

Kings speech rhetorical analysis

Literature



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Addressing the Nation When any artist or director embarks on the journey of creation, they use a variety of different techniques to aid in the conveying of their message. Their main goal is to create something special for their audience, or rather call them witnesses. Convincing them that a personal piece of art, whether it be a painting, a novel or a movie, is different than all the rest. Rhetoricians create an author's idea, their own unique perception of reality, for a vast and diverse viewing audience. The Kings Speech is a movie about talking, and the importance of talking well.

The way humans communicate is really the most important challenge we face in our everyday lives. Speaking is hugely important on an intimate, personal level; when the task is to interact with one person. But a leader of a nation has to address all of his subjects, which requires that leader to be able to speak eloquently in a dramatic political context. As Bertie so finely delivers his lines in the closing moments, as King George VI is about to first address his subjects with war on the horizon: "The Nation believes that when I speak, I speak for them.

But I cannot speak." This superb film is about a person finding his voice, finding that he can speak. The Duke of York, later King George VI, a.k.a. Bertie is a perfect example of a leader; he has it all except for one thing – he lacks delivery skills. The hero has a single problem, the conflict that needs resolving; any intelligent viewer will keep their eyes on that detail through the entire plot. A well-written story will gradually reveal information, leaving the audience with a thirst to know if and how this issue will be solved.

What makes the King's battle with speech even more powerful is that this specific detail is not only about a speaking impediment that can be a burden

to its owner but it is also about the drama in several other layers of the story. As the duke mentions, his people look up to him as he who speaks for them and in their name. Not only can it be frustrating for a nation not to have a voice; that nation is in war with another nation whose ruler can “say it rather well”.

Bertie is up against some large obstacles on his path to becoming King, and the stakes are high, the fate of an entire country lies in the words of its future leader, the King better be able to say those words clearly. This is far more than a movie about a King finding his voice. The Kings Speech is an exposition of the power that language has over individuals, and vast audiences. Rhetoric depends upon audience, and Bertie’s impediment was due as much to the pressure of his Imperial audience as it was his horrid father and family in how they treated him and his need for “corrections. Our hero in this story has to overcome the painful memories that compose his troubled royal childhood. The King’s complex past appeals to the audience’s sense of Pathos, so that every time he stammers over a sentence we remember who and what it is that causes Bertie’s handicap. Seeing the King start to succeed and triumph over his condition appeals to the viewer’s emotions for the same reason, because they have witnessed the cold, harsh environment where Bertie was raised. Audiences rejoice because seeing the main character master their own problems gives them hope and strength to take on personal matters of their own.

Another aspect of the King’s troubled past is his relationship with his brother. He lived in the shadow of his brother Edward VIII for much of his life, and Edward was the actual heir to the throne when their father died. However,

Edward abdicated the throne when he revealed that he wanted to marry an American socialite. This places further pressure on George VI to succeed in delivering this important speech to prove himself to his family and people as a strong and able leader. Being part of the Royal family means you have the best medical care that England has to offer at your disposal.

Every doctor the Duke visited had a new treatment to test out, but nothing seemed to improve his speech impediment. One of the doctors instructed Bertie to chain smoke cigarettes, because the theory was that the smoke would “relax his larynx” and calm his nerves. In this scene, the director uses dramatic irony and appeals to logos to toy with viewers, because an informed audience knows that this tactic will likely fail and in our modern time, we all know that cigarettes are hazardous to one's health.

There are many other scenes where the King is seen smoking, and in every instance he had a specific look on his face. This is the look of a desperate man, full of frustration and expectation, praying that this little stick of tobacco will answer all his questions. The scene that follows shows one of many failed treatments by a specialist to cure him of his speech problem. The Duke becomes frustrated during the treatment and asks his wife, Elizabeth, the Duchess of York (Helena Bonham Carter), to promise that he won't have to see any more doctors.

This leads the Duchess of York to secretly visit an unorthodox speech therapist, Lionel Logue (Geoffrey Rush). Mr. Logue explains to the Duchess that although he is willing to help the Duke, he will only assist on his terms and they must come to him and follow his rules. The Duchess agrees, and sets an appointment. Mr. Logue's favorite phrase is “My castle, my rules”,

even though he is a commoner, not royalty; someone who is not enough “regal” to actually own a castle. Yet this speech therapist knows exactly what he is saying.

He too recognizes the importance of rules, a frame of reference and a place which is the proper place. If you’ll put him to the rhetoric test you will find he too has it all except for one thing – apparently he is part of no ethos. He is a commoner, and eventually we find out he has no credentials; which is even worse than being an Australian in Britain. Logue lacks legitimacy, which he knows is not important for his ability to help others, but is a frustrating disposition if you take his rules seriously.

The King looked past Logue’s lack of formal education and abrasive nature because he believed that he sensed something special about the doctor. Plus I believe the Duke and Logue shared a similar love of law and order, and the strict rules Lionel set allowed Bertie to follow them with ease. These rules forced Bertie to trust the doctor completely, which establishes a strong bond of ethos between the two men. While the person in question happens to have been an English monarch, his trepidations and fears are no different from any public speaking student that Mr.

Logue encountered over the years. So, Logue treats Bertie as though he were a regular, stuttering child and expects him to adhere to the same rules as everyone else. This is also a movie about education, as much as it is about politics and royalty. “Turn the hesitations into pauses,” Logue tells the King in one scene. “Bounce into it.” Rather than force his student into a mold, the teacher lets the student be the guide. He turns the awkwardness

into something better; he re-defines the terms on which the King's Speech was judged.

Indeed, pauses can signify confidence; taking time to choose the right words to say gives the listener the impression that what you have to say is really important. This rhetorical device is also used by our very own President Obama, being the brilliant speaker that he is. The President is in a similar position of power, like King George, and when delivering a speech to millions of people it is best to take time and choose your words carefully so that your message is communicated correctly. The final speech is the defining factor in establishing King George VI's credibility.

In his previous speeches, he had struggled with his impediment, but in this address to his country he speaks slowly, clearly, and confidently when his people needed him to do so the most. Ethos is also established in this speech because he is King, the ultimate authority figure; therefore, all people throughout the nation will be listening to his every word and reacting in a positive way. He directly calls on his people "at home, and my people across the seas, who will make this cause their own". He is asking the people of Britain to take charge and become active participants in the difficult journey that is about to begin.

The all-powerful phrase "With God's help we shall prevail" is placed at the peak of the drama, the climax when the newly appointed King delivers his speech to all of England. This phrase appeals to pathos, evoking a sense of pride in his people, and reassuring them that England can and will win the war. It seems that every word in this movie was chosen, whether consciously or un-consciously, through a deep understanding of the rules of rhetoric

because this phrase demonstrates superb decorum. Copywriters pray for the moment they will be able to come up with such a brilliant phrase.

Not because it is full of tricks since there is no trick, but with the power to echo the utmost desires wanting to be solved through all the plots and sub-plots of the rhetoric event, presenting real desires in the real world from the deep back-story to the private and personal. This also meets a dramatic high point for England at that particular moment in time, the real events took place during WWII had yet to be unraveled, but watching the movie sixty or so years later, knowing how it turned out, and listening to the final lines in the King's speech can still send icy shivers down one's spine.

King George IV was able to deliver his speech perfectly through the help and support of his wife and new friend Lionel Logue, winning the hearts of England and preparing them for the days to come. Rhetorically, The Kings Speech is a masterpiece; transporting audiences back to pre-war England and telling them an emotional tale of a King finding his voice.