

WHY I WANT A WIFE

By Judy Brady

Let's begin by reading a classic short essay, "Why I Want a Wife," by Judy Brady, originally published in Ms. magazine in 1972 and reprinted as "Why I [Still] Want a Wife" in the same magazine in 1990.

I belong to that classification of people known as wives. I am A Wife. And, not altogether incidentally, I am a mother.

Not too long ago a male friend of mine appeared on the scene fresh from a recent divorce. He had one child, who is, of course, with his ex-wife. He is looking for another wife. As I thought about him while I was ironing one evening, it suddenly occurred to me that I, too, would like to have a wife. Why do I want a wife?

I would like to go back to school so that I can become economically independent, support myself, and, if need be, support those dependent upon me. I want a wife who will work and send me to school. And while I am going to school, I want a wife to take care of my children. I want a wife to keep track of the children's doctor and dentist appointments. And to keep track of mine, too. I want a wife to make sure my children eat properly and are kept clean. I want a wife who will wash the children's clothes and keep them mended. I want a wife who is a good nurturant attendant to my children, who arranges for their schooling, makes sure that they have an adequate social life with their peers, takes them to the park, the zoo, etc. I want a wife who takes care of the children when they are sick, a wife who arranges to be around when the children need special care, because, of course, I cannot miss classes at school. My wife must arrange to lose time at work and not lose the job. It may mean a small cut in my wife's income from time to time, but I guess I can tolerate that. Needless to say, my wife will arrange and pay for the care of the children while my wife is working.

I want a wife who will take care of my physical needs. I want a wife who will keep my house clean. A wife who will pick up after my children, a wife who will pick up after me. I want a wife who will keep my clothes clean, ironed, mended, replaced when need be, and who will see to it that my personal things are kept in their proper place so that I can find what I need the minute I need it. I want a wife who cooks the meals, a wife who is a good cook. I want a wife who will plan the menus, do the necessary grocery shopping, prepare the meals, serve them pleasantly, and then do the cleaning up while I do my studying. I want a wife who will care for me when I am sick and sympathize with my pain and loss of time from school. I want a wife to go along when our family takes a vacation so that someone can continue to care for me and my children when I need a rest and change of scene.

I want a wife who will not bother me with rambling complaints about a wife's duties. But I want a wife who will listen to me when I feel the need to explain a rather difficult point I have come across in my course studies. And I want a wife who will type my papers for me when I have written them

I want a wife who will take care of the details of my social life. When my wife and I are invited out by my friends, I want a wife who will take care of the baby-sitting arrangements. When I meet *people* at school that I like and want to entertain, I want a wife who will have the house clean, will prepare a special meal, *serve* it to me and my friends, and not interrupt when I talk about things that interest me and my friends. I want a wife who will have arranged that the children are fed and ready for bed before my guests arrive so that the children do not bother us. I want a wife who takes care of the needs of my guests so that they feel comfortable, who makes sure that they have an ashtray, that they are passed the hors d'oeuvres, that they are offered a second helping of the food, that their wine glasses are replenished when necessary, that their coffee is served to them as they like it. And I want a wife who knows that sometimes I need a night out by myself.

I want a wife who is sensitive to my sexual needs, a wife who makes love passionately and eagerly when I feel like it, a wife who makes sure that I am satisfied. And, of course, I want a wife who will not demand sexual attention when I am not in the mood for it. I want a wife who assumes the complete responsibility for birth control, because I do not want more children. I want a wife who will remain sexually faithful to me so that I do not have to clutter up my intellectual life with jealousies. And I want a wife who understands that my sexual needs may entail more than strict adherence to monogamy. I must, after all, be able to relate to people as fully as possible.

If, by chance, I find another person more suitable as a wife than the wife I already have, I want the liberty to replace my present wife with another one. Naturally, I will expect a fresh, new life; my wife will take the children and be solely responsible for them so that I am left free.

When I am through with school and have a job, I want my wife to quit working and remain at home so that my wife can more fully and completely take care of a wife's duties. My God, who wouldn't want a wife?

Please take a few minutes and write a 1-2 page response to Brady's essay, based on the mini-essay prompt from the HW page. Consider ANY the following questions before you begin:

What point is she trying to make? What kinds of evidence does she present in support of her point? What kinds of evidence does she present in support of her point? How does she use rhetorical device to further her point? Whom do you think Brady envisions as her readers, and why do you think she focuses on this particular population? How do you think these primary target audience would respond to this essay? How do you think a very different set of readers (feel free to identify) might respond? What kind of person is the speaker? What sentences or phrases grab your attention? How would you characterize the meaning, purpose, and effect of the essay? How do you think Judy Brady went about finding the material she used for this essay? How would you describe the language choices she made in order to make the essay effective?

SANDOVAL CLASS NOTES

Definition of RHETORIC

- the art of finding and analyzing all the choices involving language that a writer, speaker, reader, or listener might make in a situation so that the text becomes meaningful, purposeful, and effective for readers or listeners;
- the specific features of texts, written or spoken, that cause them to be meaningful, purposeful, and effective for readers or listeners in a situation.

1. *Rhetoric* entails *finding* and *analyzing all the choices involving language*. Notice that rhetoric is not necessarily the art of *using* all the available means in a situation; it is the art of *finding* and *analyzing* the linguistic resources that a writer or reader *might* use. A person who uses his or her rhetorical skills to produce or analyze a text is constantly conducting an inventory of strategies he or she might employ as a writer of elements that he or she might notice as a reader. And there are great many things one can do to create a purposeful, effective text. Think of the mind-boggling array of choices that a writer must make in creating a text.

2. *Rhetoric is an activity engaged in by the writer, speaker, reader, or listener*. Some people consider rhetoric to be involved only with the production of texts by writers and speakers. A constructivist view of reading and listening, however, makes it clear that a person who is reading a written text or listening to a spoken one is internally "writing" the text in order to understand and analyze it, so readers and listeners also need to be aware of all the choices involving language a writer or speaker might use in a situation.

3. *Rhetoric operates in a specific situation—that is, the rhetorical situation*. Rhetoric is always situational, and texts, written or spoken, always emerge in situations. Every text ever produced was composed because a writer felt a sense of exigence—something that needed to be done, some gap or lack that needed to be addressed by writing. The writer sensed there would be an audience for his or her writing, even if that audience was only the writer. The writer sensed that he or she could accomplish a purpose or achieve an effect with this audience: he or she could inform them of something they didn't already know, convince them of the wisdom of a central idea, move them to action, cause them to laugh, cry, protest—whatever. To achieve this purpose or effect with an audience, the writer would be bound by a set of constraints—prior knowledge, attitudes, ideas, beliefs that the writer must appeal to or invoke to connect with the audience and achieve his or her purpose or effect.

4. *Rhetoric works when a text becomes meaningful, purposeful, and effective for readers or listeners*. Here is the essence of a vital concept in rhetoric: *intention*, also known as *aim* or *purpose*. Writers and speakers do not produce texts for no good reason. They want the texts they produce to *mean* something and do something. They have an intention, an aim, a purpose. If a text does not lead to the audience's making meaning with it, and if the text does not accomplish a purpose or achieve an effect, it is not a rhetorically successful text.

