

Playing on auditorium's emotions: patrick henry's speech at virginia convention a...

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During the latter part of the eighteenth century, as most of the world may already know, the British colonies in North America saw their loyalty to their British mother country swayed and almost entirely diminished. Attempts were made on the parts of politicians and writers to convince the rest of their fellow colonists to join the fight against King George III for their independence. The Declaration of Independence and Patrick Henry's "Speech in the Virginia Convention" are both powerful arguments for American independence, as both work on the emotions and ethical values of their audience.

Both works attempt to play off the emotions of those they are meant to sway, and it is apparent that they both did at least most of what they were intended to achieve. The Declaration of Independence employs a plethora of almost insults toward the King of England, comparing him to a tyrant who was "unfit to be the ruler of a free people." In the fact that this document makes the argument that it is the duty of the people "to throw off such a government and to provide new guards for...future security", it has much of the same argument as Patrick Henry's speech, though it spends more time picking out the faults of the king than provoking the people of the colonies to pick up their guns and fight the king's men.

The difference between these two documents, however, could most likely be pulled from the fact that one-Patrick Henry's speech to the Virginia Convention-was written before the war really took off in 1775, and the other-the Declaration of Independence-was written a lot closer in time to the beginning of the Revolutionary War, being signed on July 4th of 1776. The argument of the former, therefore, is much more fervent and considerably <https://assignbuster.com/playing-on-auditoriums-emotions-patrick-henrys-speech-at-virginia-convention-and-the-declaration-of-independence/>

more zealous, and much more of an argument, per se, than that of the Declaration of Independence.

Patrick Henry's "Speech in the Virginia Convention" uses a bountiful supply of rhetorical questions, all making the audience at the Convention quietly consider the state of affairs in their home colonies and the fact that the time was at hand for them to make a difference between "freedom or slavery." The many rhetorical questions that Henry uses to play off the audience's emotions and logic to get them into considering a world without the British government's fingers in it would fill at least another page if given the chance.

This work is a lot more radical, an act of bravery by a patriotic man who openly denounces the British king and makes no attempt to keep anything back, telling his listeners that "should [he] keep back [his] opinions at such a time, through fear of giving offense, [he] should consider [himself] as guilty of treason toward [his] country, and of an act of disloyalty toward the Majesty of Heaven" which he "revered above all earthly kings." This quote also speaks to the moral and ethical conscience of the listeners, telling them that Henry sees this monarch so horribly abusing his power as nothing compared to the sovereignty of Heaven and the ruler thereof, and they should too. The entire speech ends with a bit of a guilt trip, laying down that infamous line "give me liberty or give me death," (which employs parallelism) and bringing the rest of the men in the room to consider their choices—to sacrifice themselves for a better tomorrow, keep themselves

comfortable, for the time being, in a land where they are ruled by a tyrant who is slowly taking away what they have to keep themselves comfortable.

The political landscape of eighteenth century North America was dramatically shaken by politician young and old as a new country was on the brink of its genesis. The writings of this time were filled with a want and need for reform and freedom from a king who saw his colonies as only a way to make more money for his own kingdom. Thanks to this need, America was founded on an idea of liberty and justice that will hopefully be renewed in the coming era.