

Rhetorical analysis of ethos in "narrative of the life of frederick douglass, an ...



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While making rhetorical analysis of Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, I would like to point out that his memoir is recognized to be one of the greatest narratives of the nineteenth century in the United States. The text is autobiographical, and its main idea is the abolitionist movement.

Generally, I suppose that the author's desire to end slavery is the key moment the readers are to draw their attention to. Narrative consists of eleven chapters. It appeared in 1845. Frederick Douglass starts his history telling about unknown date of his birth. It is obvious, that this fact makes him downcast. The author tells about horrible events he experienced.

Thus, the first acts of slavery he describes in the chapters one-four. Frederick Douglass grew up alone, without his parent's help and support. He wrote that his mother died when he was a little boy; however, the fact didn't upset the author at all, as he didn't remember the time his mother could spend with him. In other words, one can make a conclusion that the role of parents in the story is to be neglected, as Douglass had no family.

One of the most interesting points I would like to tell you a few words about is the slaves' songs or their singing. One is to keep in mind that this description is enormously important in Frederick's production.

In Narrative the author sees and describes himself as a representative man. However, in my opinion, he sets himself apart from other slaves. Of course, being the slave, the author sees no difference, but unconsciously, it is obvious that he is different. When analyzing his descriptions, comparisons, acts, words - the readers can understand why Douglass is not similar to other characters.

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Generally, to my mind, the strongest parts of the story are the first ones. I was deeply impressed by everything the author detailed. Thus, the key point is the relations between slaves and their owners. The author discloses the cruelty of slave holders.

The strongest part I re-read several times is the so-called aspect of the truth. For instance, Douglass described that when slaves said the truth, they were beaten by slave holders. Of course, the situation recurred numerous times. Every description of the owners' cruelty makes the readers to think over the importance and meaning of the author's autobiographical story.

The chapter five is also rather important. Moreover, I suppose that this chapter determines the author's further life. Thus, in this part the author wrote that he moved to the biggest city of Maryland (one of the states of the USA) and this act had totally changed his life. The author stated that if he had no opportunity to come to another state, he would have remained a person legally owned by another.

In other words, Douglass couldn't realize what freedom was. Another important point the readers are to draw their attention to when reading is the appearance of hope in the author's heart. Another important moment I can't omit is the meaning of reading. Thus, when Douglass got an opportunity to understand how to read, he realized the possibilities he could receive and use.

It happened when Mrs. Auld's husband said that the slave is not supposed to be educated. If the slave can read, it is not a slave anymore. That statement really impressed the author. He wanted to be a free man; he desired to feel
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freedom. It seems that the moment is one of the central in Narrative. In my opinion, the readers have caught the idea of the education importance.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century and in our days getting education is one of the key things, which ennobles a person's opportunity and desire to achieve more goals he or she sets for the life. Douglass still experiences cruelty; however, this time his descriptions are not as hopeless and they were in the first chapters.

When the author started to read, he understood the meaning and importance of abolition. He realized what the act of abolishing meant. When reading the part, some readers, including me, can notice that Douglass's new skill brought him not only pleasure, but also mental anguish.

That happened because the author realized how much pain in the world, and how this world unfair. At that time Douglass wants to understand the principles of good writing and reading.

The chapters eight and nine disclose the author's travelling in the North-Easterly way. He points out the importance of the event in his life. The author still experiences cruelty; however, his expectations are not as hopeless as they were in the first parts.

The last chapters made me to think about a person's strong will. Thus, when the author was controlled by Mr. Covey, he was always beaten. Usually, under such a control, people are transformed into wreckage, but one day Douglass started to fight back. That was a new man. That was the birth of

the new man. The last straw that broke the camel's back was Mr. Covey's another assault.

In my opinion, it was a physical battle, which made the author to think about his inward nature. Nobody can be beaten. People are to fight for their dignity; they are to show the others that they have their own self-esteem and self-respect. The day when Douglass showed who he was, helped him to realize what a free man felt. A great day, a new Frederick Douglass was born.

While analyzing this aspect, I would like to emphasize that nobody can feel humiliation until he or she will be able to recognize what a miserable being a person is. In other words, a person can feel his or her slavish nature, but if a person doesn't, this changes everything:

From my earliest recollection, I date the entertainment of a deep conviction that slavery would not always be able to hold me within its foul embrace; and in the darkest hours of my career in slavery, this living word of faith and spirit of hope departed not from me, but remained like ministering angels to cheer me through the gloom. This good spirit was from God, and to him I offer thanksgiving and praise (Douglass, 29).

By the way, I would like to point out that Mr. Covey didn't attack Frederick anymore. Generally I suppose the situation proves that the strong will can't be break.

In my opinion, the author's narrative is considered to be one of the greatest productions in American literature. Douglass's work is full of pain and fear;

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however, he created the masterpiece to help other people to understand the nature of a human being. I suppose that Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass reflects the voice and sufferings of all the slaves with whom he experienced horrible events.

Nicole Schubert is of the opinion that the author's voice " acts as a platform for social justice and change that is echoed in the power of speeches from the Civil Rights Movement and the presidential election of 2008" (par. 1).

Another interesting moment I would like to discuss is people's appreciation for education. I suppose that Douglass's work is to be studied in Universities as it can impact on the students' deeper comprehension of education. Of course, when analyzing the story, one is to keep in mind time when the narrative appeared. I think that the fact which can impress almost all students is Douglass's style of writing.

It is difficult to neglect his manner to set out his thought and ideas in writing; it is not so easy to believe that an American slave can use various language devices and build such complex sentences; the author's description methods require special attention. I am perfectly sure that the ways Douglass relied on to fight with the community he lived in impressed every reader.

Finally, I want to tell a few words about appendix:

Sincerely and earnestly hoping that this little book may do something toward throwing light on the American slave system, and hastening the glad day of deliverance to the millions of my brethren in bonds-faithfully relying upon the power of truth, love, and justice, for success in my humble efforts-and

solemnly pledging my self anew to the sacred cause,-I subscribe myself,
Frederick Douglass (Douglass, 103).

What can be added? - Freedom is a person's inner feeling and its existence depends upon the pivot of a person's character.

Douglass, Frederick. Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, 2011. Web.

Schubert, Nicole. The Role of Rhetoric in the Abolition Movement: A Study of Voice and Power in Narrative, Speech, and Letters, 2003. Web.