Rhetorical Précis

English 12 Honours

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Martin Luther King Jr; known to be one of the founding fathers of America’s civil rights movement, and renowned Baptist minister, in his infamous speech “I have a dream” (1963) presents an argument that all ethnicities need to be treated equally in the United States. King creates a persuasive stance and debates the importance of equality while using various tactics, to present the case. One of which being the proper implementation of Ethos in his speaker, or the documentation of credibility within his arguments. The others being the literary devices that creates a bond between the audience and his work, these being anaphora epithet, and allusions. He speaks to the disgraceful treatment of African American people in order that the people of The United States may provoke change in civil rights within the government. King delivers this piece for the particular interest of the greater American people, suits, and the activists for equal treatment of people groups in our modern world.

*Body Paragraph 1*

* King begins by securing the audience with his credibility or Ethos, while using one of the greatest allusions in his speech
* Just after the beginning address, King mentions that “Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand today, signed the Emancipation Proclamation” Here the allusion to the Emancipation Proclamation and Abraham Lincoln’s ideals for a liberated United States, is direct evidence for MLK’s Ethos in this opening act. Abraham Lincoln is looked positively (for the most part) by every American regardless of the skin colour. With this he establishes the sourcing of the information and his credibility right off the bat
* This momentous decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice. In this second part of his speaking, again the allusion of the Emancipation decree creates this sense of credibility for all the audience members and finalizes the urge for the people to care about what he is actually arguing.
* In these quotes which are indirectly backed by Abe Lincoln, King is able to win the hearts of the people, because a respected president has many of the same ideals as does MLK. Which is that all citizens of the United States have a right to be treated fairly and equally, regardless of their native background.

*Body Paragraph 2*

* Afterwards the author continues to implant Ethos within his speaking and in this example uses a different but effective literary device to do so. This is known as Anaphora.
* Anaphora was one of the famous devices in the speech “I have a dream” (1963) King begins, “I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream. I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up, live out the true meaning of (Thomas Jefferson’s quote from The Declaration of Independence) “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.”
* In the beginning of the quote, he manipulates the speech with a very smooth and poetic sounding anaphora when he repeats “I have a dream.” The audience is gravitating towards the piece at this point, and then King makes the connection to civil rights and has credibility to back it up. Thomas Jefferson’s quote from the Declaration of Independence ties into the case for the equal treatment of men (and women) in the United States. This is substantial, but what makes it critical is the credibility. As the Americans are so patriotic, they all see the value and immense credibility of the declaration and their respective founding members.

*Body Paragraph 3*

* To close the speech King ties together his credibility and proof about the American reform, to go hand in hand with his credibility behind the faith. As a Baptist minister that is. This time he uses Ethos to back up his claims to freedom, with a certain device to appeal to the listener, epithet in particular.
* King says “Will this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day” (MLK) The first idea that is necessary to understand the impact of this line, is the Ethos within the writing. Because of his background where he was a very influential pastor (particularly in the coloured community) he demands a certain level of respect and authority in what he says about “faith”, “struggle” and prayer. In this case as an expert in the field.
* Another reason why these lines are so impactful is because he presents the country in “jangling discords” which is use epithet right there. This helps his case as its sounds more crucial to the listener and gets their attention. Which is to see the importance of change in the United States at this time. He also is able to inspire the people based off the same device when he says, “beautiful symphony.” This paints of wonderful picture of the possibility of the state of the country with a massive change in equality.
* By using these devices and his integrity in what he talks about, his case for treating all Americans equally regardless of their ethnicity stands very firm and convincing.

*Conclusion*

A phrase similar to - rising up to the inequality and injustice of the African American people, led to landslide of activism against the United States House, remains true. This was possible because of King’s use of literary devices and Ethos as a means to convince and inspire the people to make change happen. He was credible in every aspect of his case in especially in the significance of why men and women need to be treated properly. Martin Luther King also used certain poetic terms to help drive the masses to truly make an impact from his speech. Because of this, his speaking remains very effective overall. His ability to manipulate ideals and text, proved to be very useful in the civil rights movements in the United Sates, and we see evidence of this today in their civil policies.