

Analyzing from a rhetorical point of view the efficiency of patrick henry's speec...

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Rhetorical Analysis

Rhetoric is the defining characteristic that can either make or break a speech. Having good rhetoric is key to any speech and it persuades an audience to believe something and to act on that belief. There is not a true definition of rhetoric, but just a bunch of different views or understandings of the word. The definition that makes the most sense and is preferred by many comes from Lloyd Bitzer. He states, “ Rhetoric is a mode of altering reality, not by the direct application of energy to objects, but by the creation of discourse which changes reality through the mediation of thought and action.” The goal is to have people be persuaded by a speech that they will want to take action instantly after the speech is over. Without rhetoric, a speech is nothing more than an announcement of ones beliefs. Obviously, listing out thoughts is not going to be a very effective speech, but using those thoughts, twisting them in new ways and adding good rhetoric into the mix will persuade the audience to take action after the speech has ended. The “ give me liberty or give me death” speech, given by Daniel Webster, is still well known today and is synonymous with many of the other great speeches throughout history. This speech is a clear instance of rhetoric and indicates the situation that Webster wanted to change by expressing his thoughts and that what makes it such a well-crafted piece of work.

This particular speech is very compelling, not just for the information and viewpoints of it but because of the language and rhetoric used through out the entire speech. Patrick Henry is writing this because he is an upset colonist who was wanted his voice to be heard, and needless to say; his

voice was definitely heard. In Henry's speech, he tries to encourage the members of Congress and those in attendance to vote to join the fight to take back what was always theirs from birth, their freedom. Essentially what his speech is about is how important joining the Revolution is and why they must fight; he then summarizes the oppressive nature of the British so far and the useless actions that the colonies have taken prior, and he finally encourages the members there to vote to join in the fight for independence. The content, although riveting, is not what won over the delegates; it was the way he presented his ideas to them.

Patrick Henry was a master of the art of rhetoric, and a brilliant speaker by all accounts. It is clear from the language used that Henry is committed to his stance and that he completely agrees with what he is saying. In Henry's inspiring and influential speech, he forcefully insisted and advocated that the people need to not only arm themselves but to be prepared to fight. The techniques he uses in the speech are what convince the people to fight back against the British. His speech is full of emotion, and this makes the audience feel a certain way and eventually take his side of the argument. He asks rhetorical questions, uses repetition in his favor, and makes allusions to God. These techniques, along with the persuasive nature of the content, got many of the colonists on his side. He asks many questions, but he does not want any answers; he just wants the people to think about what he is saying by personally relating it to them. He asked many of these questions and all of them were used to convince the people of the points he was trying to make. For instance, "Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery?" This particular question is very effective

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because the audience start to think to themselves. From that thinking, they become upset at the thought of being held down in chains like slaves. Then he's has their full attention, they are now siding with him and are completely susceptible to what he is saying. If this technique did not get the audience on his side, then the next two most likely would have. There is a large number of repletion in this speech, and by repeating phrases or patterns in several of his statements Henry helped make specific statements stand out. He knew which statements were important and which ones he wanted the people to remember. One of them is, " The war is inevitable-and let it come! I repeat it, sir, let it come! He is calling for war and wants it to come as soon as possible and he wants the colonists to be ready for it when it does come." He proclaims these repeated statements with emphasis and these carefully placed repetitive statements stir emotions and thoughts within the audience. Another technique that Henry uses is that he alludes to God numerous times throughout his speech. An example of this is: " There is just a God who presides over the destinies of nations and who will raise up friends to fight our battles for us." This quote states that God is on there side and Henry knows that nothing gives people more confidence than having God in the corner which is why he refers to God in a caring and trusting way. He not only uses grammatical techniques but he also uses logos and pathos in his speech. Henry uses logos in his speech when he states all the wrong doings that Britain has done thus far. This logic and strong reasoning showcases the atrocities that the British have done and how they see themselves as superior to the colonists. This of course excites the colonists and makes them furious, which is just where Henry wants them. Henry also uses pathos

to get the people on his side. He shows his true emotions by bringing up how the acts of the British have left him feeling mistreated and inferior to the superpower. His emotions become the audiences' emotions because they realize that many of them also feel the same way and that they too feel oppressed. The usage of these techniques all throughout his speech are the main contributors to the audience being persuaded to be on his side and being persuaded to fight.

This speech is a clear instance of rhetoric and indicates the situation that Webster wanted to change by expressing his thoughts and that is what makes it such a well-crafted piece of work. Patrick Henry's speech lives on and the famous words that he ends the speech with can still be easily identified today. The content of the essay is strong, his arguments are backed up by facts and he has justification to legitimize all his requests. The strongest part however is how he goes about making these points. The techniques he uses along with how he appeals to logos and pathos are what make the speech stand out from all the other speeches given during that time. Henry's speech did not end unsuccessfully, although some called him a traitor, the majority was still on his side. In fact, just a few months later the first battle of the Revolutionary war took place. Therefore, it is easy to say that his speech was very effective and his outcry was what pushed people over the line and persuaded them to fight.