

Embarking patriotic immortality: rhetorical analysis

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Daniel Aubertine Dr. Viera 10/11/2011 Final Draft Embarking Patriotic Immortality: Rhetorical Analysis of the Gettysburg Address The Gettysburg address was given on the grounds of a historical battlefield in Gettysburg Pennsylvania during the American Civil War on November 19th, 1863 by the late President Abraham Lincoln. The brief, powerful speech that he delivered to fifteen to twenty thousand people is regarded as one of the greatest in American history. It is considered the turning point of the Civil War, helping preserve the union and keep America together.

Lincoln's famous war-time speech, given on the graves of fallen soldiers, uses remarkable pathos along with an astonishing endowment to the history of American speeches through diction and patriotic passion. Following the three-day bloodbath that occurred in the fields of Gettysburg Pennsylvania in early July, thousands of bloody corpses rotted in the summer's scorching heat. Pennsylvania Governor Andrew Curtin appointed David Willis, a prominent Gettysburg lawyer, to oversee the project. An interstate commission was formed, money was raised, and seventeen acres of land at the battle site was purchased.

The federal government provided the coffins. By November the cemetery was ready for dedication (Hay). The event was set-up so that orator Edward Everett would be the main speaker of the day. Lincoln sought to speak at this event because it would be a prime opportunity to boost the Union's war efforts. Crowds of fifteen to twenty thousand citizens and soldiers gathered around the stage and listened to Everett speak for nearly two hours (Borade). Lincoln then rose and spoke for just under two minutes, and the crowd was speechless (Hay).

Throughout the speech Lincoln uses the pathos to make the audience feel emotionally invested in the speech through guilt and courage. The audience is standing six feet above their fellow citizens who died in battle on their behalf, and to preserve the American way of life. Lincoln uses the location of the speech as emotional leverage on the crowd. Many of the members in the audience were either soldiers or citizens who lost loved ones in the battle of Gettysburg. Lincoln uses the guilty conscience of the audience members as persuasion into his main idea that the union cannot give up the fight.

Lincoln states in his address, “ We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who have gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this. ” He effectively uses pathos as a transition into a strong initiative that America should fight for the soldiers who lost their lives. The feeling of guilt is also intertwined and overcome by a feeling of courage in Lincoln’s speech. He makes the citizens who are opposed to the war feel guilty, and the citizens who are for the war, and the soldiers who are fighting, feel courage.

The courageous component of the speech that is felt by the audience is inspired by reminding them how heroic the soldiers who died on this field were. An example of this is when Lincoln states, “... that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion...” They faced terrifying situations with courage and, in the end, gave their lives for what they believed in. The soldiers’ courage is the source of the courage for the audience. The inspiration though emotion that Lincoln delivered was the driving force of this inspirational speech.

The incredible diction used by the president is the factor that set this historical speech apart from all the rest. Not once in his 272 word speech did the president use the word “ I” or “ me”. Lincoln was not that kind of man; he was unselfish and never distinguished himself from the audience. Another key aspect of Lincoln’s speech that is used very often in all types of writing is the use of repetition. He doesn’t repeat large memorable phrases; he repeats small words that seem to have great power. Throughout the speech he uses the words “ we” and “ us” a total of twelve times, referring to himself and the audience.

Also, he often says the word “ here” referring to the hallowed ground of Gettysburg to further associate himself with his audience (Zimmer, 4). This heavy use of plural first person tense creates a strong sense of unity with the audience and himself. Additionally he utilizes a strong vocabulary throughout the speech. He employed many complex sentences for an overall intelligent-sounding speech. For example, “ Four score and seven years ago... ” is very poetic and elegant, much more dignified than simply saying “ Eighty-seven”. Lincoln uses his words to dig deep into the audiences hearts and pull out every sense of patriotism that he can get. Each one of the 272 words that he spoke that day was to bring out the American passion that is needed for victory in the Civil war. He begins by mentioning our forefathers and how they created this nation built on equality and liberty. Then he proceeds to tell that the principles on which the nation was founded are under attack. This immediately gets the audience in the mood for being inspired to act, because soon after this he hits them with pathos, the emotions of guilt and courage.

But he ends the short speech with a powerful conclusion, " It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us --- that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion--- that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain--- that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom --- and that the government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth. " Lincoln's powerful closing words left the audience in muted shock.

The short powerful speech is one of the most patriotic in American history. Lincoln's famous war-time speech given on the graves of fallen soldiers uses remarkable pathos along with an astonishing endowment to the history of American speeches through diction, and patriotic passion. The brief, powerful speech that he delivered to fifteen to twenty thousand people is regarded as one of the greatest in American history. It is considered the turning point of the Civil War, helping preserve the union and keep America together.

The inspirational, patriotic, persuasive speech given by Lincoln shows just how good a speech can be from effective use of pathos, diction and patriotism. Works Cited Borade, Gaynor. " Summary and Significance of the Gettysburg Address. " Buzzle Web Portal: Intelligent Life on the Web. N. p. , n. d. Web. 17 Oct. 2011. . Hay, John . " Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, 1863. " EyeWitness to History - history through the eyes of those who lived it. N. p. , n. d. Web. 17 Oct. 2011. .