

Rhetorical analysis: proclamation of rebellion

Politics



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Proclamation of Rebellion On August 23rd of 1775, King George III issued A Proclamation for Suppressing Rebellion and Sedition after hearing news of the Battle of Bunker Hill. The document declared that the colonies were in an open state of rebellion and requested that all subjects of Great Britain report “ traitorous correspondence” by anyone who may be involved so they could be punished. King George’s proclamation acted as an antithesis and undermined his remaining colonial moderate support.

The purpose of the proclamation was obvious: King George III wanted to thwart the colonial rebellion by coercing them by means of intimidation, which is a form of an ethos appeal. However, the timing of the issuance of the proclamation and its diction reveal a seemingly desperate King George. King George III opened the proclamation with the use of a self-sealing conspiracy argument against the leaders of the rebellion when he referred to them as “ ill designing. ” He tried to create an outlet for the average colonial subject by calling them “ misled. This also played into the conspiracy argument by making those same subjects doubt the American leadership they had followed up to that point. It seems as though he called the colonists to rethink their position by portraying Great Britain as their protector and guardian while labeling the colonial leadership as avaricious conspirators. These claims that Britain was still an excellent father figure to whom the colonists owed respect and deference were arguments of principle.

However, it was clear that many colonists found incidences such as The Boston Massacre and The Battle of Bunker Hill indicated otherwise. Not only did The Battle of Bunker Hill display that Great Britain was not the colonist’s protector, but also that the British could be beaten. This loss painted a much

weaker picture of King George. The proclamation was released just before King George would decline to receive the colonists' Olive Branch Petition.

By declining to receive the petition, it was assumed that the King's proclamation was his response. With that in mind, the remaining colonial moderates retained little hope that Great Britain and the colonies would remain united. King George's proclamation labeled the leaders of the colonial resistance "dangerous and ill designing men" and listed the ways they had violated royal law. He also posited all the ways the Empire had correctly administered governance and rule over the colonies.

It said that those who aided Britain in finding conspirators would be protected for their "loyalty and zeal" and that ignorance was not an option. Up to this point, ignorance of the relations between the colonies and Britain was the path chosen by many moderates who hoped reconciliation would be made. In his proclamation King George identified these moderates as well as Tory supporters and attempted to pit them against the "conspirators." This rhetorical act on the part of King George III and the British was an utter failure at achieving its intended goal.

By that point, the relationship between the two parties had been violent for quite some time and colonial confidence in the King by his shrinking supporting minority was waning. He used self-boasting ethos appeals to the colonists (many of whom had already come to the conclusion that they didn't like him) and hoped that they would essentially turn themselves in and give up. The worst part about the entire proclamation was that it completely crushed moderates who supported the idea that independence wasn't the answer.