

Opening Scene Thank You for Smoking

analysis

You all did a great job on your responses and often went very deep. I want to make sure I touch on a few pertinent aspects of Nick's rhetorical strategy. Immediately Nick has to steer the conversation in a direction he can win. He certainly does not want the focus on the health risks associated with smoking cigarettes—in this case Robin Williger's cancer. So he immediately asks what essentially functions as a rhetorical question (much like the first line in the "I Has a Dream" ad) that he goes ahead and answers even though the answer is clear (but in this case, also fallacious). The false appeal to logos here moves the argument away from the dangers inherent in teen smoking and makes it about economics and then, subsequently, about intent and care. Nick's proposed logic has its roots in elementary economics and supply and demand. It would seem to make sense that a company that sells products (addictive or not) wants as many consumers as it can get. Logically this would mean that if a consumer dies, it is one less customer. It is clear that Nick and Big Tobacco are aware that cigarette smoking can kill people. That is why Nick's conversation on the talk show avoids any talk of health issues. Also note, that Nick's audience are not those on stage with him (except perhaps for Robin who shakes his hand at the end), because they are not available for refutation. He is after the TV audience. So his red-herring strategy of turning this into a lesson on economics allows him (as the face of Big Tobacco) to adjust the audience's perception of his and Big Tobacco's ethos. This economic argument enables Nick to talk about intent. "It's not only our *hope*; it's in our best interest to keep Robin *alive* and smoking." Big Tobacco cares about Robin's life. He uses a circumstantial ad hominem attack on Ron Goode which also includes those like Ron, the Ron Goodes of the world (perhaps the others on the stage and Senator Finistierre as well). Notice that the personal attack on Ron Goode maintains the tangential line of the red herring fallacy—it is still about economics (his budget will go up). So the Ron Goodes of the world have bad intentions for the lives of those like Robin Williger as compared to the care that Big Tobacco has for him. They are even willing to go against their own best economic interest (to make money) and actually spend 50 million dollars to keep kids for smoking. Then there is the *ad populum* appeal and the apple polishing appeal, which are obvious. What is pretty smooth is how Nick uses pronouns to argue. Note the "we" is Nick and Big Tobacco when he is talking about the \$50 million campaign and how it shifts to "we"