3-7-2014

Clarence Clark: Man on a Mission

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Man of the House

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Rhetorical Analysis

The letter that John N. Calhoun wrote to his son was very much so unlike other letters he wrote. Most of Calhoun’s letters had a political stance; usually criticizing or promoting certain political figures. The myriad of letters that John Calhoun wrote spoke in a serious tone and gave no insight on his actual personality except for the letter written to John R.

By the looks of the letter, it seems that John R. is a child. John Calhoun speaks in an easy tone and attempts to come across as reassuring. The purpose of the letter that John Calhoun wrote to John R. is to make sure that John R. realizes he must be responsible. John R. is in fact John N. Calhoun's son, and he wants John R. to become the man of the house.
John Calhoun uses both ethos and logos when bestowing the title “man of the house” on John R. To be the man or woman of the house you need many good qualities. One must care for the family and be able to support it when necessary. As a child that position is the culmination of all that you are; like being appointed the President of the United States. Knowing that John Calhoun, the prior man of the house, wants for him to be the new man of the house would surely make John R. agree to step up to the task. John Calhoun makes it seem like he is at a loss, but in reality he is only trying to sway John R. to agree. It would only be the logical choice for John R. to agree to the position and help more around the house.

Additionally, John Calhoun appeals using pathos when writing to John R. He writes that John R. needs to take care of Cliffie. He provides an example that John R. needs to make sure that Cliffie makes it across the street okay. Calhoun plays with John R.’s emotions by using his love for Cliffie, who is most likely his sister. Calhoun knows that if he incorporates John’s emotions then by bringing up one task, John R. may help Cliffie with other tasks as well. Calhoun wrote a very light letter to a John R. urging him to become a responsible member of his family. This was incredibly important during the age that they lived in.

**Historical Context**

During the 1940’s it was very usual for the man to work and the wife to stay at home and take care of the family. This quickly changed when men left and right were sent to Europe or Asia to defend our country. This left a crucial hole in the make-up of a family in that time. This absence of a man forced the women to take charge. They went to work at factories and filled jobs once held by men so that they could support the family.
They brought in the money and became the backbone of the home. The one major flaw in the change of roles was who will fill the wife’s original role. There was nobody to be around all day to take care of many of the kids during that age. This required the children who were old enough to take care of their mother’s spot.
These boys or girls would look after their siblings and make sure everything was in order. They were, in actuality, the glue that held these families together. If it was not for these kids, who overnight turned into adults, then no one would be there, reassuring their fathers that they actually had something to fight for back at home. The letter that John Calhoun wrote to John R. completely makes sense in the time when the letters were written. He writes to the boy about taking charge in ensuring his family’s safety.

Rhetoric-Man of the House

Citations

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