

We are virginia tech essay sample

[Life](#), [Emotions](#)



Speaking is form of art that can either be a natural gift or a practiced talent. Much like there are several different ways a person can draw: cartooning, free hand, or realistic, there are many ways in which a person can speak. Nikki Giovanni's speech " We Are Virginia Tech" makes people cry, rejoice, and move on. A speech is one form of art that can evoke these types of emotions from people.

In Nikki Giovanni's poem " We Are Virginia Tech," which was spoken at a memorial ceremony for Virginia Tech shooting victims, she uses her tone and a repetition of words to make her speech very powerful. The tone of her voice is very distinct, she speaks with poise and confidence, while remaining remorseful but positive about Virginia Tech's future. At the beginning of her speech Giovanni says, " We are Virginia Tech. We are strong enough to stand tall tearlessly; we are brave enough to bend to cry and sad enough to know we must laugh again. We are Virginia Tech" (We Are Virginia Tech speech).

Giovanni is trying to show the audience that they can move on while still mourning the loss of their fellow Hokies. Her word choice and type of voice she uses will dictate how the audience responds to her speech. Guenna Mckee said, " there is the art of delivery and the art of persuasiveness." Giovanni delivers this speech with such confidence and passion that the audience is left with no choice but to connect with her. This connection does not come because of Giovanni's word choice, it comes from being able to connect empathetically with her because of the form in which she presents her speech

Nikki Giovanni's passion for the Hokie nation was most seen in her repetition of the words " We Are Virginia Tech." This forces them to focus on how they are Virginia Tech, and because of that they can overcome this tragedy.

Sergey Suschi said how he thought that, " her words came and went very quickly and you were not left with time to interpret them, she tells you directly what to think." The quick pace and repetition of words is part of the artistry involved in speaking. This comes from her ability to understand what the audience needs to hear in order to, and in a way, manipulate the audience into believing in themselves again.

Susan Sontag says in her essay, " Against Interpretation", " it is possible to elude the interpreters in another way, by making works of art whose surface is so unified and clean, whose momentum is so rapid, whose address is so direct that the work can be...just what it is"(Sontag 762). Sontag talks about a rapid pace, and a direct purpose which are both clearly seen in Giovanni's speech. Giovanni says, " We know we did nothing to deserve it, but neither does the child in Africa dying of AIDS; neither do the invisible children walking the night away to avoid being captured by a rogue army" (We Are Virginia Tech speech). These words come at a rapid pace, but still manage to leave you with these images of other horrific misfortunes going on around the world.

Sontag tells us how " the work can be...just what it is," but I believe there was some form of interpretation going on while this speech was happening. Interpreting this poem is very unique to each individual in the audience. The mental images that Giovanni gives us allow each person in the audience to

form their own picture. The mental images I form in my head, and how I found myself repeating “ We Are Virginia Tech” even after the video had ended is part of the artistry in effect here. Giovanni is like a painter in a way. Her words combined with the passion in which she says them paints pictures in our minds. The pictures I see in my head may not be what she intended for me to see, or it may be spot on, but either way that is part of the interpretation in it. Giovanni says, “ neither does a Appalachian infant killed in the middle of the night in his crib in the home his father built with his own hands being run over by a boulder because the land was destabilized. (We Are Virginia Tech speech). These words grab my attention and force me to see that image, or at least what I interpret it to look like.

People in the audience who lost close loved ones in this disaster may not think the other worldly tragedies Giovanni describes are of the same magnitude as this. For others though these images she gives may help them connect with the loss some are experiencing. Speeches can affect people in different ways, some speeches will inspire you, others will make you reflect on your own life, some will teach you a life lesson, but Nikki Giovanni’s poem was meant to bring together a group of disheartened people. Giovanni’s speech did not affect me as intensely as it did to the families of the victims who actually saw her give the speech. Similar to whether you are seeing a photo of a piece of artwork or seeing it in person, seeing or hearing a recording of a speech it will affect you differently. Sontag says, “ real art has the capacity to make us nervous” (Sontag 759). This speech is meant to bring out the sadness, but also the hope for a better future that people are feeling. Preston Risser said, “ her poem brought out the hurt people were

feeling and brought awareness to the situation at hand." As seen in the video people are either crying after she is finished, or standing up with a newfound inspiration to stand tall and put this tragedy in the past. The way a piece of art might make you feel does not have to be displayed by some physical expression, it can be an emotion that is kept inside.

In relation to how Nikki Giovanni gave her speech I believe that the form and the content both have an equal affect in how we interpret it; they are both needed when understanding her poem. Sontag says, " by reducing the work of art to its content then interpreting that, one tames the work of art" (Sontag 759). I disagree with what Sontag is saying here because if we did not see how Giovanni was presenting this then it would provoke a completely different affect. Reading this as just her closing remarks would not do justice to how she presents it to the crowd. When Giovanni reads, " We are virginia tech" her voice gets louder and she emphasizes the fact that " WE ARE VIRGINIA TECH." This relates in a way to Jill Duffus's presentation on Shakespeare.

These both are types of speeches in which if you do not understand the meaning behind what is being said then some of the possible affect it could have on people could be lost. Also if you do not understand how exactly to present it, it changes the entire meaning of what is being said, alike to how if Jill would not showed us the second demonstration of her scene and how it was supposed to be funny. If Giovanni wanted to she could have presented that very same speech in a very dark manner due to all the sad imagery she gives us. Giovanni's speech is not in an old language, but certain words do

need to be emphasized when she is speaking, if the speech was monotone much of the effect would be lost.

Giovanni offers comparisons to other worldly tragedies, and allows us to draw connections between other tragedies and the Virginia Tech shootings. When Giovanni talks about how they did nothing to deserve this tragedy, but also how “neither does the baby elephant watching his community be devastated for ivory; neither does the Mexican child looking for fresh water” (We Are Virginia Tech speech). These comparisons help the audience to understand that they are not the only ones experiencing undeserved tragedies in the world. The way she makes these comparisons and the way she says it is much like how an artist has different types of painting styles he/she uses. There is no right or wrong way to present a speech like hers to an audience, but having an interpersonal intelligence helps. Professor Howard Gardner in his Multiple Intelligences essay says, “this intelligence permits a skilled adult to read the intentions and desires of others even when these have been hidden” (Gardner 59). Giovanni knew exactly what this group of people needed to hear in order to have their spirits lifted up. Much like an artist will paint a picture in order to make a people feel a certain way, this is seen most in political cartoons, Giovanni directed this speech to not only inspire but give the Hokie nation direction.

“We Are Virginia Tech...We Are Virginia Tech...We Are Virginia Tech,” Giovanni repeats this phrase five times during her speech. Why does she say those words though? Why “We Are VIRGINIA TECH?” Giovanni could have said we will survive, or we will move forward, but she chose “We Are Virginia

Tech.” Repeating these words to the audience allowed them to feel as if being a Hokie is like a higher calling. Telling a group of people who just experienced a terrible tragedy that “ they can do it,” or “ they can move on” would almost be a bit cliché like an excerpt from a movie. Allowing the people in the audience to feel as if one of the main reasons they could survive and move on from this tragedy was because they were Virginia Tech inspired them. These words fired up a passion in their hearts, allowing them to not sulk over what happened, but to remember and become something better.

Works Cited Page

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