

Example of essay on analyze two speeches

[Sociology](#), [Communication](#)



English

Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" and JFK's inaugural speech both are a masterpiece of verbal and nonverbal communication. Devoid from the rhetorical devices the speeches of these presenters might not have been as memorable as they have become. Both speeches were for a completely different audience and were made on a strikingly different occasions and contain divergent messages. Yet, both presenters were masterfully able to employ the devices of verbal and nonverbal communication rightly suited to their respective occasion and for their respective audience.

King strengthened his speech by using a very interesting analogy. He described the reason to his audience for gathering in Washington D. C in an analogical form. "In a sense we've come to our nation's capital to cash a check". In his analogy "the architects of our republic" signed a promissory note and "This note was a promise that all men, yes, black men as well as white". The note promised "unalienable Rights of Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness." Then, he stated his objective as "America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of color are concerned". He concluded his analogy, "we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt" as if to tell the people that their struggle will not end. The analogy shows that even complex themes like racial discrimination and social stratification can be described in interesting analogies to capture the attention of the people.

King's did resort to many metaphors in his great speech to add aesthetic beauty and personal style to his wording. Through this rhetorical device, he created a strong sensation of visual imagery for the listeners. Most of his

metaphors are of geographical orientation, probably to grab the attention of the black people, e. g. an island of poverty; the ocean of prosperity; valley of segregation valley of despair; the sunlit path of racial justice; quick sands of racial injustice; rock of brotherhood; a mighty stream of righteousness; an oasis of freedom and justice; stone of hope. Like King, Kennedy also adorned his speech with metaphors. Some of the metaphors he mentioned in the speech are quite striking; “ And if a beachhead of cooperation may push back the jungle of suspicion”, “ the bonds of mass misery” and “ the chains of poverty”. (Hunt 315-17)

Bold imagery is indeed the striking feature of both of these speeches and it has played its role in making both these speeches memorable. A speaker uses the imagery to incite the senses and feelings of his audience.

Kennedy’s speech is also abundant in vivid imagery. Like an expert, he knows how to capture the attention of his listeners by appealing to their sense of visual imagery. Talking about the struggle of the people of the third world countries, he said that these people are " struggling to break the bonds of mass misery." To make his audience realize that they are living in the changed world he again made use of strong imagery to bring the point home. He said, “ man holds in his mortal hands the power to abolish all forms of human poverty and all forms of human life." (Hunt 315-17) He made another reference to change in the following words, “ The torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans.” (Hunt 315-17) King’s speech is also not short in imagery as well. He portrayed the condition of the black people “ One hundred years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination.”

Antithesis is the presentation of two opposing ideas in the same sentence one after the other. Kennedy used this tool three times right in the beginning of his speech. One of these antitheses has become the most famous lines of his speech, “ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country.” He not only used it just at the beginning, but also applied this rhetorical device throughout his speech. Talking about the importance of negotiation in the era of a cold war he put his message artistically in the form of an antithesis both for his fellow countrymen and for the people in the Kremlin, “Let us never negotiate out of fear, but let us never fear to negotiate.” Some other uses of antithesis are, “We observe today not a victory of party but a celebration of freedom, symbolizing an end as well as a beginning, signifying renewal, as well as change”. The antitheses used in the above line are; “not a victory but a celebration”, “an end, as well as a beginning”, “renewal as well as change”.

Some reference to the past not only adds the nostalgic feeling of great historic moments but also enhance the literary value of a speech. There are strong historical references in King’s speech. King was fully aware how to use the context to his advantage and like a master, he used this tool to add a great strength to his message. Choosing Lincoln memorial as a venue for his memorable speech was not a random choice on the part of Martin Luther King (j) as Lincoln was the president who fought against and abolished slavery from the United States. Though Kennedy did not make as much historic reference as King did in his speech, yet there were some, e. g. “I have sworn before you and Almighty God the same solemn oath our forebears prescribed nearly a century and three-quarters ago.” and “With a

good conscience our only sure reward, with history the final judge of our deeds" (Hunt 315-17) this is a subtle reference and paraphrasing to these words of Lincoln, " With malice toward none, with charity toward all"

Anaphora is the repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of successive phrases, clauses or lines. Repeating the words again and again helps the listeners identify the main points of the message. An expert orator utilizes repetition to get his message stick in the minds of his listeners. JFK used different anaphoras in his speech, e. g. " Let both sides", " To those old allies", " To those new states", " To those people". (Hunt 315-17) This added a melodic sound to his speech, making it even more impressive. This rhetorical device also creates a memorable impression in the minds of the audience. King's speech also is not short in anaphoras by any means. In fact, one of the most famous anaphora used by King was, " I Have A Dream". This rhythmic repetition of the words " I have a dream" used eight times by King and gave the speech its title. The repetition of these simple phrases touched the heart of many people and helped King to get his message across. Other anaphoras he used include the following; " One hundred years later", " We can never be satisfied", " With this faith" and " Let freedom ring". Using repetition King was able to inspire an emotional response from his audience, and was also able to add melodic sound to his powerful message.

Vocal quality and variety of a speaker is of great significance to make his speech memorable. Both these speakers, Kennedy and King, were expert in this regard. King's background as a preacher did prepare him for this moment. Kings strong and rigid body posture added further strength to his

words. The position of the right hand implied that the hand was not pointed at the people. Instead, it was a hand of a preacher who was standing with the people and who was telling people about his dream. The complete body language of the Reverend King was a personification of his message that is why it provided his wording such a powerful impression. On the other hand, Kennedy's body language was much more subtle than King's because his audience and his position were quite different than that of the Reverend King. But, Kennedy was not less a master in body language instead of using his hands; he used his facial expressions to perfection. His face depicted the signs of an extremely confident man, a man who knew how he was going to deal with the challenges ahead of him.

Without a doubt both King and Kennedy were masters of the art of presentation, but a couple of improvements might have added a little more quality to their speeches. Kennedy could have improved the nonverbal quality of his speech by adding a little more movement of the hands. In the subject matter, his message was exquisite, but was too general and too idealistic. Just a little more focus and pragmatism would have been better. As for the Reverend King, he didn't utilize as many rhetorical devices as Kennedy did. Usage of some more devices could have enhanced the quality of his speech even further. Secondly, though the speech was aimed at inspiring the emotional responses, yet a little more control over the emotions and facial expressions would have been better. To conclude, the artistic use of verbal and nonverbal devices depicts that both orators were masters of their art. Their proficient use of the rhetorical devices made their speeches

so memorable that even after half a century these words are still fresh in the minds of the people.

Works Cited

Atkinson, Max. "JFK's inaugural speech: Six secrets of his success." n. d. bbc.com. 21 October 2014.

Benedict, Elsie Lincoln and Ralph Paine Benedict. How to Analyze People on Sight. Project EBook, 2009. Print.

Hunt, John Gabriel. Inaugural Addresses of the Presidents of the United States: From George Washington to Bill Clinton 1789 to 1996. Gramercy, 1998. Print.

"Martin Luther King's Powerful Speech Tips." n. d. soappresentations.com. 21 October 2014.

Sundquist, Eric J. King's Dream. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009. Print.

"The metaphoric power of Martin Luther King." n. d. ageer370.wordpress.com. Print. 20 October 2014.

YouTube. Martin Luther King - I Have A Dream Speech - August 28, 1963. 20 January 2011. Video. 19 October 2014.

—. President John F. Kennedy's Inaugural Address. 16 January 2011. Video. 19 October 2014.