

WRITING: A Guide for College and Beyond

© 2007

Faigley

ISBN 0-321-39626-X

Visit www.ablongman.com/relocator to contact your local Allyn & Bacon/Longman representative.

Chapter begins on next page >>

SAMPLE CHAPTER

The pages of this Sample Chapter may have slight variations in final published form.

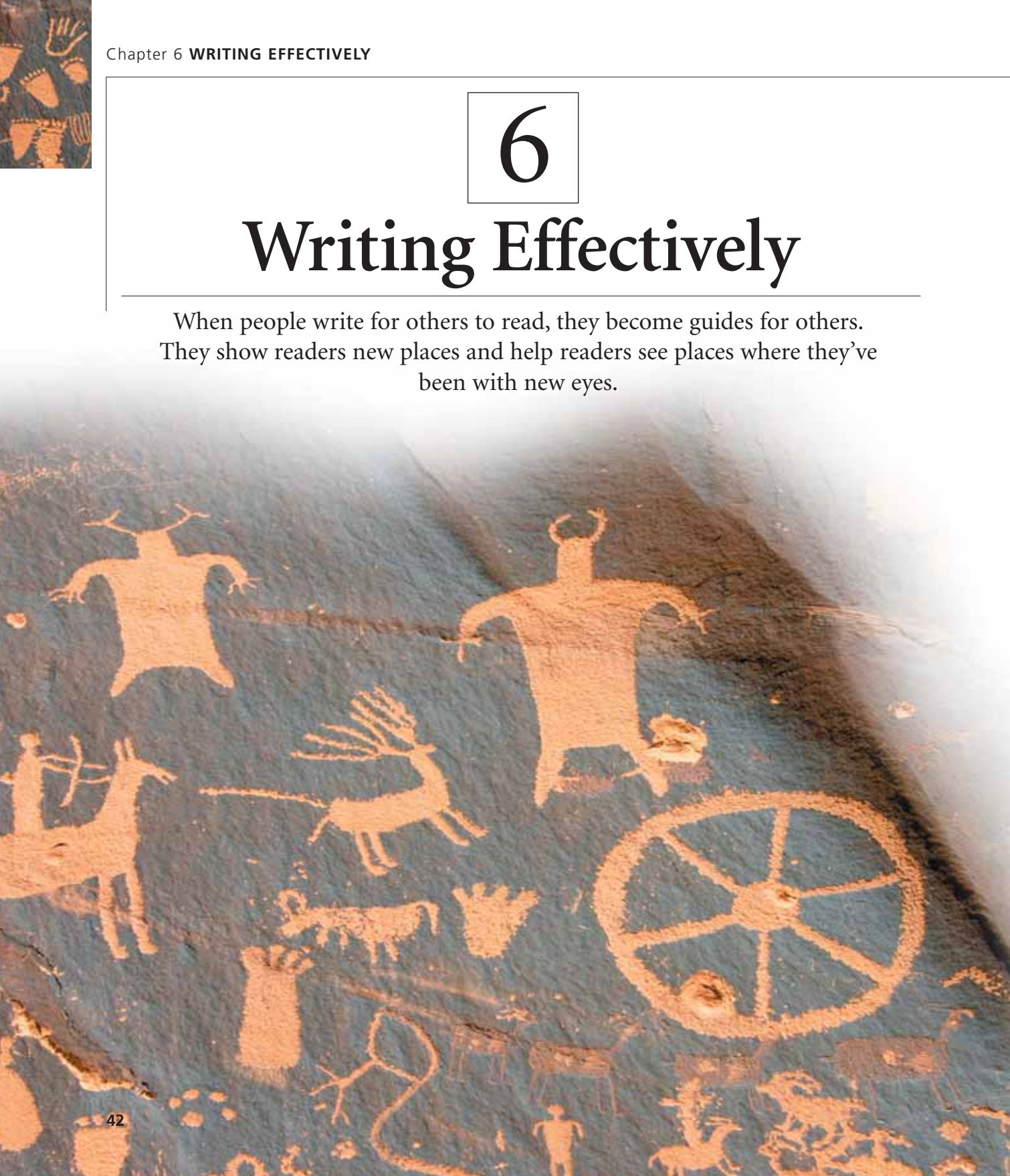


ALLYN & BACON/LONGMAN
www.ablongman.com

6

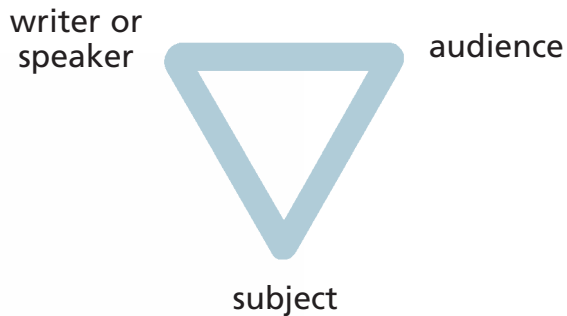
Writing Effectively

When people write for others to read, they become guides for others. They show readers new places and help readers see places where they've been with new eyes.



Understand the rhetorical situation

At the most basic level, communication involves the interaction of three things: the writer or speaker, the audience, and the subject. These three elements are often represented by a triangle.



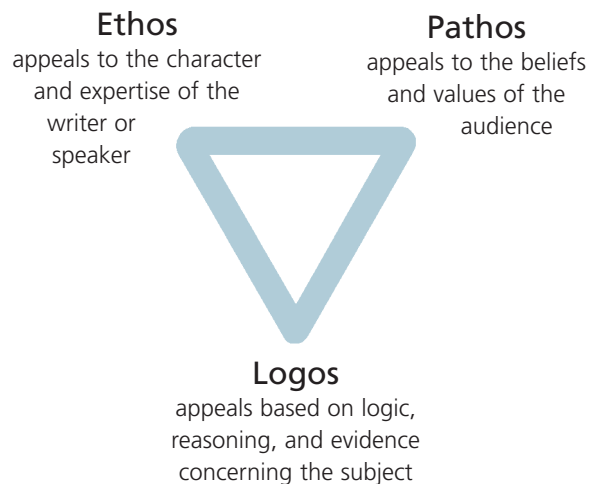
All three elements—speaker, subject, and audience—are necessary for an act of communication to occur. Think about all the times you talk and listen in a day. Who are the people you talk with regularly? What do you talk about? Even if you are talking to or writing to yourself, you still have an audience. And all three elements are in a dynamic relationship. Every one of us makes adjustments depending on our audience (think of how you talk to small children). Just as speakers adjust to audiences, audiences continually adjust to speakers (think of how your attitude toward a speaker changes for the better when that person can make you laugh).

Persuade others

The ancient Greeks recognized that the dynamic nature of the rhetorical triangle is the key to understanding how an audience is persuaded. Aristotle (384–323 BCE) defined rhetoric as the art of finding the best available means of persuasion in any situation. He set out three primary tactics of persuasion: appeals based on the trustworthiness of the speaker (ethos); appeals to the emotions and deepest-held values of the audience (pathos); and appeals to logic, reasoning, and evidence (logos).

These appeals likewise can be represented using the rhetorical triangle.

Aristotle's insight about how people can be persuaded remains relevant today. To give an example, imagine that you drive every day on Lakeside Boulevard, a divided highway with a grass median. You've read about numerous accidents on Lakeside Boulevard and witnessed two horrible accidents, when cars and trucks skidded across the median and collided head-on with traffic in the opposite lanes. You want your city council to vote to erect a concrete barrier that will prevent these frequent head-on collisions. One approach would be to use logic and evidence, documenting that Lakeside Boulevard has far more fatal accidents per mile than other streets in your city (logos). Another would be to invite an expert on traffic safety to speak to the city council (ethos). A third way would be to appeal to the council about the unnecessary loss of life caused by the unsafe street (pathos). Often you will use all of these appeals to gain support of an audience.



Think about your audience

When you talk with someone face-to-face, you receive constant feedback from that person, even when you're doing all the talking. Your listener may nod in agreement, frown, act bored, and give you a variety of other signals.

Unless your listener is deliberately acting, you have a sense of how they are responding to what you are saying. If your listener looks puzzled, for example, you can try explaining again.

Imagine your readers

When you write, you rarely receive immediate response from readers. Most of the time you don't know exactly how readers will react to what you write. You have to think consciously about your readers and anticipate how they might respond.

Know what college audiences expect

Readers of college writing expect more than what they can find out from a Google search or an online encyclopedia. Facts are easy to obtain from databases and print sources. Readers want to know how these facts are connected.

Good college writing involves an element of surprise. If readers can predict exactly where a writer is going, even if they fully agree, they will either skim to the end or stop reading. Readers expect you to tell them something that they don't know already.



Magazines sell advertising by targeting specific readers. Bring to class a magazine that you read regularly or one that you find interesting. Organize in groups of three or four students and exchange magazines with each other. Look at the articles and the advertising in the magazine.

Analyze your classmate's magazine for these criteria.

1. What is the target age group?
2. What percentages of men and women are likely to read the magazine?
3. What income level is targeted?
4. Is a particular ethnicity being targeted?
5. What else is being assumed about the audience? For magazines that cover a specific subject or activity (for example, backpacking, beauty, snowboarding, parenting, fitness, cats, and so on), what other products and services do you find being advertised?

Share your analysis with other members of your group. Ask the person who brought the magazine you analyzed if he or she agrees with your description of the target audience.



STAYING ON TRACK

Know what college readers expect

Readers expect to be challenged.

Simple answers that can be easily looked up are not adequate.

OFF TRACK:

The United States entered World War II when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. *(This fact is well known and not informative for college readers.)*

ON TRACK:

The war with Japan actually began on July 25, 1941, when President Franklin Roosevelt froze Japanese assets and declared an oil embargo, leaving the Japanese with the choices of abandoning the war with China or neutralizing the United States Navy in order to secure oil resources in Indonesia.

Readers expect claims to be backed up with reasons and evidence.

Simple explanations without support are not adequate.

OFF TRACK:

New York City is an exciting place to live, but I wouldn't want to move there because of the crime. *(Is crime really that much higher in New York City?)*

ON TRACK:

Many people don't know that New York City is the safest large city in the United States according to FBI crime statistics. It even ranks in the top 20 safest cities among the 210 cities with populations over 100,000.

Readers expect complex answers for complex problems.

Simple solutions for complex problems are not adequate.

OFF TRACK:

We need posters urging students not to litter so much on campus. *(Are posters alone likely to solve the problem?)*

ON TRACK:

Most of the litter on our campus is paper, bottles, and cans—all recyclable—yet there are almost no recycle containers on campus. Putting recycle containers in high-litter locations along with a “don't litter” campaign could go a long way toward making our campus cleaner.

Readers expect writers to be engaged.

Readers expect writers to be curious and genuinely concerned about their subjects.

OFF TRACK:

Older people have to deal with too much bureaucracy to obtain health care. *(The statement rings true but doesn't motivate readers.)*

ON TRACK:

After spending seven hours with my 78-year-old aunt on hold on a help line that never answered while sorting through stacks of booklets and forms, I became convinced that the Medicare prescription drug program is an aging American's worst nightmare.

Think about your credibility

Some writers begin with credibility because of who they are. If you wonder what foods compose a balanced meal for your dog, you probably would listen carefully to the advice of a veterinarian. Most

writers, however, have to convince their readers to keep reading by demonstrating knowledge of their subject and concern with their readers' needs.

Think about how you want your readers to see you

To get your readers to take you seriously, you must convince them that they can trust you. You need to get them to see you as

Concerned

Readers want you to be committed to what you are writing about. They also expect you to be concerned with them as readers. After all, if you don't care about them, why should they read what you write?

Well informed


Many people ramble on about any subject without knowing anything about it. If they are family members, you have to suffer their opinions, but it is not enjoyable. College writing requires that you do your homework on a subject.

Fair

Many writers look at only one side of an issue. Readers respect objectivity and an unbiased approach.

Ethical

Many writers use only the facts that support their positions and often distort facts and sources. Critical readers often notice what is being left out. Don't try to conceal what doesn't support your position.



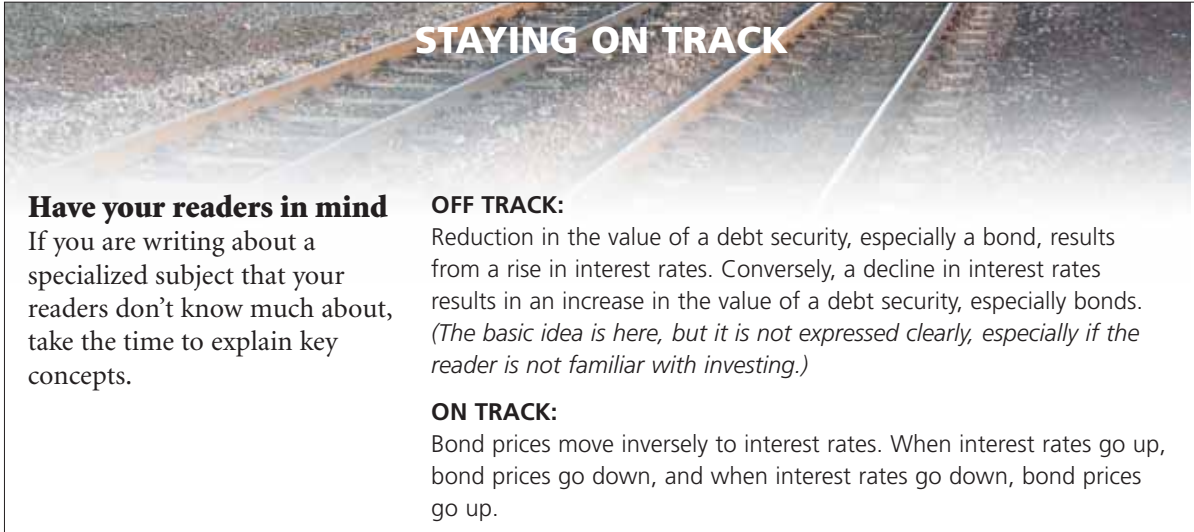
STAYING ON TRACK

Build your credibility

Know what's at stake
What you are writing about should matter to your readers. If its importance is not evident, it's your job to explain why your readers should consider it important.

OFF TRACK:
We should be concerned about two-thirds of Central and South America's 110 brightly colored harlequin frog species becoming extinct in the last twenty years. *(The loss of any species is unfortunate, but the writer gives us no other reason for concern.)*

ON TRACK:
The rapid decline of amphibians worldwide due to global warming may be the advance warning of the loss of cold-weather species such as polar bears, penguins, and reindeer.



STAYING ON TRACK

Have your readers in mind

If you are writing about a specialized subject that your readers don't know much about, take the time to explain key concepts.

OFF TRACK:

Reduction in the value of a debt security, especially a bond, results from a rise in interest rates. Conversely, a decline in interest rates results in an increase in the value of a debt security, especially bonds. *(The basic idea is here, but it is not expressed clearly, especially if the reader is not familiar with investing.)*

ON TRACK:

Bond prices move inversely to interest rates. When interest rates go up, bond prices go down, and when interest rates go down, bond prices go up.

Think about alternative solutions and points of view.

Readers appreciate a writer's ability to see a subject from multiple perspectives.

OFF TRACK:

We will reduce greenhouse gas and global warming only if we greatly increase wind-generated electricity. *(Wind power is an alternative energy source, but it is expensive and many people don't want windmills in scenic areas. The writer also doesn't mention using energy more efficiently.)*

ON TRACK:

If the world is serious about limiting carbon emissions to reduce global warming, then along with increasing efficient energy use, all non-carbon-emitting energy sources must be considered, including nuclear power. Nuclear power now produces about 20 percent of U.S. electricity with no emissions—the equivalent of taking 58 million passenger cars off the road.

Write well

Nothing impresses readers more than graceful, fluent writing that is clear, direct, and forceful. Even if readers don't agree with you in the end, they still will appreciate your writing ability.

OFF TRACK:

Nobody can live today without taking some risks, even very rich people. After all, we don't know what we're breathing in the air. A lot of food has chemicals and hormones in it. There's a big hole in the ozone, so more people will get skin cancer. And a lot of people have sexually transmitted diseases these days. *(The impact of the point is lost with unfocused writing.)*

ON TRACK:

We live in a world of risks beyond our control to the extent that it difficult to think of anything that is risk free down to the most basic human acts—sex in an era of AIDS, eating in an era of genetically altered food, walking outside in an ozone-depleted atmosphere, drinking water and breathing air laden with chemicals whose effects we do not understand.

Become an effective writer

Learning how to write well may be the most important part of your college education. Many surveys that ask college graduates what they most value about their education report that they rank

writing and communication skills far above anything else they learned. If you write well, you will become more confident and more successful in whatever you do.

What makes college writing effective

You can become a successful college writer if you do two things: write regularly and learn what makes writing effective. Effective writing is judged by the following criteria.

On task

The paper or project does what the assignment asks for.

Focused

The paper or project has a clear thesis or main point, and all paragraphs are relevant to that main point.

Organized

The order of the major points and paragraphs is clear to the reader.

Developed

Major points are supported with reasons, evidence, and examples.

Linked

Paragraphs and sentences have transitions that mark relationships.

Stylistically fluent

The sentences are varied and energetic, with active verbs.

Concise

The language is efficient without unnecessary words.

Correct

The final version is free from major errors.

Well designed

The format should be correct, the font readable, the headings consistent, and all photographs and charts clearly labeled.



Effective writing

The qualities of effective writing are evident in Angela Yamashita's essay "Got Roddick?" Her assignment was to select an advertisement and analyze how it makes appeals to ethos, pathos, and logos.

<p style="text-align: right;">Yamashita 1</p> <p>Angela Yamashita ←</p>	<p>The heading is in the correct MLA format. The paper is free of major errors.</p>
<p>Dr. Sanchez</p> <p>English 15</p> <p>12 December 2005</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Got Roddick? ←</p>	<p>The title plays off the theme of the ad and suggests the content.</p>
<p>Andy Roddick is one of the hottest professional athletes today. In 2003 he became the youngest American to finish ranked number one in the ATP rankings, and he's known not only for his excellent playing skills but also for his good looks and easygoing attitude. Ex-boyfriend to popular singer Mandy Moore, Roddick has been thrown into the spotlight and is now a teenage crush. It was his picture that</p>	<p>The writer gets off to a fast start, introducing her subject in the first sentence.</p>
<p>stopped me while leafing through <u>Seventeen</u> and made me take a longer look. Roddick stands staring at the viewer, racquet over his shoulder, leaning against the net on the court. More prominent than his white pants, white tennis shirt, and white towel draped around his neck is the white milk mustache above his upper lip. The ad reads: "Now serving. I'm into power. So I drink milk. It packs 9 essential nutrients into every glass. Which comes in handy whether you're an athlete or an energetic fan." At the bottom of the page is the ad slogan (also in white) "Got Milk?"</p>	<p>The writer engages her subject.</p> <p>Angela describes the ad with specifics.</p>
<p>The "Got Milk?" campaign has published numerous ads that try to convince adults to drink more milk. Everyone from rock groups to actors to athletes have participated in this campaign. In today's caffeine-obsessed society of coffee and soda drinkers, America's Dairy Farmers and Milk Processors (the association that sponsors the "Got Milk?" campaign) felt the need to reverse the decline in milk consumption by advertising milk in a new way. The catchy "Got Milk?" proved to be highly successful, and the campaign has been</p>	<p>Angela provides background information</p>

Yamashita 2



“Got Milk?” ad featuring Andy Roddick

Angela includes the ad along with the caption.

mimicked by many others including “Got cookies?” “Got fish?” “Got fish?” “Got sports?” and even “Got Jesus?” (Philpot). The Andy Roddick ad is typical of the “Got Milk?” series, urging people young and old to drink milk to remain healthy and strong. The Roddick ad primarily uses the appeals of ethos and pathos to persuade its audience. (The one gesture toward logos in the ad is the mention that milk has nine nutrients.)

Angela cites the source of her information.

To establish the ethos of their ads, America’s Dairy Farmers and Milk Processors use celebrity endorsements. The “Got Milk?” campaign has enlisted a range of celebrities popular with young audiences from Kelly Clarkson to Sheryl Crow, Bebe Neuwirth to Ben Roethlisberger, T-Mac (Tracy McGrady) to Bernie Mac. Choosing Andy Roddick, the dominant young male player in American tennis, fits squarely in this lineup. Admired by a strong following of young adults (girls for his looks, boys for his athletic ability), Roddick is an ideal spokesman for establishing that milk is a healthy drink. Implicit in the ad is that milk will help you become a better athlete and better looking too.

Thesis of paper

Repeating “ethos” makes a smooth transition.

Angela explains why Andy Roddick was chosen as a spokesperson.

Yamashita 3

Pathos in the ad is conveyed not simply through Roddick's good looks. His pose is casual, almost slouching, yet his face is serious, one that suggests that he not only means business about playing tennis but also about his drink of choice. The words "I'm into power" don't mess around. They imply that you too can be more powerful by drinking milk. "Now serving" is also in your face, making a play on the word "serving" both as a tennis and a drink term.

The effectiveness of the "Got Milk?" campaign is demonstrated in gallons of milk sold. The campaign began in California in 1993 at a time when milk sales were rapidly eroding. A San Francisco ad agency developed the milk mustache idea, which is credited for stopping the downward trend in milk consumption in California. In 1995 the campaign went national. By 2000 national sales of milk remained consistent in contrast to annual declines in the early 1990s (Stamler). "Got Milk?" gave milk a brand identity that it had previously lacked, allowing it to compete with the well-established identities of Pepsi and Coca-Cola. Milk now has new challengers with more and more people going out to Starbucks and other breakfast bars. Nonetheless, the original formula of using celebrities like Andy Roddick who appeal to younger audiences continues to work. Milk isn't likely to go away soon as a popular beverage.

Angela analyzes the appeals to pathos.

Angela looks closely at the language the ad uses.

The history of the "Got Milk?" campaign is given briefly and the source is documented.

Angela's style is efficient and appropriate for college readers.

The ending provides new ideas for readers to think about rather than simply summarizing what has been said.

Yamashita 4

Works Cited

- "Andy Rodick." Got Milk? 2003. Milk Processor Education Program. 18 Nov. 2005 <http://www.whymilk.com/celebrity_archive.htm>.
- Philpot, Robert. "Copycats Mimic 'Got Milk' Ads." Milwaukee Journal Sentinel 12 May 2002, final ed.: D3.
- Stamler, Bernard. "Got Sticking Power?" New York Times 30 July 2001, late ed.: C11.

Angela includes a list of works cited in the correct MLA format. If readers want to look at her sources, they should be able to find them easily.