

What is an american-- a discussion critical thinking sample

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Harold Ickes' famous speech, "What is an American?" is a prime example of a piece of public speaking that is designed to move the audience into belief and action. Written in 1941, it is a prime example of the Rogerian model of argument-- that is, it is an argument towards a certain purpose that relies upon common ground to move those who are listening. Ickes' entire purpose in writing and giving the speech was to be inclusive in his language. He purposefully included everyone, regardless of race, religion, class, or even geographical location in the description of what it means to be American. At the same time, he narrowly restricted the definition by stating that to be a true American, one must believe only one thing: that the pursuit of democracy and freedom around the world are noble ones (Ickes). The logos of the speech lies in the underlying theme that Americans love democracy and freedom, and those that are Americans should support Britain. The pathos of the piece lies in appealing to every listener and pointing out what makes every listener an "American" (Ickes). Finally, the ethos of the piece is unusual, because the speaker merely wishes to impress upon his audience that his reason for standing up and speaking is that he is an American just like everyone else in the audience (Ickes).

Ickes is arguing for American support of Britain in their endeavors against the Nazis and their allies. During the time that the speech was written, the Japanese had not yet bombed Pearl Harbor, drawing Americans into the war. Ickes makes his declaration that without American support for the British troops, there can be no freedom, prosperity, or democracy throughout the world. He uses a variety of different public speaking techniques to achieve his goals, but the most notable technique is the repetition of phrases and

ideas throughout the text (Ickes). Many public speakers use this technique, as it is considered an excellent way to engage the listeners and encourage them to support whatever issue is being raised by the speaker in question. In this case, Ickes continuously evokes the image of an American as someone who is freedom-loving, diverse, and democratic.

Works cited

Ickes, Harold. " Harold Ickes Speech-- What is an American?." 1941. Web. 8 Aug 2013. .