**Assignment 5**

|  |
| --- |
| **Summary** |
| The memoir Becoming, written by Michelle Obama, portrays Obama’s life story. Firstly, Obama’s childhood and childhood aspirations are described. She portrays herself as a completely normal child, with quite big ambitions. Secondly, her life as First Lady of the United States of America is described. This is portrayed as a life without any kind of personal space, due to all the Secret Service agents, along with the tourists and the US population in general. Thirdly, her life after the election of President Trump is described. She portrays how strange she felt, due to the sudden change. In addition to this, she describes her new life in their redbrick house, where she has more freedom. Lastly, she describes how it has been for her family to suddenly be this free, and able to do rather normal things. |

|  |
| --- |
| **Analytical essay** |
| In the preface to Michelle Obama’s memoir *Becoming,*Obama portrays her life story, including her time as the First Lady. She reflects on the common phrase asked to every child in the World “What do you want to be when you grow up?” (p. 1,8). She believes that one never ceases to evolve. She reflects on this by comparing her own life, and particularly all the different stages of her life, to the connotation of the common phrase, which is that growing up is a definitive chapter in one’s life. The following analytical essay is focused on how the topic “Becoming” is shown in the preface to the former First Lady’s memoir. Furthermore, Obama’s thoughts on personal development will be discussed.  The topic, which imbues the preface, is the endless process of personal development, and it is already highlighted in the headline of the memoir. The verb “becoming” is conjugated in the present participle, which indicates an ongoing action. Therefore, one might argue that, since this topic is indicated already before reading the text, it is the most important one for Obama. This leads to the background of the text’s sender. The sender is Michelle Obama, the former First Lady of the United States of America. She is married to Barack Obama, who was in office from 2009 to 2017. Michelle Obama is a well-liked public figure, known by almost everyone throughout the world. This gives her a great amount of ethos, even before one reads the text. The ethos is further supported by reading about all the professions she has knowledge of. “I’ve been a lawyer. I’ve been a vice president at a hospital and the director of a nonprofit (…) And until recently, I was the First Lady of the United States of America” (p. 1,10-14). These are some of the experiences, which give Obama credibility while expressing herself on the issue of becoming.  However, Michelle Obama did not write these memoirs just to express how she does not like the expression “growing up”. The intention of these memoirs might be to motivate people to not stop working. Due to Obama’s background, the receivers are most likely to include Afro-American girls, who do not have an easy life served on a silver platter. An argument in support of this segment being the mainly intended receivers could be found in the style of Obama’s language. The style is rather informal and neutral, which allows people with no or little education to understand it. “I was at home in the redbrick house that my family recently moved into.” (p. 2,64-65). This is a sentence that almost everyone can relate to and understand. In addition to the informal style, the sentence structure is quite simple. She also increases her ethos as an educated woman by not using any swearwords. However, she uses some contractions, even though it is a written text. This somehow emphasizes that she is a human being, who can relate to the difficulties of life, e.g. “(…) didn’t know exactly what I was shooting for. Now I think it’s one of the most useless questions (…)” (p. 1,7). This linguistic effect makes it easier for young girls to relate to her. Her ethos, along with the fact that she is a successful Afro-American woman, shows that it is possible to keep evolving one’s personality, even though factors, such as skin colour, might stand in the way of public acknowledgement. This constant development of herself is also emphasized by the structure, which is chronological. This allows the reader to follow Obama’s ongoing process of development. At the end of the preface, Obama reflects on which things in their new life they adopted from the White House: “(…) our furniture is arranged the same way it was in the White House. We’ve got (…) photos of our family time at Camp David, (…) a book signed by Nelson Mandela.” (p. 3, 66-69). This quote shows that the family still has many items, which reminds them of their time in the White House. The quote shows that they have kept on evolving, and that “becoming” is not just something she claims is ongoing, since she learns from her past experiences, and bring the best things with her into the new life  In the preface and the video clip, Obama expresses that she believes it is sad if one stops developing. On the one hand that seems like a great approach towards the subject, since it, first, forces people to keep on seeking new adventures and experiences. It also ensures that one’s personality is not a static item, but instead something dynamic and constantly adapting. Second, it might allow people to move on from horrifying events in their life, because they hope or believe better times will come, and that the past events will give them the experience to avoid or cope with such things in the future. However, it might not be everyone that has the time or surplus energy to seek out new experiences. Some people might just feel stuck in one job, one lousy apartment or one toxic relationship. Nonetheless, it does appear as though Obama’s point of view on the topic is the one to strive for. It should also be taken into consideration that Obama did not get everything served on a silver platter. Instead she had to work and create her own future.  After reading the preface to Obama’s memoir *Becoming*,it is clear that she aims to portray herself as a fellow American, to inspire the young generation of Afro-Americans to work hard, and never stop the process of becoming. She uses her own life as an argument that one should never stop exploring. She does this by structuring the text chronologically, beginning with her childhood. She builds a great amount of ethos by using her own life as an example. Lastly, she ends her preface, by stating that she still has a lot to say, even though she is no longer the First Lady. In this way she makes the point that, despite her age, previous experiences and personal development she is still becoming. |