

ESSAY 2 PHASE 2

Student 2 • Prof. Mani • Fall 2020

The subreddit r/campingandhiking is an online community found on the website Reddit, with a focus on outdoor activities such as the ones in its namesake. On the subreddit, there are many artifacts with a cultural significance to the community. The most commonly found, and most exemplary form of these are the pictures of views found on the subreddit. These typically consist of a picture taken by the user of a scenic view, with a short caption giving context. There is no shortage of these pictures on the subreddit and they can be found very quickly when scrolling through. Pictures of views on the subreddit r/campingandhiking hold a deep cultural significance through their purpose, exigence, and circulation. The purpose of this photo was for the user to share their experience with the people on the subreddit, and to validate himself as a member by showing his outdoor prowess. The images are circulated to a wide audience of intended and not intended viewers. These posts have exhibited exigence because more people are going and doing outdoor activities. Because of the lockdown and quarantine caused by the novel coronavirus, people have sought ways to keep busy while staying away from population centers, creating a popularity of camping and hiking, and by extension artifacts like this. These posts use these factors and their visuals to enforce the community values of sharing outdoor experience and knowledge and helping to determine hierarchy in the subreddit.



ESSAY 2 PHASE 2

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This post from r/campingandhiking shows a landscape from an area of wilderness in Idaho. The specific area is the sawtooth wilderness area. The taker of the photo was in the area to fly fish for 5 days. The landscape features a river, mountains in the background, and the photographer is surrounded by shrubbery and brush. There are some features that many of the pictures on the subreddit have in common, like sunrises and sets, and freshwater either still or running. The sun is rising in the back of the picture, which means the user woke up early enough to see the sun rise. Early rising is a determinant of hierarchy in the community, because it displays a fortitude and drive to accomplish outdoor activities no matter the hour. This particular one showcases a river which is running fresh water. The water is an iridescent orange-yellow color reflecting the sunrise. There is a tree line a few hundred yards in front of the user, contrasting the barren look of the frosty landscape. The frost on the shrubbery and grass conveys temperature to the viewer, by eliciting thoughts of the cold.

This artifact shows many elements of the rhetorical star in the context of r/campingandhiking. The intended audience is people on the subreddit, however the actual audience included the user, the members of the subreddit, people viewing the subreddit, and anyone who saw the picture IRL. The image is generally visually appealing and the viewer does not have to be a member of the subreddit to enjoy the grande vista. Because of this, the image may be shared by members of the subreddit to people who are not a part of it so they may enjoy the picture, adding to the overall actual audience. The image was circulated by posting it to r/campingandhiking and it is now a trending post on the website. It could have possibly also been circulated on alternate forms of social media the user may possess. This post exhibits exigence because the user is finding ways to enjoy themselves away from people during the coronavirus pandemic. The wilderness the user is in makes it unlikely for him to come into contact with other people, and because of this it is a safe activity, in a time where close contact with people can be dangerous. This contributes to the popularity of the post as more people take up outdoor activities, or develop tastes for them, and join the community.

The purpose of this photo was for the user to share their experience with the people on the subreddit, and to validate himself as a member by showing his

ESSAY 2 PHASE 2

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outdoor prowess. He mentions that he is fly fishing for 5 days, which shows that he is a member of the community through his hobby. Fishing is a popular hobby within the subreddit, and those who can do so successfully gain respect. The length of his trip, the cold atmosphere conveyed in the picture, and his early wake up come together to show that the user has developed abilities in the community's areas of interest. This artifact serves to inspire community members to take similar trips and enforces the community value of sharing experience by allowing other users to experience a place they may not have seen otherwise.



There are many diverse sub-genres within pictures on the subreddit, which have different traits but similar reasoning for their inclusion. This post from the subreddit was taken in the Arkansas wilderness. Some popular posts such as this one display the night sky without any light pollution, which is ambient light that artificially dulls star light allowing the viewer to see the stars well. With no light pollution, it is sure that the user is far away from city lights and must be deep into the wilderness. This is a determinant of hierarchy because it shows that the user made a successful outdoor trip, which shows knowledge of the subreddit's subject. The stars and constellations are seen very well in the picture, even with the fire light

ESSAY 2 PHASE 2

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contrasting. Fire is a common motif in artifacts like these because it symbolizes safety and mastery of the elements to members of the subreddit. Fire has connotations of warmth and comfort to many users of the subreddit. There are mountains in the background like in the last artifact. The group is camping under a tree which is displaying autumnal colors. This shows that it is getting cooler out and the user had to brave the cold to enjoy the view. There are at least three people present, of unknown age, sex, or race. Having three people is not as effective to determine hierarchy as if the user was alone like in the first artifact. The user did however, likely have to stay up late, the opposite of what the user from the first artifact did, but with the same purpose to show that they had fortitude to withstand extreme hours.

This artifact, like the last, can be rhetorically analyzed to show its true significance. The intended audience is people on the subreddit, however the actual audience included the user, the members of the subreddit, people viewing the subreddit, and anyone who saw the picture IRL. The three people in the picture, one of them possibly the user, are also part of the audience because they witnessed it in real life. The exigence of this artifact comes about because of the coronavirus pandemic. People have been increasingly taking up outdoor hobbies to get away from population centers. Because there is no light pollution it is safe to assume that this was far enough away from civilization that the user and their companions did not have to worry about contact with other people. This image was circulated on the subreddit *r/campingandhiking* in late September and may have been shared by users to their friends. The purpose of this image is to boost the user's hierarchy in the community because the original poster and their companions made a successful trip, they were comfortable because they had fire, they stayed up later at night, they dealt with cold temperatures, and they were far enough away from society to clearly see the constellations. A successful trip is a major determinant of hierarchy in the community. This picture is also attractive to many people who may see it, because of the vibrant contrasting colors between the fire and night sky. Because of this the user shared a positive experience with other community members which is a major cornerstone of the community.

Pictures of views on the subreddit *r/campingandhiking* help to determine hierarchy and spread outdoor experiences in the community. These are both major

ESSAY 2 PHASE 2

Student 2 • Prof. Mani • Fall 2020

goals of the community. The users purpose in posting the images is to do just that. These posts have been circulated frequently on the subreddit and it is exceedingly easy to find them there. Pictures of views on the subreddit have gained much popularity because more people are spending time in the remote outdoors due to the coronavirus lockdown keeping them away from large groups of people. The artifacts chosen demonstrate how these posts use components of the rhetorical star and their visuals to enforce the community goals and values.

Works Cited

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