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The Truth in Literature

“It’s in literature that true life can be found. It’s under the mask of fiction that you can tell the truth” — Gao Xingjian. Literature is the basis of all new learning and is the one gift unchanging through time. An author uses three key elements; Pathos, Logos, and Ethos to portray a version of their truth. In life, one’s worldview is crafted by the influence of many different components. For the average human living in a world of technology, social encounters, and political warfare, one's views can change like the setting of the sun, to a moon full of new opinions and ideas. Although there are many authors, a skilled writer uses Pathos, Logos, and Ethos to teach us more about ourselves.

Pathos, the Greek word for emotion, is used in many different types of literature as its main means of communication. It is one that takes many shapes. From happiness to despair, love to hate, Pathos dictates how a reader will feel emotionally in any situation. Using Pathos can also help portray a version of the authors' truth. In the book *More Happy Than Not*, by Adam Silvera, Pathos is often used as its premier factor in evoking emotion to portray the truth. The book is about Aaron, a teenager growing up in the Bronx with a secret so gigantic that it will rip him up if not expressed. He faces many obstacles on his journey of self-discovery, one of the most substantial is his sexuality. In one passage, the author states “Sometimes pain is so unmanageable

that the idea of spending another day with it is impossible. Other times pain acts as the compass to help you through the messier tunnels of growing up. But pain can only help you find happiness if you remember it.” This passage recites the main reason why Pathos is so common in writing, it uses your emotions to convey a point. When you relate to Aaron, his emotions become your emotions, and you are swept along his path of discovery, believing his version of the truth.

Logos, the Greek word meaning logic, is one of the main reasons why you would pick an orange from a cumquat. Logic rules our society, shaping our ideas and choosing major life decisions for us, but how does it teach us more about our own truth? In the graphic novel *The Complete Persepolis*, by Marjane Satrapi, one can answer this question. The novel outlines the Iranian revolution through the perspective of the author at a young age. Marjane uses Logos to outline the logic behind some of the major events that took place. From the overthrowing of the Shah, to the slow wipeout of communism in the country. Logic can help us prove the difference between right and wrong, and in this novel, the author conveys her side by using Logos to her advantage. In her book, she states, “When we are afraid we lose all sense of analysis and reflection. Our fear paralyzes us. Besides fear has always been the driving force behind a dictator’s repression.” This passage evaluates the situation and states factual evidence behind the dictators' behaviours. This persuades us to believe Marjane’s version of the truth and helps us understand more about ourselves, reflecting on our daily activities, and considering if they are forced by another’s hand.

Ethos is the most powerful element of them all. Authors use it to evaluate one’s “character”, and is the ethical appeal behind someone’s judgement and reason. Ethos is also the hardest element to recognize. It hides in the shadows of probability and emotions, only to come out when proving a point. The book, *Walking Home*, by Eric Walters explains the importance of Ethos in literature everywhere. When you read a book you are captured and brought into a world

so close to reality that, sometimes, it is undefinable. For this book, the author travelled to Africa to research the setting, people, and experiences the characters would embark on. In the author's journal of his trip to Africa, he outlines one event he would later add to the book. Eric writes, "I wanted to portray the city through the eyes of the two young orphaned children who had never seen it. They were awed, confused afraid and frightened." Ethos helps us draw closer to the truth by leading the reader to trust the morals and credibility of the characters based on their experience.

One could say that authors hold the power of the world in their hands. They have the power to mould young minds and pass down information from generation to generation. Authors use text to teach us about the truth, by using Pathos, Logos and Ethos in their own unique ways. By appealing to emotion, using logic, and evaluating a character's ethics and morals, authors ultimately teach us more about ourselves.