

Sample essay on rhetorical critique

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Analysis of I have a Dream by Martin Luther King Jr.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. speech “ I Have a Dream” is termed as the greatest speech of the 20th century. It took place in august, 28th 1963 and mesmerized a huge crowd and it also changed the destiny of America for good. The speech was not beautiful, but so deep and filled with a type of charisma that moved friend and foe. His intentions were to educate, motivate as well as persuade Americans to ditch segregation on racial grounds. His was a descriptive speech which was coupled with a lot of symbols that were purposeful, full of images that appealed to his audience towards his cause. The blacks in America did not have the freedom that they ought to have thanks to the constitution and the beliefs of the founding fathers of the nation. In his address, King’s words reflected a man who wished for history to change and the blacks to receive an equal opportunity just like their white counterparts.

The central purpose in King’s speech was to highlight the plight of black Americans while seeking the attention of the American populace in giving black Americans proper and equal treatment as everyone else. Through the address, one cannot fail to notice the pillars upon which it was framed. They include the Declaration of Independence, the Bible as well as Gettysburg Address and the American Constitution. His main intention was to persuade all Americans to get rid of segregation. He does this by painting visual images which paint the sad realities as they were and the America that the Founding Fathers expected it to be. his mission was to remind Americans the great American Dream which everyone had an equal right to fight and forge for and it is through such appeals, that his speech is termed as great.

King may have had the American context in mind while delivering the speech but then, the content and message was received and acknowledged beyond the American borders. His message resonated well with everyone in the world, who felt marginalized by superior powers than theirs. His audience was not only the black American population but everyone who claimed allegiance to the American Dream, the government and the whites who he reminded the people were not all bad. His acknowledgement of the intertwining of the destinies of all Americans regardless of their racial backgrounds widens his audience. He says that “ The marvelous new militancy which has engulfed the Negro community must not lead us to a distrust of all white people, for many of our white brothers, as evidenced by their presence here today, have come to realize that their destiny is tied up with our destiny” (King). In fact, it becomes evident that he wanted all to hear his message, including President John F. Kennedy in order to help change the destinies of the minority groups more so blacks.

In the speech, King seeks to identify with the audience and even shows that he is one of them. It seems as if he is speaking through experience and understands the predicament of the down trodden in society. His is a call of action was to recharge and re- energize the fight for the freedom of blacks in America. He may have been a reverend but he knew he had to use religion as a weapon to get his earthly goals of equality for all Americans. He uses repetition to build a crescendo and catch the attention of all who cared to listen. Other tools at his disposal include the spirit of the American Dream, the Declaration of Independence as well as the fight fought by the Founding Fathers. It did work for him because, ideally, these are the foundations and

guiding Principles of America and all Americans. He knows how to use a charged emotion to his benefit. It is not surprising that he uses repetitive phrases to drive his point home. It is through the images he creates through this repetition that he caught his audience and hence changed the destiny of blacks and all Americans.

King was a great orator and his speech transcended time and place. He broadened his speech to include all people from the rest of the world and not only his audience. Perhaps at the point where he repeats his theme of “ I have a Dream” it could have been a song or poem and not merely a speech. He was a reverend and hence may have used his appeal to the people and capitalized on speaking to the emotional being. Perhaps it is the reinforcement of his spiritual tone that did the magic. He used a powerful voice, perfect cadence and imagery to communicate to his audience and one can say he achieved what he set out to do. Aside from that, King pulled the patriotic strings which bound all Americans by reminding them the foundations upon which the country was built. Such prowess alone sets his speech aside as the greatest speech of all times.

Works Cited

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