

Understanding the Way Writers Think About Their AUDIENCE

When you write, do you imagine your readers?

Is there a way for a writer to make an audience *feel* a certain way?

According to many authors, the answer to both questions should be YES.

Many people say that there are two ways a successful writer thinks about their Audience when they write: **Audience as Addressed** and **Audience as Invoked**

1. **Audience Addressed:** When writers think of their audience before they write; when they know the **attitudes, beliefs, and expectations** of this audience – and write specifically for them as a group – the audience is considered an **Addressed** one.
 2. **Audience Invoked:** When writers use the **language** of the work to create their audience; when the actual **words on the page** work to **make the audience feel** a certain way – oftentimes the audience is made to feel as though they are part of a specific group – this is considered an **Invoked** audience.
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Your Assignment:

Read the following three excerpts, mark places where you think the author divulges his or her conception of audience, and decide if each place shows the author **addressing** or **invoking** the audience. There is no right answer – authors often intertwine or alternate these two conceptions of audience.

Questions you might want to ask yourself are:

Whom, specifically, might the author be addressing? A particular age group, gender, or social class? Do certain points seem to give evidence of this? Does a particular style of writing correspond to a particular audience? Also, are there places where the *words* seem to work to create a feeling in the audience – or make them feel as if they were part of a group? Bring these pages back to the next class period and we'll discuss as a group what we came up with.

#1. Opening paragraph of an article appearing in the New Yorker:

When I was young, my father was transferred, and our family moved from western New York State to Raleigh, North Carolina. IBM had relocated a great many northerners, and, together, we made relentless fun of our new neighbors and their poky, backward way of life. Rumors circulated that locals ran stills out of their toolsheds and referred to their house cats as "good eatin'." Our parents coached us never to use the titles ma'am or sir when speaking to a teacher or shopkeeper. Tobacco was acceptable in the form of a cigarette, but should any of us experiment with plug or snuff, we would be automatically disinherited. Mountain Dew was forbidden, and our speech was monitored for the slightest hint of a Raleigh accent. Use the word y'all and, before you knew it, you'd find yourself in a haystack French-kissing an underage goat. Along with grits and hush puppies, the abbreviated form of "you all" was a dangerous step on an insidious path leading straight to the doors of the Baptist church. We might not have been the wealthiest People in town, but at least we weren't one of them.

#2. Opening lines of a public speech broadcast on television:

Every time I'm invited to this rostrum, I am humbled by the privilege and mindful of the history we have seen together. We have gathered under this Capitol dome in moments of national mourning and national achievement. We have served America through one of the most consequential periods of our history. And it has been my honor to serve with you.

In a system of two parties, two chambers and two elected branches, there will always be differences and debate. But even tough debates can be conducted in a civil tone. And our differences cannot be allowed to harden into anger.

To confront the great issues before us, we must act in a spirit of good will and respect for one another. And I will do my part. In this decisive year, you and I will make choices that determine both the future and the character of our country. We will choose to act confidently in pursuing the enemies of freedom or retreat from our duties in the hope of an easier life.

Tonight, with a healthy, growing economy, with more Americans going back to work, with our Nation an active force for good in the world - the state of our union is confident and strong. Our generation has been blessed - by the expansion of opportunity, by advances in medicine, and by the security purchased by our parents' sacrifice. Now, as we see a little gray in the mirror - or a lot of gray - and we watch our children moving into adulthood, we ask the question: What will be the state of their union?

#3. Opening passage of a novel:

If you really want to hear about it, the first thing you'll probably want to know is where I was born, and what my lousy childhood was like, and how my parents were occupied and all before they had me, and all that David Copperfield kind of crap, but I don't feel like going into it, if you want to know the truth. In the first place, that stuff bores me, and in the second place, my parents would have about two hemorrhages apiece if I told anything pretty personal about them. They're quite touchy about anything like that, especially my father. They're *nice* and all – I'm not saying that – but they're also touchy as hell. Besides, I'm not going to tell you my whole goddam autobiography or anything. I'll just tell you about his madman stuff that happened to me around last Christmas just before I got pretty run-down and had to come out here and take it easy. I mean that's all I told D.B. about, and he's my *brother* and all.