Jimmy Carter’s essay “Arctic National Wildlife Refuge” demands that each of America’s citizens consider the environment as an integral part of their lives. Carter’s essay skills help him to make his points ring clear. Furthermore, Carter’s uses of evidence, reasoning, and stylistic devices help him to highlight the fact that the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge “should not be developed for industry” (Carter).

In order to underscore his primary concerns for this Refuge, Carter includes pertinent pieces of evidence which appeal to logically minded readers. First, Carter notes that this land has been a designated “8.9 million-acre” haven for wildlife since President Eisenhower established it in 1960 (Carter paragraph 5). He expounds upon this by adding that he himself further safeguarded Alaskan wildlife twenty years after Eisenhower when he “signed the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act” (Carter 5). By including both of these legislations, Carter establishes a timeline for conservation which shows there is a precedence for persevering the area in question. Carter goes on to explain that what the oil industries would gain from the region would not be enough of an amount to justify its destruction. He states that “at best, the Arctic Refuge might provide 1 to 2 percent of the oil our country consumes each day” (Carter 7). Why on earth would industry pillage this environmental bounty for such a small amount of oil? Carter’s evidence plainly illustrates that destruction in this area is foolhardy.

Much of Carter’s reasoning stems from emotional eye witness accounts of his own encounters with the wildlife in this region. After explaining that he has visited this area with his wife and that they had an unforgettable journey peppered with sightings of animals only found in Alaska, he insists that “there are few places on earth as wild and free as the Arctic Refuge” (Carter 8). This declaration strikes readers more because Carter has already discussed examples of the area’s unique natural offerings in prior paragraphs. Also when he reasons that Americans need to consider the fact that many indigenous people rely on Alaskan wildlife’s continuation to support their way of life, Carter further appeals to a reader’s sense of humanity (Carter 6). Essentially, he makes sure that readers understand that preserving this area is important, not just for the animals which inhabit the region, but for the sake of the people who live there and who need them.

Finally, Carter’s intense descriptive and figurative language nearly screams as it pleads his case. Carter establishes beautiful imagery to map this arctic refuge in the reader’s mind. From “the never-setting sun circled above the horizon” to “the sounds of grunting animals and clicking hooves filling the air,” Carter recreates the experience of being on this land to make readers feel connected to it, essentially underscoring its value in their minds (Carter 2, 3). When Carter begins to conclude his essay in paragraph 7, he compares developing this region to “tearing open the heart.” This comparison which personifies the land with a painful, bloody and gut-wrenching phrase, drives home his message. Drilling on this land will tear out an organ—and one no one can live without.

Throughout his entire essay, Carter’s skills elevate this wildlife refuge’s relevance and highlight its value for animals and for people. Readers see its beautify, rustic and wild, and they are convinced that drilling there is simply, plainly wrong. Readers may even find themselves
praying that the industries seeking its destruction will pause long enough to realize that it is truly “a symbol of national heritage,” one which we must protect.