

# ESSAY # 1: RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF A SPEECH

**Length:** 1000-2500 words (please single space).

**Task:** Using Roberts-Miller, Selzer, and Campbell as guides (and also as professional rhetorical sources to quote when needed), write an essay that rhetorically analyzes and criticizes (evaluates) **one** of the following speeches:

- Ted Kennedy's "Chappaquiddick Speech"
- Barack Obama's "2004 Keynote Address"
- Emma Goldman's "Speech to the Jury"
- Lincoln's "Second Inaugural Address"
- Eleanor Roosevelt's "Struggles for Human Rights"
- Wallace's "Century of the Common Man"

## Your Goals as Rhetor:

1. Teach your readers something new about rhetoric
2. Teach your readers something about your artifact that is not obvious to a one-time reader of that artifact
3. Remember, in all your essays, your **ethos** is affected by such things as clarity, reliability of your understanding of your sources, your summary of their positions, format, grammar and usage, tone, style, and so on. Your essays should be written in a way that makes it clear that you are an intelligent person who has carefully read the sources and thoughtfully put together an argument.

## Your Goals as Learner:

1. Learn how to analyze an artifact using a rhetorical approach
2. Learn to use the concepts and terminology of rhetorical analysis/criticism
3. Move beyond class discussions

## Your Audience

1. See #8, page 6 of your syllabus.

## Background of Assignment

- You have unique analytical and ethical insights to offer about the text you choose, but you have to be committed enough to do the exploration and thinking required to develop those insights and to present them in a convincing and compelling way.
- Any effective rhetorical analysis deals with a **question** whose answer is worth knowing, whose answer is not obvious to a one-time reader of the artifact (in this case, the speech), and which inspires you to have something worthwhile to say about rhetoric and the speech's ideas.

## Procedure:

- Read the speech once just to get an overall sense of its purpose and point. Write down your reaction to the speech and its ideas. Remember that none of these speeches is addressed to you—you are not the intended audience. That fact automatically gives you critical distance, but your initial reactions will give you some direction. You need to consider who the actual audience was and who the ideal audience would be.
- Then go back through the speech, marking passages that seem particularly effective or unclear or problematic in some way (remember, e.g., the disconnect between the photos and verbal messages in the slide show at our first class).
- Ask yourself, "What is the rhetor's major way of convincing the audience—pathos (appeals to their emotions)? Logos (appeals to their rational minds)? Ethos (the appeal of the character of the rhetor)? Commonplaces (appeals to commonly held beliefs)? etc.? What kind of reasons and evidence does the rhetor offer? What is the primary tone of the speech?"
- Use Selzer's analysis of E.B. White's essay "Education" & Campbell's analysis of Nixon's speech as model(s) for your analysis (Campbell might be more useful since she is analyzing a speech).

- You are therefore primarily performing *textual analysis*
- Remember that everything is an argument (the text and your essay), so you need to make a **claim**, give **reasons** to justify the claim and **evidence** (usually quotations from the speech and from the rhetorical critics we've read so far) to support each reason
- Here are the issues you need to deal with for in your Introduction and Background sections. Explicitly use the boldfaced terms:
  - What was the **rhetorical situation** and **context** of the speech
  - What is the rhetor's **purpose(s)**?
  - What is the rhetor's **major claim**, **reasons**, and **types of evidence**?
  - What **assumptions** (stated and unstated) does the rhetor make about the situation, about the audience, about human nature and the world in general?
- The Body of your essay will analyze the rhetoric of the speech. In rhetorical analysis, many areas of focus (called units of analysis) exist. Select the one(s) that support your interpretation of the text.
  - What is the rhetor's **ethos** and how do you know (i.e., give reasons and evidence)?
    - Explicitly use Aristotle's technique for analyzing ethos—**sagacity, good moral character, and good will toward his audience** ("Rhetoric Tool Chest")
    - In what way(s) does the rhetor use his **ethos** to aid his **purpose** and his **major claim** and how do you know (i.e., give reasons and evidence)?
  - In what ways does the rhetor use **pathos** to aid his **purpose** and his **major claim** and how do you know (i.e., give reasons and evidence)?
  - In what ways does the rhetor use **logos** to aid his **purpose** and his **major claim** and how do you know (i.e., give reasons and evidence)?
  - In what way(s) does the rhetor use **arrangement** of the speech to aid his **purpose** and **major claim** and how do you know (i.e., give reasons and evidence)?
  - In what way(s) does **style** aid the rhetor's **purpose** and **major claim** and how do you know (i.e., give reasons and evidence)?
  - In your Conclusion, briefly summarize your insights into the artifact. How effective is the argument the rhetor is making? Explain and evaluate the effectiveness of the rhetor's techniques. Answer your Research Question and tell your readers what you discovered about rhetoric in general.

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