Scheerenberger 1 Andrew Scheerenberger

Professor Jessica Frogley

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A Discussion of There Must be the Look Ahead

Theodore Roosevelt’s essay, “There Must be the Look Ahead,” composed as part of a letter during his presidency, provides a specific means to systematically maintain and utilize American natural resources. President Roosevelt explains how proper management of natural resources will improve American life, both present and future. He warns how exhausting resources will greatly decrease chances of future life being prosperous, and articulates the dangers of overuse of resources by people fueled by avarice. President Roosevelt explains the consequences of free grazing, such as a loss in soil fertility. He claims land should be given to home-makers instead of a few people who would exhaust the land for gain. Roosevelt goes on to form ways to moderate the use of resources by means of government policies, like reservation of forests, and projects, like developing rivers. Overall, government programs combined with restraint from fast personal gain is what Roosevelt claims are the keys to American future benefit.

Roosevelt’s audience is the party that is most impacted as well as the people who can most affect the situation. The home-maker is the most impacted group because Roosevelt is calling for land to go to home-makers. For example Roosevelt suggests that, “The government should part with its title only to the actual home-maker, not to the profit-maker who does not care to make a home”. This shows that the home-maker is part of Roosevelt’s audience because the policies and guidelines he is calling for will favor the home-maker getting land. Basically, he is trying to get people who want to settle land to understand the situation and that he is doing proactive things to help them. This can be seen when he uses language like, “in the interest of the actual home-maker,” when talking about policies and recommendations made by him or his agencies.

The other part of Roosevelt’s audience is the federal government because they can most affect the situation. Roosevelt uses language like should, devote and undertake when talking about the government. For example when talking about the development of the waterways, he says all of its planning and implementation should be done by the government which should take it seriously. This shows that the government can most affect the use of natural resources by utilization of policies and programs. Overall Roosevelt is addressing the government because they are who he has to convince in order to get action.

Roosevelt’s situation while writing this letter was the reckless use of national resources for immediate profit. For example Roosevelt claims that, “The present annual consumption of lumber is certainly three times as great as the annual growth”. Using this example of lumber, Roosevelt is showing he is motivated by the irresponsible use of resources. He uses words like skin, exhaust, waste, and abuse when describing the current use of resources. In general Roosevelt shows often that he knows about resource exhaustion and is driven to change it.

 Roosevelt has a dual purpose for this essay: to improve national policies about the use of natural resources and to change thinking about the use of resources in America. The first purpose, trying to improve policies about the use of resources, is Roosevelt trying to get new legislation, agencies and projects started to help regulate and develop natural resources in America. For example he talks about already effective programs like the Reclamation service and Public-Lands commission and how new legislation needs to be made based off of these programs to regulate other resources like grazing. Roosevelt also talks about projects that should be undertaken to develop resources, like the damming of waterways to provide more horse power. When Roosevelt talks about the government’s involvement in regulating natural resources he makes it sound like their responsibility, “The Congress has not yet acted upon these recommendations, but they are so just and proper, so essential to our national welfare, that I feel confident, if the Congress will take time to consider them, that they will ultimately be adopted”. These examples show Roosevelt trying to guide the government to make new policies on regulating and developing resources.

The second purpose of Roosevelt’s essay is to change the mentality on resources from “happy go lucky indifference” to responsible consideration. For example Roosevelt asserts that, “there must be a realization of the fact that” misusing resources and land instead of developing them will cause strife for future generations instead of advancing their well-being. From the title and thesis to his illustration of people who overuse resources for personal gain, Roosevelt is trying to remodel the thought processes on the usage of resources. This can be seen from Roosevelt’s language when talking about how important it is to understand and be proactive about natural resources, language like benefit and prosperity. Overall, Roosevelt is trying to get people to rethink the use of resources and to get the government more involved in the use of natural resources.

Roosevelt’s main claim is that America has to be more careful with its natural resources. For example Roosevelt states, “The conservation of our natural resources and their proper use constitute the fundamental problem which underlies almost every other problem of our national life”. This means that if resources aren’t managed properly the American people will lose out on prosperity and even feel exhaustion. Throughout the essay Roosevelt is explaining how and why to be careful with resources, tying all of his claims together. Basically, Roosevelt’s main assertion is that the American people have to be more prudent on the use and upkeep of natural resources.

Roosevelt makes a lot of claims in his essay and uses different means to support them. One of his major claims is if the American people keep being wasteful with natural resources future generations will feel the exhaustion. He uses loaded words like exhaustion and undermine when talking about the effects on the children but never explains why. When talking about finite resources he says if we don’t use them properly that future generations will not have enough resources to live on when they should. This reason isn’t relevant because there is no time frame on how many generations based on evidence or research.

Another major claim is that the land should be given mainly to home-makers. To support this Roosevelt talks about the alternative to home-makers, which according to him are profit-makers who use the land recklessly and are inherently wasteful. Roosevelt never gives an example of a profit maker or cites research on the over grazing of their cattle. Since there is no support for why land should be given mostly to home-makers, this claim does not advance his argument.

Roosevelt also claims that government policy should be put into place to regulate resources. His support for this claim is that current systems for most natural resources are wasteful. He gives many examples of the current systems being wasteful, like lumbering at a greater rate than trees can grow, and pastures being destroyed by grazing animals. While these may be good reasons, there is no evidence or examples of over grazing or over lumbering. Since there is no proof of waste this support is inadequate and doesn’t help this argument.

Roosevelt makes two concessions to try to show he recognizes the opposition, followed by two counter arguments. His first concession is that there is opposition from people who want to use the land for quick profit with indifference about its effect on future generations, and from people who don’t comprehend the situation or see the whole picture. This concession is ineffective because it is confrontational and suggests that those who do not follow his way of thinking lack understanding or don’t care about future generations. Roosevelt’s counter argument is that it is wrong to let people deplete resources for profit instead of using them to advance as a community. This counter argument is also ineffective because he does not address a plausible argument by opposition but rather attacks people who don’t agree with him.

 Roosevelt’s second concession is, “there are plenty of men in public and private life who actually advocate the continuance of the present system of unchecked and wasteful extravagance using as an argument the fact that to check it will of course mean interference with the ease and comfort of certain people who now get lumber at less cost than they out to pay, at the expense of future generations.” This concession is inadequate because it shows a lack of objectivity, calling the current system extravagant and adding ‘at the expense of future generations’ to the end of the argument. Roosevelt’s counter argument is, “But only a savage would, in his private affairs, show such reckless disregard of the future”. His counter argument is unsuccessful because it doesn’t address why lumber needs to be more expensive but rather condemns the opposition.

In his essay Roosevelt uses many elements of pathos to try to advance his argument. For example, he uses strong language when discussing how exhausting and skinning the land will result in undermining our children’s prosperity. This use of loaded words and emphasis on community are his attempt at getting people concerned about how the use of national resources will affect American descendants. He is trying to make people angry at his opposition, by using words such as greedy, wasteful, reckless and savage to describe them. Roosevelt’s overuse of pathos undermines his argument because insulting the opposition instead of analyzing and addressing opposing views causes readers to disregard his claims.

The appeal least used in this essay is ethos. Roosevelt probably thought he didn’t have to demonstrate he is knowledgeable or that he has good character because he is president. One example of Roosevelt using ethos incorrectly is when he tries to show he is knowledgeable by explaining how the waterways should be developed. It is incorrect usage because he only gives a general outline of what should happen and expects it to be done, with no evidence to support it.

Roosevelt uses logos to try and advance his claims, but uses no evidence. For example he uses the premise of, “we are exhausting our resources” then uses the example of over lumbering American forests and finally concludes America has to look ahead and save its resources and not use them recklessly. The lack of evidence regarding reckless use of resources in the form of over lumbering leaves this part of Roosevelt’s argument lacking.

This essay is not effective in swaying me to use natural resources wisely. I do not like the fact that there is no evidence, specifically data. With topics like over use of resources I want to see data taken over an extensive period of time and specific examples of people exhausting resources. Data and examples may shed light on whether natural resources are being used recklessly, how the depletion is progressing and who is involved. I really don’t like how many times Roosevelt references future generations, but doesn’t say how resource depletion affects them. I especially don’t like his overuse of the word exhaustion and slamming opposition. I prefer arguments based on facts not fear. My impression of Roosevelt is he is a politician trying to rally up support.

If I were to meet Theodore Roosevelt I would tell him that he needs to do research into a topic and find evidence before even putting pen to paper. I would tell him he can’t just make either/or fallacies when talking about the topic, and that he needs to acknowledge multiple points of view on the situation. Then he needs to anticipate opposing views and make good counter arguments that don’t involve calling them savages. Lastly I would advise him to not use so much pathos in his argument that people stop reading. Overall I would suggest against using this essay as a source or writing anything like it.