

Rhetorical expressions of canadian identity essay



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The rhetorical expression of Ernest Renan in his article entitled, "What is a nation?" begins with a proposal; a proposal that delves deeper into the subject of "nation" and re-defines the word in a manner that a nation is not an entity but rather a part of humanity. The article begins with a proposal, a notion to explain its readers regarding the misunderstandings related to what a nation is. The tone of Ernest Renan (otherwise translated by Martin Thorn) is persuasive though the author confesses that there would be no approach towards a biased perspective and the author is successful in maintaining the same tone by giving several examples that aid in the understanding of the concepts based on his perspectives.

The author has a good beginning where it draws its readers into its grasp by stating, "What I propose to do today is to analyze with you an idea which, though seemingly clear, lends itself to the most dangerous misunderstandings." The author here is exhibiting his sense of understanding regarding the topic where he claims that he would help clear any misconceptions involved with the topic proposed. The author also, indirectly, hints on the fact that he is extremely knowledgeable regarding the subject and has a fair opinion regarding the topic he chose to choose with his readers or audience. However, the text moves to a dramatic stance when the author states, "I want now to try and make these difficult questions somewhat more precise for the slightest confusion regarding the meaning of words, at the start of an argument, may in the end lead to the most fatal errors."

It is a delicate thing that I propose to do here, somewhat akin to vivisection; I am going to treat the living much as one ordinarily treats the dead. I shall

adopt an absolutely cool and impartial attitude. ” The author has carefully chosen his words carefully to draw his audience into what he wants to discuss. So far, he has been successful in captivating the reader’s attention through a dramatic entrance though he has still not initiated to elucidate on what he wants to discuss. He claims notions from the history naming Sparta and Rome to the building of the large nations and the people’s misconceptions regarding what a nation really is. After reading through the entire text, we witness an expositional attitude of the author in terms of the rhetoric style.

By being detailed and dramatic in its approach, his intention is to lure and captivate the audience’s mind to make them agree with his notions. Did we just sense hyperbole in the author’s beginning note? Absolutely. The author exaggerates regarding his views about what a nation is. He touched on every aspect of history in a brief manner from Middle East to the Americas, including the French Revolution as well. The beginning of the article through the examples stated above serve as an open proof where the audience will sit back, relax and would listen to what the author is trying to say because the issue he is dealing with is indeed exhilarating (subjects regarding misconceptions about the development or perceiving of nation have been a great interest for people of all ages, especially related to the field of philosophy and politics). As we move on, the author proceeds to discuss the true facts of history by starting with the fall of the Roman Empire.

The structure moves from the previous historical facts in detail. The author is definitely trying to establish the fact that race cannot be confused with nation. The author is trying to define “ nation” by stating his examples and <https://assignbuster.com/rhetorical-expressions-of-canadian-identity-essay/>

understandings from the history. He is trying to “ persuade” his audience by stating the ultimate results of the wars as well as the forming of nations that resulted afterwards. As he states, The crucial result of all this was that, in spite of extreme violence of the customs of the German invaders, the mould which they imposed became with passing centuries, the actual mould of the nation. ” Renan attributes the formation of the modern nation to several instances and not just one.

The author also discusses the irony of the history by stating the contrast related to the laws of the history of Western Europe. He gives several examples ranging from what King of France did to the Turkish policy of separating nationalities according to the religion. This is contradictory to what the author had already posed earlier. We definitely sense irony when he says that race cannot be confused with nation where as history accounts for the opposite. As stated in his article, “ The Turkish Policy of separating nationalities according to religion brought much graver consequences, for it brought the downfall of the east. ” This is true when keeping the historical records into account but the Turkish nation was built solitarily based on religion and thus, became a nation.

The motivation of the argument begins when the author states that the building of modern nation is based on historical facts led by many events and this includes examples such as the consequences on unity, consequences of direct will or the consequences of general consciousness. Renan tries to overcome the fact that a nation cannot be confused with race, ethnic origins, language, geography, dynastic principles or any kind of attraction or materialistic interest. The author questions its readers

regarding the legitimacy of statements that are in agreement with the misunderstandings mentioned above. The purpose of what the author is trying to convey is clearly stated throughout the text where he discusses each factor separately followed by an explanation of his own opinion. We sense a paradox in the text throughout where the factors stated by the author may seem contradictory but what author states eventually is the truth.

In the first section, the author shows why the military necessity cannot be confused with the nation. He states several examples, one of which has been elucidated above regarding the wars. The second issue he touches on is regarding nation being a dynasty where in his discussion, the author openly concludes in the following manner, " It must therefore be admitted that a nation can exist without a dynastic principle, and even that nations which have been formed by dynasties can be separated from them without therefore ceasing to exist. " The author states how a race becomes less significant when discussing the subject about a nation.

Not even ethnography comes close to what a " nation" truly is. Language is undoubtedly concerned with race and therefore, cannot be associated with nation as well. While religion has been the major distinction between nations today, according to Renan, " Religion cannot supply an adequate basis for the constitution of a modern nationality either. Originally, religion had to do with the very existence of the social group, which itself was an extension of the family.

” In the first part after the introduction, the author discusses about the fall of the Roman Empire followed by the proceedings on why the several factors such as language, race, ethnicity, religion or dynasty cannot be termed as a nation, the third part deals with what a nation actually is. The author proceeds as follows in a dramatic manner, “ A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. Two things, which in truth are but one, constitute this soul or spiritual principle. One lies in the past, one lies in the present. One is the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories; the other is present-day consent, the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in an undivided form... The nation, like the individual is the culmination of a long past of endeavors, sacrifice and devotion. The metaphors and the personification style used by the author in drawing the audience into his universal idea of what nation is truly mesmerizing for any reader who reads the following lines above- whether or not they are interested to know about the nation.

The author also describes the nation as “ large-scale solidarity, constituted by the feeling of the sacrifices that one has made in the past and of those that one is prepared to make in the future. The audience recognizes the terms used by the author as they are able to associate it with themselves and therefore easily connect to what the author is actually trying to convey; thereby completing the author’s purpose of writing. The author designates man as a free being when he states that, “ man is a slave neither of his race nor his language, nor of his religion, nor of the course of rivers nor of the direction taken by the mountain chains. ” Throughout the text, the author had heavily emphasized on why the nation cannot be bound by the

boundaries of the following traits and finally concludes of what he really thinks a nation is. It is clearly an expository text where the author details his position on several issues and highlights the importance of understanding the nation from a humanistic perspective.

The traits used in the entire text ranging from ironies to personification shows the writer's potential to draw the audience into his perspective. Furthermore, the essay is synonymous with the argumentation theory established by the Philosopher of Science, Steve Toulmin where the author has presented the data as well as the claims and also warrants for the truth in what he believes in. While the text may be complex in nature, the audience may find themselves connecting to the text based on several historical facts that the author stated. This trait makes the text appealing and as we reach the conclusion of the text, we find ourselves in a position where we agree with what the author. The use of several literary devices in the text makes it very enjoyable for its readers to read and therefore, the text written by the author receives its credit and accomplishes its purpose. "What is a nation" by Ernest Renan is expository in nature where the author gives a detailed account on historical facts to support his arguments.