

Analyzing Famous Speeches as Arguments

Essay Assignment Sheet

- 1) Select a famous speech to analyze. Your choices are a compilation of several collections, including *The American Rhetoric*, *The History Place*, and *Britain's Guardian Unlimited*. Please note that some famous but "overdone" speeches were deliberately not included on the list.
- 2) Analyze your chosen speech as an argument and write an essay about the writer's effectiveness considering the context in which and audience to which they were delivered. Essays should identify and explain the rhetorical strategies that the author deliberately chose while crafting the text. What makes the speech so remarkable? How did the author's rhetoric evoke a response from the audience? Why are the words still venerated today?
- 3) Carefully consider the author's deliberate manipulation of language. The thesis must be arguable and take language into account; it may not merely tout the general importance of the speech or the valiance of the speaker.
- 4) Stay focused on the speech as an argumentative text. There isn't ample space in this essay to carefully detail every aspect of the historical context in which this speech falls. It's critical to know about the events that led up to the speech, so it is probably necessary to include pertinent details. However, it is not useful to delineate, for example the specific events of the entire Revolutionary War that preceded George Washington's Inaugural Speech.
- 5) Include content from multiple (2-3) secondary sources that effectively and actively support your thesis. You must have a Works cited page in MLA format that includes the speech and additional sources.
- 6) Bring a copy of the speech to class on the days that are set aside for work days. The final essay must be turned in—along with a clean, neat copy of the speech—at the beginning of class on the assigned date.

First Draft Due: Nov. 15

Second Draft Due: Nov. 19

Final Copy Due: Nov. 28

Examples of Rhetorical Devices:

Tone, Diction, Figurative Language, Repetition, Hyperbole, Understatement

Elements of Argument:

Claims, Warrants, The Appeals (logos, pathos, ethos), Fallacies