
A Review Of Rosenbaum's Short Story Pathos And Ethos In Graduation

One Day

Angelou's "story", Graduation, appeals to pathos and ethos. Pathos appeals to pity or sadness, basically emotion; while ethos appeals to ethics. As Angelou's "story" starts she expresses and describes the excitement of her graduation with each detail, such as, "[m]y class was wearing butter-yellow pique dresses and Momma launched out on mine. She smocked the yoke into tiny crisscrossing puckers, then shirred the rest of the bodice... I was going to be lovely," (48). With each word she expresses more and more meaning and nostalgia.

Ethos is revealed towards the end of the "story" when Mr. Donleavy gets on the stage to start his speech, "[w]e were maids and farmers, handymen and washerwomen, and anything higher that we aspired to was farcical and presumptuous," (55). After Mr. Donleavy spoke the students hung their heads and the faculty pretended to not exist at that moment in time. Everyone there except for Mr. Donleavy appeared to be discouraged and unmotivated. In the 1940's ethics were far from this generations standards. For that exact reason the "story" uses Mr. Donleavy's speech as an example of the ethics he lacked and the ethics that society had failed to uphold for the African-American community. Mr. Donleavy spoke of the sports that the men could play and spoke nothing of women or even non-athletic jobs besides cotton picking or cleaning or farming. Mr. Donleavy's speech appeared to be virtually unethical to stereotype the potential-filled graduating class he stood before on that day.

Angelou started out excited and filled with potential for her future, she went through many details of her graduation day and the days leading up to it. However, as her "story" progressed the excitement slowly faded away into despair and negativity about who she was as a person and where she was going to end up. Angelou uses her scene change to powerfully impact every reader with the drastic change in emotions, mentality, and even physical demeanor. Even the posture of the students and faculty changed when their mentality about their situation changed. With each passing moment throughout Mr. Donleavy's speech Angelou talked about her life and her future and where, according to him, was always going to be predestined for virtually nothing significant. Mr. Donleavy ranted about the other school, filled with mostly Caucasian students, and how they were getting the newest technology. While at another, disadvantaged, school a grown man stands to remind them how truly disadvantaged they are.

Graduation goes through several emotions in the twelve pages it takes Angelou to describe that one moment in her life. A moment where, it is supposed to be one of the happiest times in her life, and she managed to feel utterly terrible about who she was as person in her community and her country. A country that- from the very beginning- strived for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Times have changed and people have changed, along with their views and morals. One day we will all stand as one, but until that day we will continue to live in a world filled with people who will never truly understand what it means to accept the people and things that inhabit our world.