

Wendell phillip speech

Literature



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Wendell Phillips, a white American abolitionist, used the power of language to his advantage to collaborate an influential speech filled with praises and moving words for the former slave, Haitian general, Toussaint-Louverture. His words reveal an unmistakable abolitionist fervor that screams to Americans to allow African Americans to serve in the military and open their eyes to the oppression of slavery. He attempts to ignite this passion through his zealous attitude, his strategic defense for Louverture, and his fluid progression of ideas. His most effective technique, however, is hidden under the surface in his use of stellar parallel structure and reference to historical allusions. These tools allow him to praise his esteemed subject while at the same time moving and influencing his audiences.

Phillips speech is rich with historical allusions to the great leaders of our past- leaders who have had a significant impact on our American history. He first juxtaposes his introduction of Louverture with an input about George Washington, the great American President and military leader. This appeals to American emotions as an influential leader is followed up by a Haitian Negro. By placing the two names side by side, Phillips emphasizes a much-intended similarity between the two in terms of greatness. He makes a second juxtaposition when Oliver Cromwell, an important English political leader known for his military skill, is stated parallel to Toussaint's. Similar to the juxtaposition to Washington, Phillips looks to dispel the mere differences between Cromwell and Toussaint and portray them as equals.

A second effective mechanic used in Phillips speech is the flawless use of parallel sentence structure throughout the passage. He admires Toussaint's action when he "forged a thunderbolt and hurled it" and follows this

assertion by paralleling the Spaniards, French, and English. This structure illuminates how the Haitian successfully challenged each of these “ great” European powers and came up victorious. The structure creates a build-up, each one effectively following the next. This syntax adds to the emphasis of Louverture’s great accomplishments and puts them in a light not too far-fetched from those of the great Europeans.

Wendell Phillips carefully chosen diction and use of syntax frees the audience of prejudice in debating whether to allow Negroes into the military. He embodies his speech with emotion and power that pushes the idea that Toussaint should be credited along with the other renowned leaders. His language moves his audience in a way that contributes to the developing abolitionist fervor that helped the North win the Civil War. He instills in them the same respect for Louverture as for Washington, the Father of their country and Cromwell, the great military leader. His words were strong enough to influence America as a whole and carried with it so much truth and emotions that people were left with only one thing to do-fight to free the ever-oppressing chains of slavery.