

United states and martin luther king assignment

[History](#)



A speech is worthy when it is still relevant and relates to audiences throughout time. Literature has relevance in that it, as well as manifestations of it, reveal insights into the human condition. Speeches are such an example and it is this relationship between text and ideals that can relate to different contexts and different audiences. A speech is relevant even if it evokes a negative response. It still holds an element of altering attitudes for particular audiences.

Atwood's speech " Spotty Handed Villainesses" gives us an insight into the nature of fiction and its portrayal of the feminine, as it challenges the existing notions of ' women behaving badly'. Martin Luther King Jr's speech " I have a dream" deals with the nature of the marginalised and the quest for freedom. Both texts challenge the perceptions of ' the other' being our society and appeal to our post- modern, fragmented world and numerous discourses.

These speeches are worthy as they expose relevant issues that affect the contemporary world. Atwood's speech deals with the issue of feminism and the perceived view of it being evil, in context this is a very topical issue as it was written in a period of an ongoing clash between the feminist and counter feminist movement- An area of academic interest. The speech engages this academic audience through the use of literary allusions to ' Medea, Lady Macbeth and Becky Sharp'.

Atwood distinguishes herself from the feminist movement by challenging their view that evil women should not be depicted in literature, as she highlights that they would be an accurate reflection of society prevalent in

the cumulative listing of “ the murderers, the seducers, the espionage agents, the cheats”. “ Spotty Handed Villainesses” has evoked many negative responses including Feminist Jane Dough’s criticism for ‘ selling out on the cause of the Women’s movement’. Atwood employs humour to engage her audience, prevalent in the extended allusion of ‘ Something other than breakfast’.

This allusion enables the audience to understand the nature of fiction in extending its boundaries beyond what’s morally acceptable in society at a given point in time. For example literature has exposed the evolving notions of the human condition ie. female sexuality “ Once all werewolves were male.. but there are now female werewolves” Despite the sarcastic undertones about the extremities of feminists, Atwood displays her support for the women’s movement in the metaphor of the horses “ Not in fact.. logging a few dead horses” this highlights her perspective and values that issues regarding the role of women in society are not in fact ‘ dead’ but still valid. “ Female bad characters can act as mirrors in which we can see more than just a pretty face- they can be explorations of moral freedom” the use of simile highlights the notion of women stereotypes within society and ultimately reveals the women’s progress to moral freedom.

The transcending issue of the role of women in society and gender equality are worthy to audiences of today as they still affect our contemporary world. Martin Luther King Jr’s speech “ I have dream” was given in 1963 at the height of the Black civil rights movement in the US. The speech reveals the nature of the marginalised Afro-American’s quest for freedom and racial equality through a positive, hopeful, non violent approach.

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This universal notion of freedom and equality for the marginalised was able to inspire and relate to audiences experiencing racial difficulties throughout the world (ie. The push for aboriginals to be recognised as Australian citizens). King's speech challenges the perceptions of the 'other' being the white American society and the pro-violent black, Malcolm X labelled King a " " it is important to note that like Atwood, King's speech still affected 'the other' by evoking a negative response.

In a contemporary context the world is still grappling with issues of racism today, the values of freedom, equality and justice still appeal to our post-modern society and are cherished as part of our liberal and democratic traditions. " I have a dream" is worthy as King employs various rhetorical techniques to achieve his goal of exposing universal issues. To engage his audience King uses an economic metaphor " we have come to our nations capital to cash a check.. nd its come back with insufficient funds" to illustrate the ongoing injustices of the marginalised, existent in American society, but also to appeal to the white, upper class audience who are economically minded and able to gain a greater appreciation of his speech through monetary allusions. As a preacher he attempts to appeal to the greater Christian morals of righteousness and equality through the use of religious terminology such as " God's children" this phrase also unites everyone as equal under god, thus it creates a sense of awareness that the white community's racist attitudes are sinful.

The necessity for freedom is highlighted in the tone of despair within the metaphor " still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination" King balances his despair and rage with fresh
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cultural optimism, proposing freedom and racial justice as the answer. This is explored through the employment of juxtaposition in the “heat of injustice and oppression” with the “oasis of freedom and justice” to evoke empathy in the audience by illustrating the realities of their society.

The emotive comparison also gives hope to the audience that they can initiate the change and freedom of the marginalised. The rhythm in which King delivered his speech is most ‘worthy’, as he went from a slow drawl of despair as he spoke of the ‘island of poverty’ moving to a verbal intensity as he called for all the people of the land to give rise to the decree in the historic reference to the Constitution and Declaration of independence, which declared ‘that all men are created equal’ which gave the audience a sense of urgency for the need to take action now and correct the injustices of the past.

King’s speech resonates with audiences universally in the context of the civil rights movement and the contemporary world today and is ‘worthy’ due to employment of various techniques which successfully expose relevant issues of the human condition such as racial inequality and the necessity of freedom.

Similarly Atwood’s speech resonates with audiences both within her era following the strong feminist push and today as the role of women in society is still valued. Atwood lends insight into the nature of fiction and its portrayal of the feminine in a ‘worthy’ entertaining and informative fashion. Both ‘worthy’ texts challenge the perceptions of the ‘other’ appealing to our post modern, fragmented world of today.