

Activity 8: Annotations – “It’s Not About the Bike”

Write the lines where Armstrong says what it means to be alive.	Is this line positive or negative?	Paraphrase the line – use your own words.
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

Activity 8, continued

Thinking Critically

1. An autobiography is a form of nonfiction- a text that tells the “truth.” Do you think Armstrong is being truthful in his account of his life? Explain your reasoning.

From his perspective, Armstrong probably believes his is telling “the truth.” Others, whose voices are not represented in the story, may have a different view of his story. Armstrong has had time to reflect on what he went through in his 20’s so it is not a “raw” experience but rather one that has crystallized with time and reflection.

2. Armstrong’s autobiography is written by Armstrong with Sally Jenkins. What role do you think Jenkins played in the writing of the text? How does her participation in the creation of the text influence your interpretation of Armstrong’s story? In other words, how does the combination of Armstrong and Jenkins as authors affect the “ethos” of the text?

Students should suspect that Jenkins had a profound impact on the text’s style and structure. Her role may make readers question the validity of the ideas because they do not know anything about her (a ghost writer) or her ability or authority to talk about the issues in Armstrong’s text.

3. Do you think that Armstrong’s story has an impact on the reader because of its use of logic (logos) or emotion (pathos) or both?

The text uses both logos and pathos. The descriptions that Armstrong provides engage the reader emotionally, and that emotional impact is used to justify a logical embracing of life.

4. Unlike Hamlet, Armstrong is not in the midst of his crisis when he writes his story; instead, he writes about his experiences in hindsight. Does that have an impact on Armstrong's ability to make his ideas and story compelling to the reader? Explain your reasoning.

Armstrong may have described incidents much differently when he was in the midst of his battle with cancer. The narration of the events after he had already succeeded in defeating cancer and regained his health and strength and athletic dominance provide a particular lens through which to view those events. By contrast, Hamlet is engaging the question from a "what will happen?" perspective. The authors of this text make the reader want to know how Armstrong was able to rise above the difficulties he faced.