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Teenage Development:

The Effects of Genre and Rhetorical Strategies on Audience

In today’s society, the moment in which a soldier departs for war is often portrayed in news media such as television. However, the way teenagers react and behave following their parent’s departure is rarely depicted. For this reason, I chose to write an informational blog post to be published in the *Military Spouse* magazine. My intention with this post is to inform military moms on what to expect as their child grows into a teenager in a household where one parent is deployed overseas. The *Military Spouse* magazine is an ideal place of publication for my blog because its readers consist of upper middle class military spouses in which 71% of them have children. The audience of this magazine would be interested in the topic of this blog because since they have kids, they share strong familial values. They are aware of the importance of ensuring that their children develop into emotionally stable individuals during their teenage years. Growing up with a father who was constantly absent from home because of work, I am familiar with what is like to behave as a role model for younger siblings. Although the situation in my household was not military related in any way, I believe the stress involved with having to step up and become a responsible example for younger siblings to follow is universal. To meet the needs and expectations of a blog written for the readers of the *Military Spouse* magazine, I have utilized the genre conventions of opening lines that entice the readers to read my blog, the inclusion of outside resources to add depth to my project and the discussion of opposing viewpoints. In addition, I incorporated anecdotes and similes in my blog in order to convey my message that the stress of living in a household where one parent is deployed overseas can either be beneficial or detrimental to a teenager’s well being.

The opening lines of a blog are one of the most important aspects that contribute to the success of your post. This is the first thing that will grasp your reader’s interest. If a blog begins with a dull statement, readers will simply glance over your work without reading it to its entirety. For purposes of my blog, the opening line of my post was, “Have you ever looked your child in the eye at bedtime and wondered what kind of person he will grow into?”(Mejia). By asking if they have ever looked their child, “in the eye at bedtime” I appeal to my audience’s shared belief of the importance of family time. According to Aha! Parenting Blog, bedtimes are, “companionable, safe moments of connections between you and your child.” I am attempting to form a personal connection with my readers by referencing bedtimes in the opening of my blog. This will, in turn, intrigue them to completely read my post.

Another convention of an informational blog written for the *Military Spouse* magazinethat I used in my project was the inclusion of outside resources. By adding outside resources, I demonstrate to my readers that I have researched the topic extensively. Consequently, I prove myself to be credible on discussing the issues presented in my blog. For example, I referenced a public health doctor in order to explain to my readers that, “exposure to parental support in childhood is associated with indicators of psychological and physical health” (Mejia). This citation was meant to educate my readers on the impact that strong support groups have on the “psychological and physical health” of their children. Once the audience understands this concept, they will become aware of ways to raise their children so as they reach their teenage years, they will be able to benefit from the stress involved with living in the absence of one parent. The audience of *Military* Spouse, which consists of military spouses with children, would be interested in this piece of information because they would want to know what they should be doing in order to raise their children in the best way possible.

In addition, blogs often recognize any opposing viewpoints and refute them. This convention is used by bloggers to add depth to their post in order to make it more interesting for the audience to read. The opposing viewpoint that I addressed in my blog had to do with the fact that despite having a positive upbringing, military teens might still struggle with the stress associated with a single family home. To address this, I suggest ways that military moms can help their teen cope with the stress. For example, based on psychological research, I recommended that parents of struggling teens, “recognize the causes of your teen’s stress, and encourage him to discuss his personal feelings with you” (Mejia). Stating that military moms should motivate their teens to, “discuss his personal feelings” with them, is another way of appealing to my reader’s familial values. Although the readers of *Military Spouse* are already aware that they should have a strong connection with their kids, that quote from my blog will demonstrate to them that forming a bond with their teens will help them be able to manage their stress in the long run.

Besides incorporating the conventions associated with blogs and the *Military Spouse* publication, I utilized elements of story telling such as anecdotes in order to show my readers that some teens are capable of benefiting from the stresses involved with having a parent deployed to war. The anecdote that was most effective in my project begins by asking readers to imagine, “what would occur if the worry that your younger children felt for their deployed parent invaded their thoughts”(Mejia). By personifying the children’s worry and describing it as “invading their thoughts” readers are able to acknowledge the extent of how younger children can become emotionally unstable after their parent’s deployment. I continued that anecdote by stating that the older siblings will offer a shoulder to cry on and provide emotional support. This proves that their older siblings will help them get through rough days. According to Ayra Moore, a writer for *Live Strong*, “a younger child’s mental stability is also affected by how his older sibling responds to him” (Moore). This demonstrates that the well being of children can be greatly impacted by the actions of older siblings in the absence of one parent. It forces the audience of my blog to consider how teenagers can gain a sense of responsibility from watching over their younger siblings.

I utilized similes in my blog in order to explain to readers why teenagers might struggle with living in the absence of one parent. I stated that, “the lives of teenagers are already like a rollercoaster ride without all the added pressures of having to behave like an adult at an early age”(Mejia). Rollercoasters are fast-paced, typically involving a lot of quick turns and loops. Therefore by comparing teenage life to a “rollercoaster ride,” I intend to make my audience fully grasp the concept that teens face internal and external conflicts daily. Thus, it can be difficult for them to cope with having to step up and become responsible for their younger siblings. Psychologist Carl E. Pickhardt claims that, “Come adolescence, identification can shift to embrace a more counter cultural definition, for example modeled by rebellious peers and outlaw icons of the popular culture.” This demonstrates that teenagers are often rebellious because those around them are influential to their behaviors and attitudes. Readers of my blog should recognize this when attempting to help their teenagers cope with the added stress brought on by their spouse’s deployment.

The process of writing my blog taught me the importance of using rhetorical strategies to appeal to a specific audience. The needs and expectations of readers vary greatly depending on the place of publication and the genre of the writing. For example, I had to decide which conventions of blogs would produce the strongest impact on the readers for the *Military Spouse* magazine. Those are the conventions that I incorporated into my blog and discussed in my companion essay. Through careful planning and multiple revisions, I believe I constructed my blog in ways that would intrigue the audience of *Military Spouse* to read it.

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Parenting

Teenage Development

Have you ever looked your child in the eye at bedtime and wondered what kind of person he will grow into? As typical children reach their teenage years, they begin to encounter a lot of pressure from the world around them, more specifically from their peers. However, being surrounded by all aspects of military life, your child might face even more struggles during their teenage years.

Your teen’s stress will begin soon after your spouse’s deployment. He will realize that there is a lot more that will be expected of him while at home with his younger siblings because he is going to have to fill in the shoes of his absent parent. The way you raise your child in the early years of his life will determine if he will respond to this newly acquired stress in ways that are beneficial to his well-being.

According to Dr. Benjamin A Shaw of the School of Public Health, exposure to parental support in childhood is associated with indicators of psychological and physical health. If your child was raised was around individuals who act as great support groups, he would experience little to no difficulties with transitioning into a temporary single-parent home as a teenager.

You might expect your teen to grow into a responsible and respectful individual because of these new living circumstances. If your teenager has younger siblings, it will be expected of him to step up and guide the younger siblings when your spouse’s deployment begins.

As the older sibling, his younger brothers or sisters will look up to him. According to various interviews conducted Stephanie Chen, a reporter for CNN, he will utilize his role model position to encourage his siblings and raise their spirits whenever unpleasant situations arise. He will be there to offer emotional support to his siblings when they are missing their deployed parent.

For example, imagine what would occur if the worry that your younger children have for their deployed parent invaded their thoughts. This would lead to them having a rough and emotional day. Your teen would step up, offer a shoulder to cry on, and attempt to cheer his siblings up. Conclusively, your teen will become more responsible after your spouse’s deployment because he will begin to realize that his actions demonstrate a great impact on his younger siblings.

Because the lives of teenagers are already like a rollercoaster ride without all the added pressures of having to behave like an adult at an early age, your teen might have a difficult time adjusting to this new lifestyle during your spouse’s deployment despite having a positive upbringing.

*Military One Source* states that deployment can be especially hard for teens to cope with because they are already dealing with the physical and emotional changes associated with adolescence. The stress may cause them to become depressed because it is possible that your teen will feel alone without both parents present.

If this is the case, there are various ways in which you can build a stronger relationship with your teen in order to help them learn to manage this stress. *Family Doctor*, an organization created by American Academy of Family Physicians, claims that recognizing the cause of your stress will help you manage your emotional health. To recognize the causes of your teen’s stress, you should encourage him to discuss his personal feelings with you. Also, by doing this, you are demonstrating to him that you are concerned for his well being. In turn he won’t feel as alone.

Another strategy that can be beneficial to help your teen is to provide easily accessible methods of communication between him and your deployed spouse. For example, while your teen is at home, you might give him a laptop or a cell phone with video calling abilities. Whenever your teen is grieving his absent parent, he could simply call his parent. This will help strengthen his emotional wellbeing.

It is crucial you are familiar with what can occur when your spouse is deployed during your child’s teenage years. With this knowledge, you will be able to look for signs that show that your teen might be struggling to deal with the stress of having an absent parent. It is better to notice these signs early in order to prevent your teen from developing any other long-term emotional problems related to your spouse’s deployment.

Working Bibliography

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