

# Rhetorical analysis of now we can begin

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“ Now We Can Begin” is a speech written by Crystal Eastman right around the time that the 19th amendment was passed in the United states enabling women the right to vote. Before this Women in the US had limited rights and were not treated the same with their male counterparts.

They were expected to stay home and take care of the children while the men were allowed to go out and get jobs. During the 20’s, when this speech was written, the gender roles began to fade as more and more women started pursuing work and a life outside of the home. With the increase in women challenging gender norms the Feminist movement was born.

Eastman, who was a mother and wife at the time, was a Feminist and strongly believed that the fight for equality for women did not end with winning the right to vote. In her speech she talks about the ways that America could improve with the gender equality. She wanted men and women alike to start sharing traditional gender roles and to just treat women as normal human beings.

By writing this speech she found an effective way to keep the feminist movement going. Eastman has a very passionate tone when she writes. While she does not specifically use her own personal experiences, you can easily tell that she feels strongly about what she is saying to her audience. In the first paragraph she states, “ Now they can say what they are really after...

in common with all the rest of the struggling world, is freedom.” Even though she uses the pronoun “ They”, you can tell that she is speaking from her heart, that she and every other woman wants to have freedom. Eastman

also mentions feminism a lot in the speech, like in the second paragraph,” But the true feminist, no matter how far to the left she may be... sees the woman’s battle as distinct..” and in the fourth, ” ..

All feminist are familiar with the revolutionary leader who can’t see the woman’s movement.” As someone who was a feminist and participated in the feminist movement, by mentioning feminism you can tell how passionate she is with the entire movement. Eastman writes and talks about many of the social and legal issues that were around during the 1920’s. During this time women had just won the right to vote. Even though this was a huge step towards Equal rights for all, some men thought as Eastman states her speech, “..

. Thank God, this everlasting woman’s fight is over!” Men during this time assumed that their wives were happy with their roles. Before the 20s a woman’s role was to stay at home, do the housework, and take care of the children. Men didn’t share any of the home responsibilities. They went to work, came home, and ate dinner.

A good majority of men spent most of their day away from home. In the speech, it talks about the best way to spread feminism is to start at home with the children, especially in young boys. “.. The average man has carefully cultivated ignorance about household matters... It was his mother’s fault in the beginning..

he was quick to see how ...being no good around the house would serve him throughout life.” Boys were not trained to keep a house. From an early age they were told their only purpose was to go out and work.

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Girls on the other hand were taught how to cook and sew. Training both genders differently at an early age just creates a wedge in feminism.

Reading about what she feels is a big problem with child raising shows that the only logical solution to spread feminism is to raise feminist boys. Another barrier Eastman write about is of course the legal one. As the 20's progressed more and more women began entering the workforce. Eastman writes that “ the next feminism objective” is to break down the remaining legal barriers for women.

she states that these barriers, “...make it difficult for women to enter or succeed in the various professions.. to learn trades and practice them.

.” One of the legal barriers Eastman believes in the inequality in pay. Despite the increase of women joining the workforce they were paid significantly lower than their male counterparts. By mentioning the inequality of pay, she let her audience know how it was not tolerated and would be a road block in the feminism movement. Crystal Eastman was a mother and wife during this time.

As she writes she appeals to women who are mothers or may want to become mothers. Even if the audience is a group of women who are not mothers they can easily relate. Growing up all girls were told that their only purpose was to get married and have babies. By constantly being told this they were dehumanized. All of these women want one thing, as Eastman puts it, .

.” they are after, in common with all the rest of the struggling world, is freedom.” During the 20's women all across the country were experiencing  
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different freedoms. They started working, and doing more with their lives outside the home. School became a really important part in life. Now girls and boys alike can get a good education and pursue many different fields of study.

Every girl reading this speech can easily relate to what Eastman writes, and knows the feeling of having just a taste of that freedom. Sadly after they got married and wanted children the freedom seemed to stop, and many women started wondering what to do with their lives. Eastman happily provides an answer. In the speech Eastman talks about the counter argument that by giving women in the US all of these freedoms (occupation and independence) , then it would be more difficult for them if they want to have children. “.

. Voluntary Motherhood” is one solution to this “ problem.” Eastman believed that “.. Women are to have children when they want them..

” She thought that by choosing a designated time in which a women was to devote her life to motherhood, this provided some freedom of occupational choice. If you did not want to be a mom, then you wouldn’t become one by accident, and if you do want to become a mom you could spend a few some years in an occupation before becoming a mother full time. Crystal Eastman provides many wonderful solutions to the problems that feminist had during the 1920’s. While there were things that she did not include in her speech such as, how to make the current adult men of the 20s more open to the feminist ideals, she still had very strong ideas of how to push the movement forward. From early training at home to choosing the time in which women

would devote their lives to home-making, these things are what help spread feminism. Eastman was extremely effective in conveying her message across and the audience definitely is confused on what needs to happen to make change in the US during the 20s. Since the 1920s were already a time of change, by writing her speech Eastman added fuel to the fire. She let men know that the feminist movement was not over and that women all across the country were going to keep fighting. She also let women know that the fight was not over and that they had to keep going if they wanted more change in freedom in their lives. Crystal Eastman undoubtedly pushed the feminist movement forward.