

Pathos: Appeal to Emotions

When an author relies on pathos, it means that he or she is trying to tap into the audience's emotions to get them to agree with the author's [claim](#). An author using pathetic appeals wants the audience to feel something: anger, pride, joy, rage, or happiness. For example, many of us have seen the ASPCA commercials that use photographs of injured puppies, or sad-looking kittens, and slow, depressing music to emotionally persuade their audience to donate money.

Pathos-based rhetorical strategies are any strategies that get the audience to “open up” to the [topic](#), the argument, or to the author. Emotions can make us vulnerable, and an author can use this vulnerability to get the audience to believe that his or her argument is a compelling one.

Pathetic appeals might include

- **Expressive descriptions** of people, places, or events that help the reader to feel or experience those events
- **Vivid imagery** of people, places or events that help the reader to feel like he or she is seeing those events
- Sharing **personal stories** that make the reader feel a connection to, or empathy for, the person being described
- Using **emotion-laden vocabulary** as a way to put the reader into that specific emotional mindset (what is the author trying to make the audience feel? and how is he or she doing that?)
- Using any information that will **evoke an emotional response from the audience**. This could involve making the audience feel empathy or disgust for the person/group/event being discussed, or perhaps connection to or rejection of the person/group/event being discussed.

When reading a [text](#), try to locate when the author is trying to convince the reader using emotions because, if used to excess, pathetic appeals can indicate a lack of substance or emotional manipulation of the audience. See the links below about fallacious pathos for more information.