

# MA2 Preparation Packet: iPad Pro “Crush!” Ad

## What is the text you are analyzing?

Apple’s 2024 iPad Pro “Crush!” advertisement — a video that shows various creative tools (a piano, paints, books, record players, etc.) being crushed by a giant hydraulic press until only the thin iPad Pro remains. The ad symbolically implies that the iPad can replace all traditional creative tools in one sleek device.

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## Who/What created this text?

Apple Inc., through its official marketing team, released the ad across multiple platforms, including YouTube, Apple’s official website, and social media channels.

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## When was this text created, and where can it be found?

The “Crush!” commercial was released in May 2024 to promote the M4 iPad Pro, which Apple described as its “thinnest product ever.” The ad was distributed globally via television, YouTube, and Apple’s social media accounts. It was pulled shortly after release due to public backlash, but remains viewable online through news coverage and reposts.

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## What’s the exigence/purpose?

The ad’s purpose was to persuade consumers that the iPad Pro can replace multiple creative tools — from music instruments to art supplies — in one ultra-thin device. Apple intended to celebrate the power of technology to enable creativity anywhere, emphasizing thinness, innovation, and creative potential.

However, the rhetorical choice of destroying creative objects backfired, leading viewers to interpret the message as technology replacing or erasing creativity instead of empowering it.

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## Who is the audience? Why do they care?

The target audience included artists, designers, musicians, filmmakers, and students — essentially, Apple’s long-time “creative” demographic that values design and artistic tools.

They care because Apple products have historically been marketed as tools for creative expression. The ad contradicted that ethos by symbolically destroying the very objects that represent creativity. This caused disappointment and emotional backlash, with many creatives calling the ad tone-deaf and soulless.

Apple eventually apologized and withdrew the ad, admitting that it “missed the mark.”

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## Contextual factors influencing the text’s creation

**Company Context:** Apple was launching its first device using the new M4 chip, competing with high-end tablets and laptops. The company needed to communicate that this iPad was not just thin, but *powerful enough* to replace professional creative tools.

**Social Context:** Released during a time when many artists felt threatened by the rise of AI-generated art and automation, audiences were already sensitive to messages about technology replacing human creativity.

**Political Context:** Not directly relevant.

**Economic Context:** Apple faced pressure to differentiate the iPad from cheaper tablets amid slowing sales. A striking, provocative ad was likely intended to reignite excitement and brand prestige — but it risked alienating the very audience it relied on for loyalty.

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## Text Effectiveness (Carroll p. 55–56 prompts)

### 1) Does the rhetoric address the problem it claims to address?

No. Apple’s goal was to show that the iPad Pro *contains* the tools of creativity, but the imagery instead showed those tools being *destroyed*. The visual metaphor undermined the intended message by evoking loss rather than empowerment.

### 2) Is the rhetoric targeted at an audience with power to make change?

Yes — artists, creatives, and long-time Apple users. This audience has cultural influence and purchasing power. However, because the ad alienated them emotionally, it failed to persuade or inspire. Instead, it generated negative press and public criticism.

### 3) Are the ethos/pathos/logos appeals appropriate?

- **Ethos:** Apple’s brand credibility usually inspires trust, but this ad weakened that credibility among its creative audience by appearing to disrespect artistic traditions.

- **Pathos:** The ad aimed for awe but created discomfort and sadness. The destruction of beloved creative tools triggered negative emotions that overshadowed the message.
- **Logos:** The logic of the metaphor (“all creativity in one device”) was flawed. Destruction does not logically equal innovation or empowerment.

#### 4) Does the rhetor give enough information for an informed decision?

No. The ad relies entirely on symbolic imagery without context or narration. Viewers are left to interpret the meaning, and most drew negative conclusions. There was no explanation of the iPad’s actual creative features (like the M4 chip, OLED display, or Apple Pencil Pro), leaving the audience with confusion rather than clarity.

#### 5) Does the rhetoric attempt to manipulate (incomplete/inaccurate info or emotion abuse)?

Yes, indirectly. The ad manipulates emotion through shock value — the crushing imagery grabs attention but sacrifices honesty about what the product *does*. It implies that technology can replace human creativity, which is misleading and oversimplified.

#### 6) What sub-claims must the audience accept?

- That *all* forms of creativity can be contained within a single digital device.
- That technological innovation inherently *improves* or *replaces* traditional creative tools.

Most of Apple’s audience rejected these premises, arguing that creativity cannot be simplified into a screen.

#### 7) Possible negative effects & who is impacted?

- **Audience (creatives):** Emotional backlash, loss of trust, and disappointment in a brand that once celebrated artistic individuality.
  - **Author/creator (Apple):** Public embarrassment, damaged brand perception, and the cost of retracting a global ad campaign. The backlash showed that even a respected brand can lose credibility when its rhetoric contradicts its values.
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## Featured Sources (3)

### The Guardian – “Apple pulls iPad Pro ad after backlash over crushing creative tools”

- **Who:** The Guardian (reporters covering media/tech news).
- **What:** Report on Apple’s decision to pull the “Crush!” ad after widespread criticism.
- **When:** May 2024.
- **Where:** Online article.
- **Why:** Verifies public reaction and confirms Apple’s apology, showing the rhetorical failure.
- **Issues/Bias:** General news tone; mostly objective.

### CNBC – “Apple apologizes for controversial iPad Pro ad”

- **Who:** CNBC Technology section.
- **What:** Coverage of Apple’s official apology and reasoning.
- **When:** May 2024.
- **Where:** CNBC.com.
- **Why:** Reliable corporate source showing Apple’s acknowledgment of rhetorical misfire.
- **Issues/Bias:** Focuses on corporate image, not in-depth rhetorical critique.

### YouTube / Apple Official Channel (Original Ad)

- **Who:** Apple Inc.
- **What:** Official “Crush!” commercial.
- **When:** May 7, 2024.
- **Where:** YouTube / Apple.com (now removed).

- **Why:** Primary source of the text itself for rhetorical analysis — visuals, tone, sound design, symbolism.
- **Issues/Bias:** Promotional in nature; intended to persuade, not inform.