

Literary devices

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In Patrick Henry's "Speech in the Virginia Convention," the restatement of thoughts and rhetorical questions are used to further explain his points and express his opinion. Restatement is the restating of an idea but presenting it in different words, images, or ideas. In his speech, Henry restates ideas he believes will happen: slavery, war, and the representation of King George as an enemy. Throughout his speech, he pleads with the President as well as the other audience members to think about the odd things done by the British government.

In one quote, he talks about the need to be courageous and fight back: "The battle sir is not to the strong alone; it is to the vigilant, the active, the brave.... There is no retreat, but in submission and slavery!" (Henry 205-206). This quote applies not only to pathos, but also to ethos.

It is emotionally implicating because he uses an assortment of adjectives that boost the ego. He is counting on their pridefulness because he knows that preying upon the men's ego is the easiest way to get them involved. At the end of the quote, he purposefully uses the word slavery to instill the fear that is subconsciously inside everyone's mind. He makes this fear a real threat by explaining how both losing this battle as well as giving up would inevitably result in slavery. Ethos is used when he implies that it is wrong to retreat and supports that claim by bringing up slavery.

At this point, he uses restatement to emphasize the importance of his thought: "The war is actually begun!...Our brethren are already in the field! Why stand we here idle!" (Henry 206). When he says this, he is making the

people realize how detrimental it is that they retaliate. He is purposefully trying to get them heated so that they will rally.

He again talks about a fear everyone has; the fear of war, as well as the possibility of losing it. The last line of this quote is spoken very passionately and invokes feelings of anger in the audience. The word brethren brings out feelings of comradery as they think about how a war has started, and their very own families, friends, and neighbors are fighting. They begin to ask themselves that very question: Why should we stand idle if the war has begun? By using this device, Henry is able to put ideas in the heads of those present and reinforce them. This quote applies to the appeal of pathos because people become emotionally involved when they feel threatened. Henry tells them that it is already happening, so that makes the people feel like they have no control.

This causes them to feel impassioned and puts a desire inside of them to be involved. Another device used by Patrick Henry is when he asks a question that does not seek a verbal answer, also known as rhetorical questioning. By posing a question that does not require an answer, it causes the people to think deeply about the question and really ponder it. When Patrick Henry wants his audience to acknowledge the fact that war is coming, he does not explicitly say it, rather, he uses subtle questions to plant the idea in the minds of his audience. For example, in one part of his speech, Henry points out that there has been obvious war preparations. Instead of presenting this in plain language, he asks them this: “ Are fleets and armies necessary to a work of love and reconciliation?” (Henry 204).

This statement makes people question why it is that war preparations have begun. Later, he asks: “ But when shall we be stronger? Shall it be the next week, or the next year?” (Henry 205). This question makes it even more apparent that the men cannot sit around and stay idle. Patrick Henry knows that the only way to make a change is to fight for his beliefs and to encourage his fellow men to fight with him. Logos can be seen here because the question being asked is a logical inquiry. They feel as if they came to the conclusion themselves because they have to do independent thinking to reach it.

This technique works because by leaving the questions open ended, people come to conclusions and get more passionate about the issues at hand. The use of restatement as well as rhetorical questions succeeds in making Patrick Henry’s speech very persuasive because of the effect it has on his audience.