



AP* English Language and Composition

Rhetorical Analysis

Quindlen's "C Word in the Hallways"

Teacher Overview

“The C Word in the Hallways,” Anna Quindlen Rhetoric for AP^{*} Language and Literature

Teacher Overview

Skill Focus

Critical Thinking					
Remember	Understand	Apply	Analyze	Evaluate	Create
Close Reading		Grammar		Composition	
<p>Reading Strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annotation Determining Audience Determining Author’s Purpose Determining Fact and Opinion Determining Main Idea Generalization Inference unspoken assumptions Paraphrase <p>Literary Elements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detail Diction Persona Style determined by persona Tone how style leads to persona <p>Figures of Speech</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Metaphor <p>Sound Devices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alliteration Assonance <p>Literary Techniques</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Argumentation claim data enthymeme exigence emotional appeals ethical appeals logical appeals Irony <p>Literary Forms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nonfiction 	<p>Sentences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structure periodic <p>Syntax Techniques</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Antithesis Juxtaposition Repetition anaphora epistrophe 	<p>Modes (Types)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expository analytical <p>The Process of Composition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drafting timed <p>Structural Elements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction thesis Body topic sentence use of commentary use of evidence conclusion 			

Materials and Resources: *Everyday Use: Rhetoric at Work in Reading and Writing*, by Hephzibah Roskelly and David A. Jolliffe. New York: Pearson Longman, 2005.

Anna Quindlen, “The C Word in the Hallways,” *Newsweek* 29 November 1999. Also from her book *Loud and Clear*.

Lesson Introduction

This article, which appeared in *Newsweek* November 29, 1999, offers a worthwhile study of rhetoric. With this article, teachers may introduce **terms unique to rhetoric**:

Claim: the writer's position; the ultimate conclusion, generalization, or point that the author is expressing; the point, backed up by support, of an argument.

Data: the support the writer offers for his/her claim

Exigence: the need an author has to write about a particular subject.

Although Quindlen does not mention the Columbine incident, it happened in May of 1999, several months before this article was published. Ostensibly Quindlen's exigence was to prevent young people from harming themselves and others and to convince her audience that mental illness is as damaging as physical illness. We may assume, however, that she was aware of Columbine and wrote to prevent another such situation.

Appeals

This article also offers a perfect vehicle for teaching the **appeals: logical, emotional, and ethical**. Sometimes students think they have to separate each appeal and be able to point to exact places in the text where each appeal is used. The appeals, however, function concurrently, just as diction, imagery, and figurative language overlap.

Logical Appeal: The logical appeal is always the central appeal; ethos and pathos grow out of logos. The word "logos" means fleshed-out thought, embodied thought; using logic is the simplest way to persuade (Roskelly and Jolliffe 163). Quindlen uses the logical appeal in her facts about the murders committed by Kip Kinkel and Sam Manzie, her knowledge of all the facts surrounding both the murders and the home lives of the boys, and in her diction, which is erudite and reflects her knowledge of psychiatry and mental illness.

Ethical Appeal: Linked to this appeal, though, is Quindlen's ethical appeal. She has researched her subject and is intimately acquainted with the facts in the case. Her argument is compelling just because she knows all the details of these cases; she has done her homework. In addition to deep background knowledge, however, Quindlen is passionate, even opinionated, in her contention that society has too long ignored mental illness in young people. She offers few details about the brutal murders, details that might prejudice the readers against her position. She offers no strong concession to the opposing view; instead, she seems to regard those who would blame teenagers for their violent actions with mild contempt.

Persona: Closely aligned to the ethical appeal is the author's persona, which creates a certain tone. Students will have an activity which helps them to gauge Quindlen's persona.

Emotional Appeal: The emotional appeal is also tied to the logical and the ethical appeals. Details sway the readers' emotions: Sam Manzie had a relationship with a pedophile; Faith Kinkel tried to help her son through counseling; Kinkel's father bought his son the Glock that he used for his killings and was more concerned with his insurance coverage than with his son's well-being.

Questions for Analysis: Are the boys the ultimate victims? Does Quindlen create empathy and sorrow for these boys, whose crimes were horrific? How does the data Quindlen chooses to include develop her claim? What is her claim?

Writing Prompts:

- ❖ Students may begin writing about this article by producing one paragraph. They could either identify and respond to one of Quindlen's unspoken assumptions or, based upon one paragraph in the article, analyze her persona.
- ❖ As a culminating activity, students could write an essay in a timed setting (40 minutes) on the following prompt: *Carefully read the following article by the American writer Anna Quindlen. Examine the rhetorical strategies she uses to persuade her readers that society should stop dismissing mental illness in young people as a "character flaw" and take action to help them find treatment.*

Quindlen's Unspoken Assumptions:

- ❖ Being mentally ill is not a sin.
- ❖ Men and women perceive mental health differently.
- ❖ Mental illness can be controlled by a person's mind.
- ❖ As a society, we should care about mentally ill teen-agers.
- ❖ Mental illness ought to be treated like other illnesses, such as cancer.
- ❖ Mentally ill people often cannot distinguish between right and wrong.
- ❖ Mental illness can be just as debilitating as other diseases, such as cancer.
- ❖ As adults, we should take care of our children, no matter what their needs.

Allusions:

You may want to familiarize students with the allusion in the ninth paragraph: "And then there are the teenagers themselves, slouching toward adulthood in a world that loves conformity." (The sentence also alludes to the fact that some teenagers, boys especially, tend to slouch because they have grown so much in a short time.) Joan Didion wrote a book of essays entitled *Slouching Toward Bethlehem*, but the original source of the phrase is from the poem by William Butler Yeats, "The Second Coming." Here are the last two lines:

*And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?*

The poem alludes to a coming age of barbarism and darkness in which evil and violence replace peace and order. The writer suggests through the allusion that the untreated mental illness of troubled young people will eventually cause disastrous consequences for civilization as a whole.

The second allusion is to Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*, Act III, scene i, in which Mercutio, having been mortally injured by Romeo, cries out, “A plague on both your houses!” to Tybalt and Romeo, thus cursing both the Montague and Capulet families.

Just as the Capulet and Montague families were devastated by the consequences of their narrow-minded misunderstanding of their children’s problems, Quindlen suggests through her allusion that our own society will eventually suffer because it has neglected and misunderstood mentally ill young people.

“The C Word in the Hallways,” Anna Quindlen

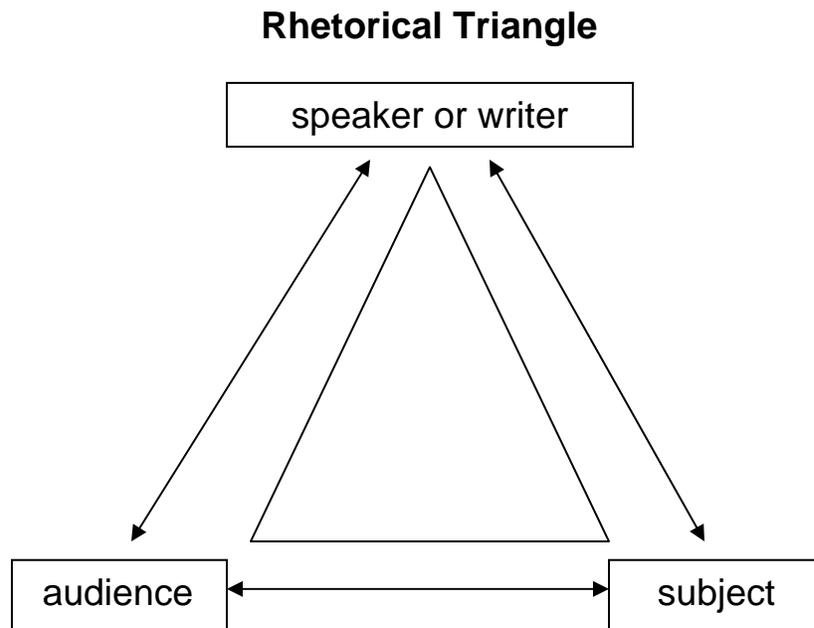
Student Activity

- (1) The saddest phrase I’ve read in a long time is this one: psychological autopsy. That’s what the doctors call it when a kid kills himself and they go back over the plowed ground of his short life, and discover all the hidden markers that led to the rope, the blade, the gun. There’s a plague on all our houses, and since it doesn’t announce itself with lumps or spots or protest marches, it has gone unremarked in the quiet suburbs and busy cities where it has been laying waste. The number of suicides and homicides committed by teenagers, most often young men, has exploded in the last three decades, until it has become commonplace to have black-bordered photographs in yearbooks and murder suspects with acne problems. And everyone searches for reasons, and scapegoats, and solutions, most often punitive. Yet one solution continues to elude us, and that is ending the ignorance about mental health, and moving it from the margins of care and into the mainstream where it belongs. As surely as any vaccine, this would save lives.
- (2) So many have already been lost. This month Kip Kinkel was sentenced to life in prison in Oregon for the murders of his parents and a shooting rampage at his high school that killed two students. A psychiatrist who specializes in the care of adolescents testified that Kinkel, now 17, had been hearing voices since he was 12. Sam Manzie is also 17. He is serving a 70-year sentence for luring an 11-year-old boy named Eddie Werner into his New Jersey home and strangling him with the cord of an alarm clock because his Sega Genesis was out of reach. Manzie had his first psychological evaluation in the first grade.
- (3) Excuses, excuses. That’s what so many think of the underlying pathology in such unimaginable crimes. In the 1956 movie “The Bad Seed,” little Patty McCormack played what was then called a homicidal maniac, and the film censors demanded a ludicrous mock curtain call in which the child actress was taken over the knee of her screen father and spanked. There are still some representatives of the “good spanking” school out there, although today the spanking may wind up being life in prison. And there’s still plenty of that useless adult “what in the world does a 16-year-old have to be depressed about” mind-set to keep depressed 16-year-olds from getting help.
- (4) It’s true that both the Kinkel and the Manzie boys had already been introduced to the mental-health system before their crimes. Concerned by her son’s fascination with weapons, Faith Kinkel took him for nine sessions with a psychologist in the year before the shootings. Because of his rages and his continuing relationship with a pedophile, Sam’s parents had tried to have him admitted to a residential facility just days before their son invited Eddie in.
- (5) But they were threading their way through a mental-health system that is marginalized by shame, ignorance, custom, the courts, even by business practice. Kip Kinkel’s father made no secret of his disapproval of therapy. During its course he bought his son the Glock that Kip would later use on his killing spree, which speaks sad volumes about our peculiar standards of masculinity. Sam’s father, on the other hand, spent days trying to figure out how much of the cost of a home for troubled kids his insurance would cover. In the meantime, a psychiatrist who examined his son for less time than it takes to eat a Happy Meal concluded that he was no danger to himself or others, and a judge lectured Sam from the bench: “you know the difference between what’s right and wrong, don’t you?”
- (6) The federal Center for Mental Health Services estimates that at least 6 million children in this country have some serious emotional disturbance, and for some of them, right and wrong takes second seat to the voices in their heads. Fifty years ago their parents might have surrendered them to life in an institution, or a doctor flying blind with an ice pick might have performed a lobotomy, leaving them to loll away their days. Now lots of them wind up in jail. Warm fuzzies aside, consider this from a utilitarian point of view: psychological intervention is cheaper than incarceration.
- (7) The most optimistic estimate is that two thirds of these emotionally disturbed children are not getting any treatment. Imagine how we would respond if two thirds of America’s babies were not being immunized. Many health-insurance plans do not provide coverage for necessary treatment, or financially penalize those who need a psychiatrist instead of an oncologist. Teachers are not trained to recognize mental illness, and some dismiss it, “Bad Seed” fashion, as bad behavior. Parents are afraid, and ashamed, creating a home environment, and a national atmosphere, too, that tells teenagers their demons are a disgrace.
- (8) And then there are the teenagers themselves, slouching toward adulthood in a world that loves conformity. Add to the horror of creeping depression or delusions that of peer derision, the sound of the C word in the hallways: crazy, man, he’s crazy, haven’t you seen him, didn’t you hear? Boys, especially, still suspect that talk therapy, or even heartfelt talk, is somehow sissified, weak. Sometimes even their own fathers think so, at least until they have to identify the body.
- (9) Another sad little phrase is “If only,” and there are always plenty of them littering the valleys of tragedy. If only there had been long-term intervention and medication, Kip Kinkel might be out of jail, off the taxpayers’ tab and perhaps leading a productive life. If only Sam Manzie had been treated aggressively earlier, new psychotropic drugs might have slowed or stilled his downward slide. And if only those things had happened, Faith Kinkel, William Kinkel, Mikael Nickolauson, Ben Walker and Eddie Werner might all be alive today. Mental-health care is health care, too, and mental illness is an illness, not a character flaw. Insurance providers should act like it. Hospitals and schools should act like it. Above all, we parents should act like it. Then maybe the kids will believe it.

I. The Rhetorical Triangle

The best way to begin developing skill with rhetoric is to envision the thought processes of both the writer and the audience as they examine a text. A writer's purpose is to create a text that will be meaningful, purposeful, and effective. This relationship can be shown through a rhetorical triangle.

- ❖ The subject and the kinds of evidence used to develop it
- ❖ The audience—their knowledge, ideas, attitudes, and beliefs
- ❖ The character of the speaker or writer—in particular, how the speaker or writer might use his or her personal character in the text (Roskelly and Jolliffe 6-7).



(7)

Notice that the triangle has arrows from one point to another and that the arrows go both ways. This shows the dynamic nature of persuasion.

The writer or speaker understands the audience—who they are and what they know. The writer or speaker also creates a **persona**—a “mask” behind which writers may reveal or withhold certain aspects of their personality to persuade the audience (10).

Let's apply the rhetorical triangle to the Quindlen article:

- ❖ **Speaker or writer:** Quindlen is a writer for the national news magazine *Newsweek*. She is a highly regarded essayist and novelist and is a parent.
- ❖ **Audience:** The *Newsweek* audience would be made of a diverse group of educated, intellectually curious readers who read widely and presumably care about the health and well-being of adolescents.
- ❖ **Subject:** This article was published in November 1999, about six months after the Columbine shootings. Anna Quindlen expresses her concern that mental illness is not perceived by adults as a treatable problem and therefore often goes unchecked. Her position also reflects her fear that disturbed adolescents in America, because of their untreated mental illness, threaten the security of schools. Her evidence consists of individual cases discussed in great detail, along with information about mental illness.

The three parts of the triangle do not stand alone but are interconnected, as the arrows demonstrate. Quindlen creates a persona of the compassionate and passionate adult who wants to effect immediate change in the way mentally ill young people are viewed by society. Her persona (**speaker or writer** in the triangle) connects to her subject. The fact that she knows her **audience** well (their beliefs, assumptions, and prejudices) affects the evidence she chooses to use (**subject** in the triangle) (7).

II. Unpacking Quindlen's Argument: Her Unspoken Assumptions

Any topic or issue that might form the basis of a text must offer at least two possibilities of interpretation, analysis, or argument. In other words, the subject must be one with which reasonable people might disagree. A persuasive text cannot be rhetorically effective if it covers a subject on which all people agree.

The statement *People should help those less fortunate than themselves* is less open to argument than the statement *Those who are rich should give away a lot of their money to help the poor*.

A successful writer generates effective material by capitalizing on what his or her audience already knows, making them curious to know more about the topic and then satisfying their curiosity by providing facts, ideas, and interpretations that build on what they already know. Writers must presume that the audience believes and accepts the assumption(s) they are making, and often these assumptions are unstated (12-13).

Often writers and speakers use a type of logical reasoning called a **sylogism**. A syllogism has three parts:

- A major premise
- A minor premise
- A conclusion

Here is an example of a syllogism:

- *Major premise:* Women are wise.
- *Minor premise:* Debra is a woman.
- *Conclusion:* Therefore, Debra is wise.

Sometimes, however, writers choose not to state their major premise(s) directly. They count on the audience to be able to see those major premises (or to unpack the argument). A syllogism in which the major premise is unstated is called an **enthymeme**.

Look at how this **enthymeme** differs from the syllogism:

- *Major premise:* omitted
- *Minor premise:* Debra is a woman.
- *Conclusion:* Therefore, Debra is wise.

Often writers omit the major premise. In an enthymeme, that major premise is unstated. Quite possibly, people will hold differing opinions about the major premise. For example, there may be some people who would not accept the premise that "women are wise." In an enthymeme, instead of having an "irrefutable" general truth for a major premise, the major premise is a statement that the writer *presumes* the audience accepts (43). Because the writer presumes that the audience believes and accepts the assumption that holds the major premise slot, that part of the argument frequently goes unstated. In most arguments, the writer supplies the other parts of the enthymeme and assumes that the audience is going to complete for itself the unspoken major premise (43-44).

Look at the seventh paragraph in Quindlen's article.

"The most *optimistic estimate* is that two thirds of these emotionally disturbed children are not getting any treatment. Imagine how we would respond if two thirds of America's babies were not being immunized."

Quindlen's unspoken assumption is that mental illness IS treatable and that it SHOULD be treated. Here is the unspoken assumption stated in an enthymeme:

- *Major premise:* Mental illness is as treatable as physical illness
- *Minor premise:* Adults are responsible for the well-being of young people.
- *Conclusion:* Therefore, adults must do all they can to help mentally ill young people seek treatment.

Now look at another unspoken assumption in the seventh paragraph:

"Many health-insurance plans do not provide coverage for necessary treatment, or financially penalize those *who need a psychiatrist instead of an oncologist.*"

The unspoken assumption is that mental illness is as debilitating and crippling as cancer.

Here is this unspoken assumption stated in a syllogism:

- *Major premise:* Mental illness is as debilitating as cancer.
- *Minor premise:* Adults would surely do all they could to help a child with cancer.
- *Conclusion:* Therefore, adults should help young people with mental illness seek treatment.

Finding and writing enthymemes is more an intellectual exercise than an indispensable element of understanding rhetoric. What IS important is that you be able to identify the unspoken assumptions the writer is making because only then can you fully understand the writer's argument and the choices he or she makes to develop that argument.

Find three more unspoken assumptions that Quindlen makes. Remember that these are assumptions that she believes strongly but with which everyone else may not agree. If they all agreed with her, what would be the need to write a persuasive essay about this subject?

1. _____.

2. _____.

3. _____.

II. Quindlen’s use of diction and details to reveal persona

Read the quotes on the left. Write commentary explaining the effect of the diction and details. Then, in the last column, write your inferences about her persona based on the diction and details. Some examples have been completed for you.

Quote from the article	Diction and detail commentary	Inference about the persona
“Excuses, excuses. That’s what so many think of the underlying pathology in such unimaginable crimes.” (4 th paragraph)	Quindlen had just written that Sam Manzie strangled an 11-year-old boy with the cord of an alarm clock “because his Sega Genesis was out of reach.” The repetition of the word “excuses” in a fragment conveys a tone of sarcasm. This tone warns off any reader who might actually blame Sam Manzie.	Quindlen is opinionated and quite confident of her position.
“the film censors demanded a <u>ludicrous</u> mock curtain call in which the child actress was taken over the knee of her screen father and spanked” (4 th paragraph)	Quindlen could have omitted the adjective “ludicrous,” thus allowing her audience to reach their own conclusions about the film. Instead, she forcefully guides the reader’s opinion.	Quindlen is judgmental and forceful in conveying her opinions.
“And there’s still plenty of that <u>useless</u> adult ‘what in the world does a 16-year-old have to be depressed about’ mind-set to keep depressed 16-year-olds from getting help.” (4 th paragraph)		
“a judge <u>lectured</u> Sam from the bench: ‘you know the difference between what’s right and wrong, don’t you’?” (6 th paragraph)		

“wrong takes second seat to the <u>voices in their heads</u> ” (7 th paragraph)	Quindlen implies that children are not accountable for their actions because they have no control of the “voices in their heads.”	Quindlen is knowledgeable about mental illness.
“a doctor <u>flying blind with an ice pick</u> ” (7 th paragraph)		
“or financially penalize those who need a psychiatrist <u>instead of an oncologist</u> ” (8 th paragraph)		

Writing Activity: Write a paragraph identifying traits of Quindlen’s persona. Support your assertion with at least two quotations from the article.

Use and Omission of Details

When writers have a strong claim and have done their research, they make choices about what data to include and what to omit. Omitting certain details is a legitimate persuasive technique. What Quindlen omits is perhaps as important in establishing her claim as the details she chooses to include. Consider the following:

“This month Kip Kinkel was sentenced to life in prison in Oregon for the murders of his parents and a shooting rampage at his high school that killed two students.” (3rd paragraph)

Quindlen avoids mentioning any of the graphic details about these murders. But in testimony at Kinkel’s trial, one student said, “I saw so much that day that haunts me. I remember seeing Jesse in front of me, with blood all over his white shirt...I saw Jennifer with blood all over her face and neck, and I assumed that she was already dead. I saw a body behind me on the other side of the table, and I didn’t know who it was.” Quindlen carefully avoids mentioning details of the actual shootings because knowing them could sway her readers to feel sympathy for the students Kinkel murdered.

What other details does Quindlen choose to omit, details which might weaken her argument and cause her readers to disagree with her? _____

IV. Quindlen’s Style

One aspect of rhetorical strategies is the author’s style—diction, imagery, syntax, figurative language, etc. Look carefully at Quindlen’s style to see how she persuades her readers.

Let’s examine Quindlen’s style in the first paragraph:

Diction: The term “psychological autopsy” is jarring and shocking. An autopsy obviously involves a dead body, so the language alludes to death in the first sentence of the article. To link “psychological” and “autopsy” together captures the reader’s attention at the very beginning of the article.

Diction and sound devices: Quindlen uses the word “kid” instead of “child,” “young person,” or “student.” With the words “when a kid kills himself,” Quindlen employs both alliteration and assonance with colloquial diction. The effect is to shock the reader with the juxtaposition of sound devices with the idea of a young person’s suicide.

Syntax and diction: “and discover all the hidden markers that led to the rope, the blade, the gun.” Using asyndeton speeds up the pace as the reader reads these blunt, mono-syllabic, concrete weapon words.

Allusion: “There’s a plague on all our houses” is an allusion from *Romeo and Juliet*. The allusion refers to the tragic death of the young people in the play. Quindlen regards the greater tragedy to be the mental suffering of young people, who act because of forces beyond their control.

Syntax: “and since it doesn’t announce itself with lumps or spots or protest marches,”— Quindlen uses polysyndeton in the repetition of the conjunction “or” to give the sense of an ongoing list that is never-ending.

Syntax: Quindlen juxtaposes two unlikely things in “murder suspects with acne problems” to shock readers’ sensibilities and to engage them fully.

Syntax: Another example of polysyndeton occurs with the words “And everyone searches for reasons, and scapegoats, and solutions....” Again the effect is of a list that could go on interminably.

Sound devices: “ending the ignorance about mental health, and moving it from the margins of care and into the mainstream where it belongs.” The alliteration of the repeated “m” sound reinforces Quindlen’s main point in this article.

Syntax: Quindlen ends with a rather short sentence whose brevity underscores her main point, a point to which she has been leading the reader all through this paragraph: “As surely as any vaccine, this would save lives.”

Read the sample entries below. Then find your own examples of Quindlen’s style and comment on the effect of the stylistic device. The first examples are done for you.

Stylistic Device	Effect of Stylistic Device
“they were <u>threading</u> their way through a mental-health system” (6 th paragraph)	The metaphor “threading” implies working one’s way through a maze, the way thread works its way through cloth, in and out. This shows that the mental health system is unbelievably complex and difficult to navigate, and many kids and parents become lost in it, failing to get the help they need.
“In the meantime, a psychiatrist who examined his son for less time than it takes to eat a <u>Happy Meal</u> concluded that he was no danger to himself or others....” (6 th paragraph)	The juxtaposition of eating a McDonald’s Happy Meal with the time a psychiatrist spent examining the 15-year-old killer Kip Kinkel reveals how casually mentally ill children are treated by society. (And notice the irony of the name of the meal.)
“might have performed a <u>lobotomy</u> , leaving them to <u>loll</u> away their days” (7 th paragraph)	These words create a sense of shock and outrage. The alliterative “l” sound in “lobotomy” and “loll” plus the assonance in the “o” sound suggest a similarity in these terms. But the connotations of idleness in the word “loll” are antithetical to the barbaric, revolting connotations of the word “lobotomy.” Juxtaposing these two terms should be deeply disturbing to the perceptive reader.
“ <u>If only</u> there had been long-term intervention....” “ <u>If only</u> Sam Manzie had been treated....” “And <u>if only</u> ...” (9 th paragraph)	The anaphora creates a perceptible rhythm and emphasizes how important it is for society to change its attitude toward mentally ill young people. The words “If only” suggest that minimal effort could have changed the tragic outcome.
“Insurance providers should <u>act like it</u> . Hospitals and schools should <u>act like it</u> . Above all, we parents should <u>act like it</u> .” (9 th paragraph)	The epistrophe emphasizes the final claim that Quindlen makes, the conclusion she wants her readers to reach. She clearly articulates her belief that all of society shares a common interest in the well-being of young people.

Writing Prompt

Carefully read the following article by the American writer Anna Quindlen. Examine the rhetorical strategies she uses to persuade her readers that society should stop dismissing mental illness in young people as a “character flaw” and take action to help young people find treatment. You have 40 minutes to complete your essay.