

John f kennedy's inaugural address essay sample



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The inaugural address of John F Kennedy was successful because of the various rhetorical devices that he employed throughout the speech. These devices used include contrasts, three part lists, antithesis, alliteration and bold imagery. The devices emphasized the fact that Kennedy was campaigning for better freedom for not only the people of the United States of America, but also the people in the neighbouring lands.

During the opening line of his speech, John F Kennedy addresses his peers in government, reciting a list of the important figures in the parliament of the United States in 1961; a list which ends with ' fellow citizens'. This was important as it showed him identifying with the audience as though they were his governmental peers, and the rhetorical device of the list that was used emphasizes the fact that he places himself on a par with the ' fellow citizens', rather than the list of officials that he listed in the opening of his speech. The religious imagery used later in this paragraph, for example ' For I have sworn before you and Almighty God' makes it seem as though everybody is equal in the eyes of God.

When Kennedy states that we shall ' bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe' he uses isocolonic phrases, phrases of the same structure and length which adds force to the fact that they would do all of the things that he mentioned together, creating a sense of unity among the people of America. Antithesis is used multiple times during the course of the speech, such as in the first paragraph of the speech when John F Kennedy states that his electoral victory is ' signifying and end, as well as a beginning - signifying renewal, as well as change.' This emphasizes to the

audience the importance of his victory, and how he believes that he can bring about a positive change for the people of the United States of America.

John F Kennedy uses anaphora in his address to the public at the beginning of five consecutive paragraphs, when he is addressing different groups of people and pledging different ideas to them. When he uses the word 'to' at the beginning of these paragraphs, such as when addressing his comments 'To those old allies whose cultural and spiritual origins we share', it allows the audience to separate his ideas, as they are presented in a clear, concise way. The pledge goes on to state that 'United there is little we cannot do... Divided, there is little we can do' which uses the device of chiasmus to promote the argument that as a country, and to the allies of the USA, there must be a sense of unanimity. The address goes on to use further anaphora, but this time with the paragraphs beginning with the command 'let'. One example of the use of this in the speech is 'Let both sides seek to invoke the wonders of science instead of its terrors. Together let us explore the stars, conquer the deserts, eradicate disease, tap the ocean depths, and encourage the arts and commerce'. This plants the idea that under his presidency, America could go on to achieve great things, such as those listed above, but it could only do so if everyone was together, united.

Kennedy appeals to the people's morality when he pledges to help the 'peoples in the huts and villages across the globe struggling to break the bonds of mass misery' for reasons that are not political, or 'because the Communists are doing it ... but because it is right'. By appealing to the people's morality, Kennedy is making it more likely that the people who did not vote for him in the election should have voted for him, to try and make it

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so that the whole country is behind him in his endeavours to make changes for freedom.

Kennedy appeals to the nationalism of the American people when he creates a sense of history as he states ' For I have sworn... the same solemn oath that our forebears prescribed nearly a century and three quarters ago'. He appeals to the nationalism as a way to make the Americans think of the history of the country, and also the recent history. Kennedy wanted to keep peace with ' those old allies', and make peace with the other countries. This was an attempt to avoid another disastrous war, as the world, America included, was still recovering from the consequences of the last major war, and at the same time fighting against Communism in the Cold War.

In Kennedy's inaugural address to the people of the USA, he tried to make everyone equals and create a sense of unanimity amongst the population. This was achieved by using a number of rhetorical devices, the most effective of which were anaphora and antithesis, as they enforced the meaning of the speech well.