

# Rhetorical analysis of fdr's first fireside chat

Philosophy



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President Franklin Roosevelt's "First Fireside Chat" is a reassuring piece that inspired the nation in a time of need using his voice that projected his personal warmth and charm into the nation's living rooms to explain the banking crisis. He slowly and comprehensibly informed the American people on what has been done and to explain the complex banking system while using rhetorical appeals of ethos, logos, and pathos to effectively restore American faith in the United States government and banking system.

Roosevelt won the 1932 election after a landslide victory over his predecessor Herbert Hoover. At this time, America was going through one of the toughest times inside its own borders ever: The Great Depression. Roosevelt's First Fireside Chat on March 12, 1933 marked the beginning of a series of 30 radio broadcasts to the American people reassuring them the nation was going to recover as he shared his hopes and plans for the country. Roosevelt was simply telling the people what he was doing and why. This level of intimacy with politics made people feel as if they too were part of the administration's decision-making process and many soon felt that they knew Roosevelt personally and most importantly, they grew to trust him. Only eight days after his inauguration, President Roosevelt took to the air waves to let Americans know how the country was doing. Millions gathered around their radios to listen in. The President explained to the country in simple terms why so many banks had failed and why he had decided to close them down on March 6 (the so-called "bank holiday").

He then described the measures that Congress was taking to make sure that a banking crisis would not happen again. Roosevelt used ethos multiple times in his speech to establish his credibility and honesty. After his

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introduction Roosevelt told America, “ And I know that when you understand what we in Washington have been about, I shall continue to have your cooperation as fully as I have had your sympathy and your help in the past week. This was an effective use of ethos because he draws the distinction between conventional knowledge and new insight that he provides throughout his speech. Another example of effective ethos can be found towards the end of his speech when Roosevelt told America, “ I hope you can see, my friends, from this essential reticle of what your Government is doing that there is nothing complex, nothing radical in the process. ” This summed up the knowledge he shared in the banking system and instilled a sense of integrity in the government.

Throughout the chat Roosevelt used his knowledge to teach the American banking system and explained thoroughly what went wrong while using some of the most commonly words in the English dictionary, which appealed to a large audience that effectively established personal credibility. Along with ethos, Roosevelt used logos in his speech to successfully show that his plans for America were logical and reasonable. Roosevelt used logos to logically organize his speech to effectively inform America of the Emergency Banking Act and his possible solutions.

Roosevelt told America at the beginning of his speech, “ I want to tell you what has been done in the last few days, and why it was done, and what the next steps are going to be. ” Roosevelt starts with this sentence because little hope and despair fill American hearts who need explanations for the failure of banks and Roosevelt comes out right away with what he's about

to say. The way Roosevelt structured the speech with upfront communication portrayed him as a very organized and upfront leader.

Also in the beginning of his speech he says “ First of all let me state the simple fact that when you deposit money into a bank, the bank does not put the money in a safe deposit vault. ” Following this quote he states exactly what is done with your money and why. Roosevelt used logic to make a statement that everyone can agree with and relate to provide a sense of unity. Roosevelt used logos throughout his speech to show Americans that he is both logical and reasonable.

On top of logos, Roosevelt's most effective rhetorical appeal in his first fireside chat is pathos. He appeals to pathos the most throughout the speech because he wants the concerned citizens to feel comforted. He explains towards the end, “ After all, there is an element in the readjustment of our financial system... and that is the confidence of the people themselves... it is up to you to support and make it work. ” This is where he makes the people feel important that draws attention to the audience's desires to make it out of the banking crisis.

Immediately after he inspires in unity as he concludes “ It is your problem, my friends, your problem no less than it is mine. Together we cannot fail. ” Roosevelt used inclusive and emotional language such as “ my friends”, “ we”, and “ together” while referencing to what Americans desire in their future, which made people want to act. Roosevelt used pathos effectively throughout his speech to draw attention to the desires, emotions, and beliefs of the audience.

Shortly after Roosevelt was inaugurated on March 4, 1933, Roosevelt addressed a worried nation over radio broadcast in his First Fireside Chat that brought his charm and personal warmth into living rooms. With his effective use of pathos, ethos, and logos his rhetorical appeals helped describe the crisis, restore American confidence and faith, and lay out solutions that he is going to use to fix the problem. Worried and impoverished Americans cherished a voice of hope that called for action when leadership meant the most during the worst economic times our country has faced.