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ENGL 21003-D
Rhetorical Analysis Assignment

New York City is considered to be the jewel metropolis in the Northeastern U.S. As a financial pillar and a massive generator of tourism, it can be inferred that NYC is an indispensable metropolis, not just for the US, but globally as well. However, what most New Yorkers, and the population at large do not yet fully understand, is that NYC is currently under siege from one of the worst marauders recorded in human history: Mother Nature. Aline Reynolds and her work with the Columbia Earth Institute captures the danger NYC is facing in the article “Urbanization is Cutting off Life Support to NYC’s Wetlands”. New York City was once the host of a staggeringly large set of saltwater marsh wetlands on its southern coast. Unfortunately, due to human actions, the saltwater marsh lands are fragmenting and falling apart, and what this means for NYC is a much larger exposure to storm surge and flooding risk. Those who witnessed Hurricane Sandy would not want a repeat of another dangerous storm surge event, and that is precisely why the article promotes the restoration and preservation of NYC’s saltwater marshes.

Aline Reynolds is a NYC native who has written about a number of diverse topics on NYC, ranging from climate control to public education. She has over five years of experience up her sleeve in journalism. Coupled alongside her second career in urban planning, Reynolds has a fascination with writing about the revitalization of urban and regional regions with a focus on sustainability, allowing her to work on urban planning projects while simultaneously promoting her work. Reynolds, due to her profession, is well aware of the issues arising in Jamaica Bay, which prompted her to dedicate an article describing the current problem plaguing Jamaica Bay’s salt marshes.

It is observed that the purpose of this article is to spread awareness of the Jamaica Bay crisis, and possibly present the audience with directions to take in order to accomplish that goal. In her article, Reynolds begins by describing the ecological gemstone that Jamaica Bay exists as “[t]he marshes have also been a haven for an estimated 325 species of migratory and resident birds and upwards of 90 types of fish.” This is a way to build intrinsic value in the salt marsh as a remarkable ecosystem before mentioning the main crisis the Bay is currently undergoing. Aside from providing the needs for thousands of animals, Jamaica Bay provides a functional use for the city as well: wave attenuation. This is the rate at which saltwater marshes can dampen, or weaken, storm surges and coastal flooding. Reynolds couples both the functional use, as well as the danger the animals are exposed to in order to succinctly create a call for action.

The audience the author is writing to, in this case, seems to be generalized laymen residing in the NYC area. There exists no technical jargon in the writing to support the idea that this article was made for scientific professionals, and each of the ideas that are scientific in origin are broken down for accessibility into the topic. Combining that knowledge with the fact that Reynolds is an NYC native, and it is inferable that the geographical concentration of the audience would be clustering the NYC area, as they have the largest connection to the existence of, and subsequent disappearing of, the saltwater marshes of Jamaica Bay.

The genre of this piece is an online article meant to disseminate the scientific information behind wave attenuation down into a layman's perspective. Through easily read excerpts describing both the risks to salt marshes as well as how it benefits the population, it is apparent that the genre targets a generalized audience that may not know much of the current events affecting Jamaica Bay, especially those who are close to NYC location-wise. This belief is compounded further by the lack of scientific jargon in the article, as well as the fact that any pieces of information that aren't common knowledge, such as wave attenuation, is broken down into digestible information.

The medium used holds significance as well. This is an article that was published electronically and is easily accessible through search results. Being an online journal, the information provided is easily accessible, shareable, and therefore, viral.

Rhetorically speaking, the article plays off on emotional support, as well as an appeal to logic. Through the mentioning of the value behind Jamaica Bay's ecological status, the author creates a link of sympathy between the audience members and the animals that call the marshland their home. In addition to an emotional appeal, the author creates logical appeal as well by tying in the future safety of NYC towards the continued survival of the salt marsh. Ironically, the existence of the city is predicated upon saving the salt marsh, and yet the very existence of the salt marsh is threatened by the presence of the city.

It can be seen that Reynolds wrote an online article regarding the status of Jamaica Bay, and the danger its disappearance poses on the metropolitan area at large, in the event of a hurricane. Through simple appeals to logic and emotion, her article targets residents of the greater NYC area through an online medium, increasing its accessibility to the general public. Whether NYC chooses to increase its efforts to sustain the saltwater marshes, or whether it decides to take on a more industrial approach to finding replacements for the saltwater marshes' wave attenuation rate, one thing is for certain: the clock is ticking for the marshes, and there might not be much of a city left to save should that time run out.

Works Cited

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