrance” during cinematics and “boss-fights” encouraged players to carry out her wishes and dream without question or hesitation. Which is why I believe that if enticing a legion of complete strangers to unite and defeat multiple “universal” threats is not the definition of a rhetorical superhero, I’m not sure who or what could be worthy of such a title.
13. In conclusion, I feel confident that the title of “rhetorical superhero” is appropriately bestowed upon Helena for her unwavering support towards players as they attempt to survive in

such a calamitous world along with her in-depth calculations and theories about the “story” of the Arks. Finally, her “superhero entrance” during the boss fight in Chapter 2 undoubtedly convinced players that she was the most qualified person to lead them into the future and provide stability to the Arks which is what brought me to the belief that she is a rhetorical superhero.

Work Cited

[1] “ARK: Survival Evolved Wiki.” Official ARK: Survival Evolved Wiki, ark.gamepedia.com/ARK_Survival_Evolved_Wiki.

Instructor: Netta Baker (Advanced Instructor)

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Project Two: Rhetorical Superheroes (24%)

Blueprint

✓ Published

 Edit



Basics



Length: 1500-1800 words (5-7 pages, double-spaced)

Rough Draft Due (for Peer Review): Thursday, November 5th

Final Draft Due: Tuesday, November 10th

Overview



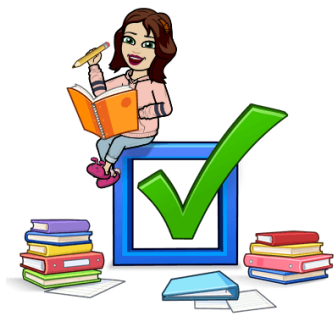
Our second project this semester invites you to develop an account of an especially effective rhetor – someone who, in speech or in writing, proved persuasive in a specific situation. We will consider this effective communicator to be a "rhetorical superhero." This means that your account should examine the specific qualities, tactics, or "powers" the person put to use in changing the hearts,

minds, or actions of others or in compelling assent (i.e., getting people to nod their heads in agreement).

To start, you should begin to think about what makes a *superhero* super. Superheroes have special powers, right? They are usually able to adapt their identities in such a way that foregrounds some distinctive measure of speed, strength, magic, or energy. In *Understanding Rhetoric*, although the figure is purely fictional, [Metamorph](https://bookshelf.vitalsource.com/#/books/9781319401597/pageid/163) (<https://bookshelf.vitalsource.com/#/books/9781319401597/pageid/163>) should begin to give you ideas about what a rhetorical superhero might do. Another source of ideas might be the [Clifton Strengths assessment](https://experience.vt.edu/strengths.html) (<https://experience.vt.edu/strengths.html>) all first-year students at Virginia Tech complete. Strengths, in this context, are qualities that distinguish one person from the next and that help us make choices about how we want to develop, sometimes by keying on what we are already good at, and sometimes by finding opportunities for growth in areas we might not already be as proficient with.

As you begin to write, remember that this is a *profile* piece. It should be focused on **one** person or character in just **one** specific situation (i.e., 1 speech or essay, one scene, one song or performance/video, etc.).

Steps



1. Choose the rhetor. This can be a character, performer, organization, or individual. Stay away from individuals/organizations who have already been written about extensively (i.e., most political figures and groups have been analyzed ad nauseam by experts, making them unsuited for this project which is an exercise in independent rhetorical analysis)

2. Choose a rhetorical situation. Once you have a specific person, you will need to choose a specific "rhetorical artifact," this means a specific speech, scene, song, poster, performance or document of your chosen rhetor.

3. Analyzing the Rhetorical Artifact. Once you have your selected rhetor and rhetorical artifact, you have what you need to begin analyzing your rhetorical superhero.

Remember: Our Invention Portfolio Items/Discussions each week will help you develop all the important content for each of the steps above.

Important Details to Include

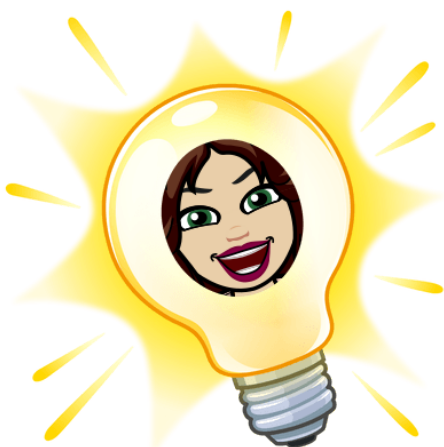


Provide sufficient context: Your project should tell readers about the chosen rhetor and provide a fully developed description of the artifact, its message/purpose and its target audience.

Utilize rhetoric's vocabulary: just like any other field, rhetoric has important vocabulary that allows you to professionally articulate the causes of rhetorical success or failure. Your paper **must** use rhetorical terms such as *ethos*, *pathos*, *logos*, and *kairos* to explain the rhetor's effectiveness.

Include evidence for all claims: evidence for a rhetorical analysis might include memory (what you remember about an event), an artifact (a copy of the effective document or a transcript of a speech), a photograph or video, an interview with the rhetor, or second-hand accounts from others who witnessed the event.

Guiding Questions



Introduction

- How has your understanding of rhetoric evolved over the years? Who is your selected rhetor (your rhetorical superhero)?
- What is the rhetorical context of the specific speech/situation you've chosen?
- Why do you find this rhetor and moment particularly appealing? Be sure to **briefly** use rhetorical concepts here to pin this appeal down: why do they have ethos with you? Why do you find their uses of pathos persuasive or appealing? Why do you view them as reasonable (*logos*)? Why is their presence in your life timely (*kairos*)?
- Why do you believe they might appeal to others? Why is the artifact you've chosen a good example of their appeal?

Body Paragraphs

(minimum of 7 body paragraphs, 1 for *kairos*, 2 for *pathos*, 2 for *ethos*, 2 for *logos*)

- What is the ***kairos*** of the artifact for its target audience? (e.g., why is it timely for them?)
- What are two moments where the rhetor utilizes ***pathos*** in the artifact? What do they want their audience to feel in these moments? To what degree do they succeed and why?
- What are two moments where the rhetor strengthens their ***ethos*** with the audience? What do they want their audience to think about them as an author/speaker/leader, etc.? To what degree do they succeed and why?
- What are two moments where the rhetor uses particularly strong ***logos*** (audience-based reasoning)? What claim/reason do they present? What supporting evidence? Why will the audience accept this proof and value this reasoning?

Conclusion

- How did the rhetor learn to use these rhetorical strategies? Do you think the uses were strategic and planned? Or accidental and improvised? Why?

Level Ups (optional)



Level-Ups are value-added badges, of sorts. They offer you the incentive of doing something a little extra both to level-up your writing practice and also to gain experience with some aspect of development that will enrich your work. **To claim a level-up, simply add a note in your project at the location where you have applied the level-up, like this [Level-Up One - Photographic Evidence] or [Level-Up Two - Source Integration].** There are two boosts available for Project Two. Each will also affect your project's evaluation, benefiting the project with a slight increase in credit if executed successfully.

Level-Up One - Photographic Evidence

Include a photograph of the rhetor.

Level-Up Two - Source Integration

Integrate and synthesize a source that adds another layer of understanding to your analysis of the rhetor. This could be a YouTube video, article, or other source that provides commentary, information, or analysis of the rhetor or a topic related to their speech. To acquire full points, you'll need to synthesize a quote or paraphrase from the source in one paragraph of your analysis. This means introduce the quote the quote/paraphrase, cite in the text and Works Cited according to MLA, and explain how it further expands your understanding of the rhetor's rhetorical effectiveness.

Invention Portfolio Contents

The invention portfolio amounts to a small collection of writings, notes, reflections, and annotations that lend a broader base to your thinking through and deciding about directions to take for Project Two. Invention is a key rhetorical concept in that it names the processes and practices relating to how we come up with what we write or what we say when we speak. With this in mind, the Invention Portfolio is a collection of smaller, everyday writing prompted for you to do as the project

begins to take shape.

Points 60

Submitting a website url

Due	For	Available from	Until
Nov 10	Everyone	-	-

Project Two Rubric (Rhetorical Superheroes - Rhetorical Analysis)

You've already rated students with this rubric. Any major changes could affect their assessment results.

Criteria	Ratings				
Introduction - Focus & Purpose: The introduction immediately focuses readers on the selected rhetor and selected artifact. Ends with a clear thesis that argues for the rhetor's successful use of rhetorical appeals with the target audience	A	B	C	D	F
Introduction - Development: provides a concise yet thorough description of the artifact's rhetorical context, including message and purpose, and brief audience analysis.	A	B	C	D	F
Introduction - Organization: Organizes ideas from the basic (rhetor, artifact) to the more detailed (message/purpose and audience analysis) and finally to the focus of the paper: rhetorical analysis	A	B	C	D	F
Body Paragraphs - Organization: Organizes content to anticipate reader questions, skepticism, and concerns (most likely successful strategy: kaios, pathos, ethos, logos).	A	B	C	D	F
Kairos - Organization: utilizes a Three-Ex strategy to guide readers through the analysis in a logical and easy to follow order.	A	B	C	D	F
Kairos - Focus & Purpose: utilizes accurate defining language to explain the analysis of the rhetorical appeal	A	B	C	D	F
Kairos - Development: the writer connects their analysis of the appeal's success or failure to specific values, concerns, experiences, knowledge, etc. of the target audience.	A	B	C	D	F
Pathos - Organization: utilizes Three-Ex strategy to organize the ideas in a logical and easy to follow order.	A	B	C	D	F
Pathos - Focus & Purpose: the writer utilizes accurate defining language to define the rhetorical appeal. Accurate defining language should reference emotional or physiological responses in the target audience. Such language includes (but is not limited to): anger, love, joy, happiness, fear, sadness, discomfort, uncomfortable, secure, safe, relieved, etc.	A	B	C	D	F
Pathos - Development: the writer connects their analysis of the appeal's success or failure to specific values, concerns, experiences, knowledge, etc. of the target audience.	A	B	C	D	F
Ethos - Organization: utilizes a Three-Ex strategy to guide readers through the analysis in a logical and easy to follow order.	A	B	C	D	F

Criteria	Ratings				
Ethos - Focus & Purpose: utilizes accurate defining language to explain the analysis of the rhetorical appeal (wording that indicates the audience views the author as: trustworthy, credible, authoritative, knowledgeable, sharing their values, reaching out to them, relatable, caring, etc.)	A	B	C	D	F
Ethos - Development: the writer connects their analysis of the appeal's success or failure to specific values, concerns, experiences, knowledge, etc. of the target audience.	A	B	C	D	F
Logos - Organization: utilizes a Three-Ex strategy to guide readers through the analysis in a logical and easy to follow order.	A	B	C	D	F
Logos - Focus & Purpose: utilizes accurate defining language to explain the analysis of the rhetorical appeal. Should break down two distinct enthymemes utilizing enthymeme language (claim, reason, warrant, evidence)	A	B	C	D	F
Logos - Development: the writer connects their analysis of the appeal's success or failure to specific values, concerns, experiences, knowledge, etc. of the target audience.	A	B	C	D	F
Conclusion - Organization: the conclusions organizes ideas in a logical and easy to follow order	A	B	C	D	F
Conclusion - Focus & Purpose: the conclusions serves to make a final, concise and cohesive argument for the writer's analysis of their chosen rhetor's success	A	B	C	D	F
Conclusion - Development: the conclusion identifies the rhetor's greatest rhetorical weakness and strengths, and reminds readers of the audience traits contributing most to the rhetor's success	A	B	C	D	F