RHETORICAL ANALYSIS

Passage Analysis

SOAPSTONE

Subject: Protagonist shares life story to show how she became the person that she is today.

Occassion: She sees her mom digging through the dumpster and she is embarrassed. She doesn't know how to explain it to others, so she just tells it all.

Audience: Probably American audience that enjoys memoirs

Purpose: (a.k.a. exigence) To show how despite a turbulent upbringing and challenges, one still has choice, agency, and opportunity to change one's life. (American Dream)

Speaker: Jeannette Walls (writer, former journalist)

Tone: Dynamic; variable; reflective; etc.

Notes

LIST AT LEAST FIVE KEY POINTS

1. The fact that she was three years old when she vividly could remember catching on fire. This kind of set the pace for the text. Like she was going to have to grow up quickly.

2. The mother pointing out that the Joshua Tree's struggle was what made it beautiful…. becomes a metaphor for her mother's life.

3. The contrast between Phoenix and Welch- how different the two places are and how the atmosphere changes.

4. How the language switches from violent discourse/conversation to reflective and poetic nostalgia at times.

5. The emphasis on characterization- some more than others.

Rhetorical Devices

LIST AT LEAST FIVE DEVICES

1. POV- First person POV enables her to directly discuss her personal experiences and reconstruct/relive those with a potential readership.

2. Diction/Word Choice/Language- Walls doesn't hold back in regard to the language. She shares it how it was. This creates an authentic (although sometimes violent portrayal of her experiences).

3. Imagery- This re-creates the experience for the reader- pulls them into the memories.

4. Repetition & Symbolism- how the recurrent symbols (search for gold, journey, skeddadle, glass castle, fire, etc.) in the text speak to the overarching theme in the memoir.

5. Atmosphere- how the mood of each part changes, which is a metaphor for the prosody and cadence of life.

Appeals Overveiw

ETHOS-PATHOS-LOGOS
INCLUDE QUOTATIONS

Ethos- POV- first person= personal accountability in memoir. "I was scraping the dried blood off my legs when I looked up and saw the Green Caboose come back around the bend…I pulled away from him. 'I thought you were going to leave me behind,'I said"(Walls 30-31).

Pathos- Imagery + Atmosphere- paints in the details and sets the mood for an intended audience. "Mom had grown up in the desert. She loved the dry, crackling heat, the way the sky at sunset looked like a sheet of fire, and the overwhelming emptiness and severity of all that open land that had once been a huge ocean bed"(Walls 21).

Logos- Structure of the Story- look at the flash-forward preface followed by an earliest memory and chronological storytelling. "I was sitting in a taxi, wondering if I had overdressed for the evening, when I looked out the window and saw Mom rooting through a Dumpster" (Walls 3).

Thesis Statement

INCLUDE WRITER/SPEAKER, TEXT AND EXIGENCE

In The Glass Castle by Jeannette Walls, she explores her oftentimes unstable background to exemplify how choice, agency, and opportunity still exist despite initial hardships. Walls is able to effectively convey this experience through the employment of first-person point-of-view, nuanced language, and vivid imagery.

Selected Strategies

THE A-B-C TOPICS

[A] POV- the role of direct experience as denoted in first person adds underlying credibility in the memoir genre.

[B] Language- word choice and selected dialogue exemplifies the struggle of her childhood-encompassing both violence (invectives, etc.) and beauty (positive connotations as well).

[C] Imagery- creates experiences that serve a two-fold purpose. It creates the experience for the reader. It also creates the experience AGAIN for Walls to process.