

## Chapter 8: Cultivating Signal, Noise, and Feeling: Songwriting Practices in Digital Rhetoric Courses

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### 2. “Distracted Driving in 500 Words” by Trinity

In this example, Trinity discusses a hot-button issue—texting while driving. Her rationale concerns her use of stats and the idea that “dark classical music adds a sense of eeriness to the podcast and thus strengthens my message.”

#### Transcript

*[This piece begins with highway sounds, text messaging sounds, a car horn, more text messaging sounds, and a car crash sound effect.]*

*[Music fades in, sounding somber and classical.]*

**Trinity:** Distracted driving is a significant problem today in the USA, with about 421,000 accidents annually because of this issue alone. Distracted driving is any activity that takes a driver’s focus, mentally and physically, off the task of driving; this can be eating while driving, driving while impaired by alcohol or other drugs, or texting while driving. Out of the 421,000 accidents due to distracted driving, over 330,000 accidents can be attributed to texting and driving. A solution needs to be developed to decrease the amount of fatal and nonfatal crashes associated with texting and driving, and not just on the federal level of the government.

The federal government, specifically the legislative branch, should make stricter laws regarding texting and driving; they should enforce harsher punishments, such as steeper fines associated with texting and driving. In addition to steeper penalties, an individual should be subjected to time in jail if they continually text and drive. The primary reason why texting and driving have gotten this severe is the lack of punishments and the lack of regard for this crime. Such as the eighteen days in jail Reggie Shaw received after killing two men as a result of texting and driving.

However, texting and driving is just as deadly as driving while impaired by alcohol. On the technological side of deterring texting and driving, car manufacturers should develop a device that is built in every car located in the driver’s seat to detect when the driver is using a mobile device and sending text messages. On the other hand, if an individual is not identified using their phone while driving, they should be rewarded. This incentive program will significantly reduce texting and driving accidents as a lot of individuals act on motivation and are greatly influenced by extrinsic motivation, which is being motivated by external factors such as money, or good grades. In regard to the state government, the completion of driver’s education needs to be required before obtaining a driver’s license. Driver’s education doesn’t just teach the laws of the road; it also shows young drivers the dangers that can arise while driving. While I was taking driver’s education, I can remember feeling a sense of impending doom as I watched and saw pictures of what can happen to a driver that does not obey the laws of the road. Driver’s education mentally prepared me to drive, to expect the unexpected, and to drive not only for myself but for others around me.

*[Classical music fades out, and a piano track fades in.]*

The benefits of the plan I am proposing is the apparent fewer fatalities and nonfatalities associated with distracted driving. This program is essential to reduce the over 330,000 crashes a year to a far more “manageable” number.

Don't be a statistic.

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## Rationale for 500-Word Podcast

For the 500-word storytelling podcast, I used Audacity to record, edit, and enhance my podcast. My podcast briefly discussed my views on texting and driving and offer three solutions to decrease the accidents due to distracted driving. My primary audience is individuals who have engaged in the activity of texting and driving; the secondary audience is all drivers on the road.

The update podcast is an almost total redo of the original podcast as I lost all my computer files as the result of a damaged hard drive. For the background highway sounds, I used more noises such as gradually increasing in amplitude followed by a gradual decrease; also I incorporate the car horns better. I raised the vocal track and lowered the music tracks so my message could be better understood by the listener. I amplified the car crash so it “hits” the listener and I improved the transitioning between the dark classical music and the upbeat classical.

For the beginning of my podcast, I wanted sounds that would grab and pull in the audience. Almost immediately my mind went to the various commercials of a distracted driver's last minutes alive. The driver received their final message, rummaged around in their bags or purses for their phones, sent their last message, and met their early demise. Using the Freeound.org website, I found some sounds that best suited my podcast's opening. Since there isn't a video with the podcast, it almost puts the listener in the podcast, such as listening to Audible books as it is so easy to get immersed in the story. This “concept” engages the audience as a lot of them regularly texting and drive; this connection with the audience will make them more likely to listen to the complete message in my podcast. The familiar sounds will trigger these dangerous memories; however, this time, they will not be able to maintain texting while driving and be involved in the virtual crash. My argument is strengthened using these sounds as it allows the listener to be in the shoes of an individual who died as a result of texting and driving. Some of my classmates noted that my plan seems too extreme but using the opening sounds, it will put into perspective why my idea is the way it is.

In my initial essay, with 500+ words, I utilized a lot of statistics; however, a podcast is more based on emotional appeal than logical appeal in my opinion. This observation is also why I used the dark classical music at the beginning of the podcast. The music almost sounds like the listener is at a (their) funeral. The dark classical music adds a sense of eeriness to the podcast and thus strengths my message. Towards the end of my podcast, I switch the dark classical with a slightly more upbeat classical piece, the light at the end of the tunnel. This change occurred when I began to discuss the benefits of my plan. This upbeat sound puts the listener from the unease of the dark classical to a sense of calm.

My primary objective is to change the cognitive dissonance of my audience as they know texting while driving is dangerous but still partake in the activity. This podcast will encourage the audience to

rethink the listener's actions and hopefully change for the better. Overall, I think my podcast accurately depicts the emotions I feel when thinking of texting and driving.