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To: Evelyn Birkby From: Harry Slack

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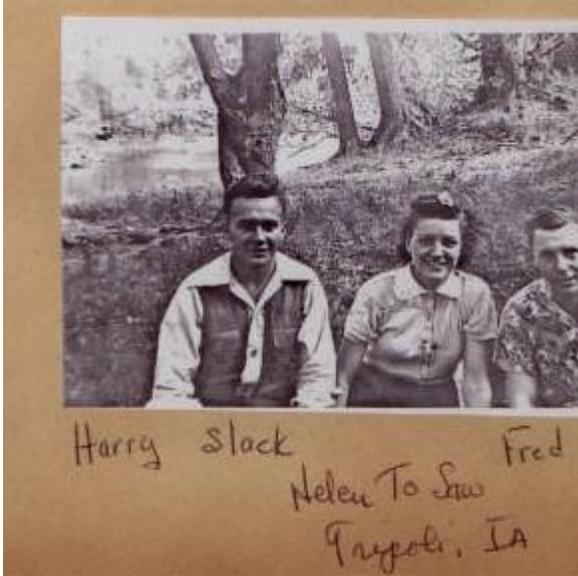
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# To: Evelyn Birkby From: Harry Slack

## Rhetorical Analysis:



In Harry Slack's [letter](#) to Evelyn Birkby he uses many rhetorical techniques such as humor, sincerity and flattery to ensure that he will get a response back. In the first sentence, Slack appeals to sincerity, love and friendship by stating he feels "really very happy," that she wrote him a letter. Instead of just saying thank you for the letter, he utilizes this kind of approach to make

Evelyn feel good about making him happy. He is using this to persuade her to write him back again. She is more likely to respond if she knows he actually enjoys getting her letters. Harry also mentions writing another friend Helen. He states that he wouldn't know what to do if she quit writing him. Saying this implies that he would feel the same way if Evelyn stopped replying. The statement influences her to write back. Also in the letter he suggests that Evelyn "might" want to tell his old friend Fred to write him. He leaves the choice up to her, but if she is a good friend she will comply. Harry uses an understatement when he says, "a fellow *might* want to hear from one of the gang once in a while." Henry is suggesting something that he really does want her to do.

Harry apologizes for not responding to Evelyn's last letter and then proceeds to make up for it by acting interested in her latest activities. This is an appeal to sincerity and friendship. He uses an

appeal to flattery when he states he would want to attend one of her Sunday school classes. Harry also asks her about the dances in the park. Evelyn would take this as a sincere interest in hearing from her and about her life. Asking about the reader's life is effective, because it makes the reader feel important and loved.

Slack uses humor in his letter several times. One of the times he uses it to distract from the fact that he can't tell her where he is. He writes instead, "I'm enjoying myself and getting fat. Ha ha." This remark eases the tension about the war and relieves Evelyn of worry since he appears to be having a good time. He also uses humor when he describes how he didn't get into the Air Corp because of his failed mental exam. He jokes about it saying, "I know don't tell me! You always did think I was a little off in the upper story, huh?" This statement makes Harry likeable. He seems humble and can poke fun at himself. Harry uses another understatement when he mentions the "slight mistake" that the newspapers made regarding his injury. The understatement adds humor because he is making light of a serious subject. The humor in this letter effectively lightens the situation and shows Harry's fun personality.

## Historical Analysis:



In the letter Harry writes to Evelyn, he mentions that he got injured in the war. Harry Slack was a Private in the Marine Corps. He enlisted in July of 1940 and had been deployed in the South Pacific for about a year at the time of this letter. In the battle that Harry was wounded in, he was credited to killing four Japanese soldiers. This battle took place in Guadalcanal on December 30, 1942. Guadalcanal is part of the Solomon Islands in the

South Pacific. The group of Marines he was with had run into some snipers and their officer knew it would be a suicide mission to send his men any further. Instead, the group backed off and called in an air strike. The Japanese, thinking that the Marines had given up and retreated, came after them. Harry's troop was ready and waiting though. The Marines ambushed the Japanese soldiers and won the battle.

The Waterloo Daily Courier, a local newspaper in Iowa, reported about this battle. They stated that there were casualties as well as some men wounded. According to the newspapers, Harry was wounded but the newspapers only commented on the fact that he was able to walk back to the base on his own. Harry informs Evelyn in the letter that he was not injured in the hand as some newspapers had reported, but rather the head. He was left with, "a swell souvenir of two holes through [his] helmet." We don't know how exactly his head was injured. The helmets used at the time of WWII were made of stainless steel, so it makes you wonder what hit his head hard enough to leave two holes.

Harry also mentions in the letter how he had wanted to be in the Air Corp but had not been able to pass the mental examination. He jokes about not being smart enough, but the mental exam to get in was quite hard. At the time Harry wrote this letter the Air Corp was making some changes to allow more men to pass this test. Before the Air Corp changed their policies though, their physical and mental examinations were successful at weeding the men out. [About one out of five applicants](#) passed the mental and physical exams. Because of the war they needed more men, so in 1941 they lowered their high standards to allow more men to qualify. By then, Harry had already enlisted in the Marines. I wonder if he hadn't lost his chance at being in the Air Corp and joined the Marines, if he would have passed the new test.

Written By: Kelsey Shrier

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