Exemplar Writing: Emily Dickinson Analysis

Perhaps the most dominant characteristic of Emily Dickinson’s writing is her use of capitalization to place emphasis on words, which is highlighted in poems such as “Much Madness is divinest Sense-“ and “The Soul selects her own Society-.” The use of capitalization functions to help develop Dickinson’s themes, which are often paradoxical. For instance, in “The Soul selects her own Society-,” the words soul, society, door, and majority are capitalized. By capitalizing these words she focuses on the “Soul,” which represents herself and the “Majority,” which stands for the dominant culture. Similarly, in “Much Madness is divinest Sense,” she places emphasis on those who are classified as “mad” and those who are viewed as having “sense.” Those who have sense are considered normal because they adhere to the dominant ideologies of that culture. Both poems place emphasis on the “Majority” through the use capitalization, which places emphasis on the cultural conflict between the minority and majority.

While Emily Dickinson’s poems often have a melancholy tone, often her poems are empowering and uplifting. Poems such as “The Soul selects her own Society” and “Much Madness is divinest Sense-“ challenge the dominant culture. For example, The Soul selects her own Society explains how she “shuts the Door- to her divine Majority” and remains “Unmoved” even in the face of an emperor; thus, she is not going to change her beliefs simply because the majority of people and those in power do not agree with her. Additionally, she expresses a similar theme in “Much Madness is divinest Sense-,“ as she explains that those who are classified as “insane” are only viewed that way because they go against the majority. Furthermore, she argues “Assent- and you are sane-,” which means you are considered sane if your viewpoints align with those of the dominant culture. The line “Demur- you’re straightway dangerous” reveals that challenging social norms is considered deviant and unacceptable. In essence, Dickinson’s paradoxical themes function to challenge mainstream culture, while addressing her critics.

**Weekend Homework (worth 2 homework grades)**

* First, use the exemplar text as a model for your writing.
* Secondly, review your assigned writing goals.
* Now, chose two rhetorical devices used in Martin Luther King Jr.’s speech.
* You will write 2 paragraphs explaining how Martin Luther King Jr. uses rhetorical devices to support his claims and argument.
* You will only focus on ONE device per paragraph.
* You will then annotate your text based on your writing goal(s).
* At this point, I want 92 and above work!
* Follow this outline to you help structure your writing. You should use this as a pattern for each paragraph. By answering the following questions, you can improve your writing:

**First Claim Sentence:** What rhetorical device does Martin Luther King Jr. use and what purpose does it serve. (use the word WHICH or BY or THROUGH)

* + Through the use of\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
  + By using\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
  + \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_uses \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, which functions to\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Example and Explanation Sentence:** What is an example of that rhetorical device being used? What is revealed/demonstrated/highlighted through the use of that rhetorical device? (or what effect was the author trying to have on the reader?)

(You will repeat this step in your paragraph)

**Concluding Sentence:** In essence, what do we learn about the significance of using that rhetorical device?