

Abigail Fountain

Professor Kade Parry

English 2010 - Section N50

January 28, 2026

“Shitty First Drafts” - Letting Drafts Take Control

In this excerpt, let's dive into “Shitty First Drafts” by Anne Lamott. Lamott creates an importance for the first drafts of writing. According to Lamott, “this is just the fantasy of the uninitiated.” (pg. 1, section 1) What does this author mean by this exactly? Every good writer has a first draft, which creates a second, or even a third. These first drafts can be “shitty”, but it is what makes good writing. Writers cannot have a solid first draft, or write with a sense of perfection on the first go. The “Shitty First Draft” is the start to beauty, grace, and all good things when it comes to writing; without our first draft there cannot be a solid baseline for good, solid writing.

Furthermore, this article is significant due to the importance the first draft writing gives to us. According to Lamott, “[Even amazing writers,] not one of them sits down routinely feeling wildly enthusiastic and confident. Not one of them writes elegant first drafts.” (pg.1, section 1). The purpose is much deeper than that. Lamott explains, not many authors know which first step to take. Even in their time as a food critic, they would make notes between the bickering of friends. That was her “Shitty First Draft.”. She was able to find that grounding for her writing through writing her thoughts down, the way she believes any author should for their first draft. This author has many rhetorical appeals in this essay, tied to logos, pathos, and ethos. They use the critique of never having a good first draft with logos, while making a good appeal of pathos as well; bringing up their satire with food critics. The last major appeal this author states

connects with ethos, bringing up how terrible things may look at first. This can continue into a beautiful masterpiece. Anne Lamott argues in her excerpt, “Shitty First Drafts,” are essential to the writing process through revision, and are far from failure.

First and foremost, the appeal for logos. Logically, humans are not perfect. From missed work emails after a tired day, to overwhelming mannerisms on social media, it can be challenging to trace every message and respond to each one. The same logic applies to writing. “Almost all good writing begins with terrible first efforts,” (pg. 2, section 10) says Lamott. The human race cannot strive for perfection, as that is incredibly unrealistic. The real goal should instead be to strive for these shitty drafts, so there is a ground to stand on for a solid foundation of work. It is not smart or practical expecting flawless work from a lack of revision. As a writer, they must strive for hard work, and correction of errors, instead of hoping for perfect levelheaded effort in the first go. Someone who has crafted beautiful poems, books, and more, even with a depth of experience to that level, there must be a drive to create more than our “Shitty First Drafts.”

In addition to logos, another major rhetorical appeal this author grazes is pathos. Pathos is a very important appeal in this essay especially, because of the emotion writing can create. If there is a desire to create a solid essay that really hooks the reader, there are going to be countless revisions. Once everything is laid out, there may be changes to fit other places easier, or be able to develop a better hook once it is accurately visualized. Lamott states, “I’d write a first draft that was maybe twice as long as it should be, with a self-indulgent and boring beginning, stupefying descriptions of the meal, lots of quotes from my black-humored friends.” (pg. 1, section 7.) Due to this excerpt from Lamott, it is important to note the first drafts are not

about perfection, but about gathering of information to achieve the highest potential of writing possible.

The final appeal in this essay dives into ethos, since we have already grazed pathos and logos. Even though it's last, it is still a major importance to have these appeals as well. This appeal is especially relevant due to the curiosity of the human mind. As humans, it is natural to be curious and indulgent. There are all sorts of childlike idiosyncrasy built into people, and even the author knows that. She mentions, " You just let this childlike part of you channel whatever voices and visions come through and onto the page." (pg. 1, section 4) This appeal not only appeases the curious, childlike nature of people, but the foundation of ethics in most of society. In writing, there must be the ethical appeal to curiosity, and hone the inner child of the author to complete the first drafts to graciously create the start to a masterpiece.

Even with Lamott's strong argument, many authors do find flaws within this method, although there is still truth in the importance of analyzing work to create a final product. This process can be seen as developing laziness in writing patterns, as having a bit of word vomit. Everything on a piece of paper can be unorganized, and overwhelming. This ties back to the childlike idealism, because if everything is exerted onto a page, it can seem sloppy. This can contribute to a lower development of complexities in an essay, since it's essentially tweaking your upchuck of information on a page. Another major downside to this is the lack of creative freedom, and the belief that an author cannot write a good first draft.

Overall, the first drafts are the basis and the foundation to authors and writers. There are major rhetorical appeals through logos, pathos, and ethos in this excerpt. These processes are quite curious through the childlike idealism, the emotion and creativity behind writing, and the logical appeal of perfection. Even though there are critics and writers who find flaws in this

writing style, it is of utmost importance as writers to deliver a perfected final draft to draw in a targeted audience. Creativity stems from practice and the strive for developmental habits in our writing. Lamott has been a writer for several years, and worked in many industries through writing. From being a food critic and letting their fingers do the work, Lamott makes very promising stances in her opinions on allowing the flow of creativity and nonsense be the very foundation of a beautiful masterpiece.

Bibliography

Lamott, Anne. *Shitty First Drafts*. Anne Lamott, 2005.