

Rhetorical strategies analysis of bill clinton's first inaugural address

[Politics](#), [President](#)



Rhetorical Strategies Analysis of " Bill Clinton's First Inaugural Address"

Introduction William Jefferson " Bill" Clinton served as the 42nd President of the United States from 1993 to 2001. He got authority at the end of the Cold War. During Cold War, in order to compete with the Soviet Union's military power, the federal government spent a great deal of financial resources to establish a powerful military. The quality of life of common people decreased year after year. At that time, people desired to have a new powerful authority to rebuild people's confidence.

Clinton won the 1992 presidential election with 42% of the vote against his predecessor, George H. W. Bush who had 37. 4% of the vote. Clinton's winning ended the Republican rule of the White House of previous years. With 43% of the vote, he outpolled the winning House candidate in five districts. Clinton has been described as a New Democrat. In January 1993, he had campaigned on the theme of change and the public expected him to deliver. And in his first inaugural address, he continually promised change.

The purpose of my article is to figure out: what rhetorical strategies and tactics did President Clinton use in order to accomplish his task of change? Inaugural addresses have often served as the civil religion. Clinton was well - prepared to take this tradition. According to the evidence, it suggests his three main resources for first inaugural address are his lifetime study of the Bible, his education at Georgetown University, and his reading of others' inaugural addresses by Republican and Democratic presidents.

During the campaign Clinton mentioned that when he was a little child, he felt a strong calling to go to church even though his parents did not go. He

grew up in the Southern Baptist denomination and as he remembered, " I had to get other people to read the scripture every day or do it myself. " His religious choice fits the American belief. Most American believe that God " is actively interested and involved in history, with a special concern for America," as Robert N. Bellah said. During the 1990s, Clinton skillfully used biblical language to make common eople trust him and rebuild their confidence in a future president. Context The inaugural address of an American president is a vital ceremonial event and an occasion for a particular kind ofcommunicationbetween the President and the people. The president represents all the people of a country and his inaugural address shows a direction of the government. The address is the first official announcement made by the new president and it is analyzed as setting the tone for the four years to follow.

Presidents have had their own skill in shaping and delivering their addresses, drawing on rhetorical devices to convey a message and to communicate a sense of meaning and value. Clinton gave people a vivid image about a brand new future for the United States with a short first address. He bring a metaphor for the future, " a spring reborn in the world's oldest democracy, that brings forth the vision and courage to reinvent America. " For the spring to be reborn in America, President Clinton called for government and public to change.

Clinton thought that America have to change for better notion and " not change for change's sake, but change to preserve America's ideals - life, liberty, and the pursuit ofhappiness. " Thus, from my perspective, the

rhetorical strategy of Clinton's first address is persuasion. He tries to explain contemporary situation of America and he tries to advocate "change" on this issue. The Strategy of Persuasion As we learned, the three main methods of persuasion involve pathos, ethos and logos. President Clinton seems to use one major approach, pathos, to persuade audiences.

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Pathos is to use emotion to persuade audiences' minds in a rhetorical argument. President Clinton uses basic American beliefs and ideologies, such as, "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," trying to arouse people's passion. Also, he brought out the social problem of America, that "raised in unrivaled prosperity, we inherit an economy that is still the world's strongest, but is weakened by business failures, stagnant wages, increasing inequity, and deep divisions among our people." He used realistic problems to relate to common people's daily life. It brings out another passion, which is to struggle for their life.

Then, in the middle of his first inaugural address, Clinton calls for people's responsibilities to renew and create a better nation. He uses child to bring out a bigger theme of posterity and he calls people's passion to create a better society for their posterity. He said, "posterity is the world to come -- the world for whom we hold our ideals, from whom we have borrowed our planet, and to whom we bear sacred responsibility." By using pathos of persuasion, President Clinton tried to arouse the public to put more effort into establishing American society in order to renew the United States.

The significant purpose of persuasion always to change people's behavior eventually. Then, Clinton mentioned three main parts to renew the whole country. First of all, "to renew America, we must be bold," which brings out the responsibilities of citizens and government; second of all, "we must revitalize our democracy," which discusses reinventing authority and the federal government; finally, "we must meet challenges abroad as well at home," and President Clinton gave two ideas both diplomacy and national thoughts. The Strategy of Biblical Language

In the end of first address, President Clinton emphasis on how individuals change themselves to drive the government's and country's change. He used emotional language to make that argument, that is "in serving, we recognize a simple but powerful truth -- we need each other." In the final paragraph of the inaugural address, it included a verse from St. Paul's letter to the Galatians, "and let us not be weary in well - doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not," which could make special resonance. As mentioned above, Clinton uses biblical language to reference to political trusts and purposes.