

April 11, 2012

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Timed Write - Samuel Johnson

By manipulating his tone throughout (this letter, Johnson was able to change the harshness of his denial to help a woman's son for patronage to a university. His expectation of emotion that the woman was feeling is anticipation of hope in which he goes on to define.

8 Johnson defines hope as a "species of happiness" but it also must be "expiated by pain" (lines 4 & 7). He describes her feelings to be an "improper expectation" and at the same time "dangerous" (line 9). Johnson used diction for the word "hope" to start out his letter, and he hints towards his rejection. He doesn't plainly state that he's not going to help the woman, but the first paragraph's definition of hope and also how hope leads to disappointment, one can reach the conclusion and infer for themselves that he has rejected to help the woman's son. However, the rejection wasn't harsh.

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The second paragraph, on the other hand, completely changes in tone. Paragraph one clearly served its purpose to get the point across without being too harsh. Paragraph two,

on the other hand, turned out to be the complete opposite approach compared to paragraph one. "When you made your request to me, you should have considered, Madam, what you were asking" (lines 16-17). The change in tone is obvious, and instead of distancing himself by using diction, Johnson referred to himself in first person. By doing this, he also allows the woman to understand his side of the situation.

As Johnson writes in first person, he goes on to use Logos to show his legitimate reasons as to why he chose to not help. "You ask me to solicit a great man, to whom I never spoke, for a young person whom I had never seen, upon a supposition which I had no means of knowing to be true" (lines 17-20). Johnson had a logical explanation, and he makes the women recognize that she was mistaken for seeking his help for he had never met the boy, and he makes that point perfectly lucid. His sudden switch in tones in which he changed the degree of harshness

towards the woman further emphasizes her mistake in seeking help from him.

In the final paragraph, Johnson states that he later on met the woman's son and thought of him as a "pretty youth" (line 36). Once again, he switched his tone, but this time, his statement was firm.

"... he should at last miss the university, he may still be wise, useful, and happy" (lines 38-39). Johnson's final sentence in the letter firmly confirming his choice and adding optimism to soften his harsh words.