

Directions:

1. Demonstrate evidence of close reading.
2. Highlight your confusion.
3. Answer the three questions at the bottom of the page.
4. Write a 1+ page reflection in your WN.

Making America Stupid

Source: Thomas Friedman/ *New York Times*/9/14/08

Note: This week's article is an editorial

Imagine for a minute that attending the Republican convention in St. Paul, sitting in a skybox overlooking the convention floor, were observers from Russia, Iran and Venezuela. And imagine for a minute what these observers would have been doing when Rudy Giuliani led the delegates in a chant of “drill, baby, drill!”

I'll tell you what they would have been doing: the Russian, Iranian and Venezuelan observers would have been up out of their seats, exchanging high-fives and joining in the chant louder than anyone in the hall — “Yes! Yes! Drill, America, drill!” — because an America that is focused first and foremost on drilling for oil is an America more focused on feeding its oil habit than kicking it.

Why would Republicans, the party of business, want to focus our country on breathing life into a 19th-century technology — fossil fuels — rather than giving birth to a 21st-century technology — renewable energy? As I have argued before, it reminds me of someone who, on the eve of the I.T. revolution — on the eve of PCs and the Internet — is pounding the table for America to make more I.B.M. typewriters and carbon paper. “Typewriters, baby, typewriters.”

Of course, we're going to need oil for many years, but instead of exalting that — with “drill, baby, drill” — why not throw all our energy into innovating a whole new industry of clean power with the mantra “invent, baby, invent?” That is what a party committed to “change” would really be doing. As they say in Texas: “If all you ever do is all you've ever done, then all you'll ever get is all you ever got.”

I dwell on this issue because it is symbolic of the campaign that John McCain has decided to run. It's a campaign now built on turning everything possible into a cultural wedge issue — including even energy policy, no matter how stupid it makes the voters and no matter how much it might weaken America.

I respected McCain's willingness to support the troop surge in Iraq, even if it was going to cost him the Republican nomination. Now the same guy, who would not sell his soul to win his party's nomination, is ready to sell every piece of his soul to win the presidency.

In order to disguise the fact that the core of his campaign is to continue the same Bush policies that have led 80 percent of the country to conclude we're on the wrong track, McCain has decided to play the culture-war card. Obama may be a bit professorial, but at least he is trying to unite the country to face the real issues rather than divide us over cultural differences.

A Washington Post editorial on Thursday put it well: “On a day when the Congressional Budget Office warned of looming deficits and a grim economic outlook, when the stock market faltered even in the wake of the government's rescue of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, when President Bush discussed the road ahead in Iraq and Afghanistan, on what did the campaign of Senator John McCain spend its energy? A

conference call to denounce Senator Barack Obama for using the phrase ‘lipstick on a pig’ and a new television ad accusing the Democrat of wanting to teach kindergartners about sex before they learn to read.”

Some McCain supporters criticize Obama for not having the steel in his belly to use force in the dangerous world we live in today. Well I know this: In order to use force, you have to have force. In order to exercise leverage, you have to have leverage.

I don’t know how much steel is in Obama’s belly, but I do know that the issues he is focusing on in this campaign — improving education and health care, dealing with the deficit and forging a real energy policy based on building a whole new energy infrastructure — are the only way we can put steel back into America’s spine. McCain, alas, has abandoned those issues for the culture-war strategy.

Who cares how much steel John McCain has in his gut when the steel that today holds up our bridges, railroads, nuclear reactors and other infrastructure is rusting? McCain talks about how he would build dozens of nuclear power plants. Oh, really? They go for \$10 billion a pop. Where is the money going to come from? From lowering taxes? From banning abortions? From borrowing more from China? From having Sarah Palin “reform” Washington — as if she has any more clue how to do that than the first 100 names in the D.C. phonebook?

Sorry, but there is no sustainable political/military power without economic power, and talking about one without the other is nonsense. Unless we make America the country most able to innovate, compete and win in the age of globalization, our leverage in the world will continue to slowly erode. Those are the issues this election needs to be about, because that is what the next four years need to be about.

There is no strong leader without a strong country. And posing as one, to use the current vernacular, is nothing more than putting lipstick on a pig.

What is the author’s thesis (main point)? State in one sentence:

List three writing strategies the writer uses to make his argument:

What is the author’s purpose?

Who is the intended audience?