

Persuasion in Action

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WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will examine two different persuasive essays in order to analyze the techniques their writers used. You will also continue strengthening your problem solving skill by putting your knowledge of persuasion into action. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. Chief Joseph's 1877 Surrender Speech

Before the United States became the country it is today, it was originally inhabited by the Native Americans. As the Europeans spread across the territories that would later become a united country, there were many conflicts as they pushed the Native Americans from their homes, often beginning battles between the two. Chief Joseph of the Nez Perce tribe bravely fought a three-month battle to protect his people and their homes, and to find a new home in Canada. However, in 1877, he delivered his speech as they surrendered (Chief Joseph – In His Own Words). This speech is a sad end to a courageous battle.

The Speech

Tell General Howard I know his heart. What he told me before, I have it in my heart. I am tired of fighting. Our Chiefs are killed; Looking Glass is dead, Ta Hool Hool Shute is dead. The old men are all dead. It is the young men who say yes or no. He who led on the young men is dead. It is cold, and we have no blankets; the little children are freezing to death. My people, some of them, have run away to the hills, and have no blankets, no food. No one knows where they are—perhaps freezing to death. I want to have time to look for my children, and see how many of them I can find. Maybe I shall find them among the dead. Hear me, my Chiefs! I am tired; my heart is sick and sad. From where the sun now stands I will fight no more forever.

Chief Joseph (Thunder Traveling to the Loftier Mountain Heights) – 1877

Chief Joseph's speech is short, but poignant. The speech certainly makes strong use of pathos, which is an example of an emotional argument. Pathos uses strong language and careful diction to make the reader feel for the speaker. In his speech, Chief Joseph speaks of the tragedies his people have undergone. He mentions specific people, such as Looking Glass and Ta Hool Hool Shute, who have passed on due to the fighting ("Chief Joseph Surrenders"). He also mentions looking for his children. Certainly, most people would argue that losing a child is one of the most painful things that can happen to a person. When Chief Joseph mentions looking for his children, the audience certainly should be able to empathize with him, especially when he says

he may “find them among the dead” (“Chief Joseph Surrenders”).

The defeated chief also uses parallel structure. Parallel structure often serves to highlight statements and give them a more significant impact. When he writes that “Looking Glass is dead, Ta Hool Hool Shute is dead. The old men are all dead” (“Chief Joseph Surrenders”). The repeated structure brings home the fact that he has lost many of his people.

Though these are the two primary rhetorical strategies used in the speech, there are others. Chief Joseph highlights his emotions by using alliteration to say that he is “sick and sad” (“Chief Joseph Surrenders”). He evokes images of shivering, hungry people in the mountains with the words, “run away to the hills, and have no blankets, no food. No one knows where they are - perhaps freezing to death” (“Chief Joseph Surrenders”). Finally, in his last words, Chief Joseph’s chosen diction paints the picture of a defeated man and a defeated people: “I will fight no more forever” (“Chief Joseph Surrenders”). Though perhaps the use of the word forever is hyperbole and exaggerated, the speech is the emotional end to a battle. This speech marks the end of the Nez Perce tribe’s valiant fight for equality and land, which ended in devastating losses for their people.

2. Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Pearl Harbor Speech

During his 1940 presidential election campaign, Franklin D. Roosevelt promised not to send any American men to fight in World War II. However, as president, Roosevelt secretly sent weapons to the Allies. One year later, Japan decided to attack the U.S. navy base at Pearl Harbor. After the attack, Franklin D. Roosevelt had the difficult task of informing Americans that America would join the Allies’ war effort.

The Speech

Mr. Vice President, Mr. Speaker, Members of the Senate, and of the House of Representatives:

Yesterday, December 7th, 1941—a date which will live in infamy—the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan.

The United States was at peace with that nation and, at the solicitation of Japan, was still in conversation with its government and its emperor looking toward the maintenance of peace in the Pacific.

Indeed, one hour after Japanese air squadrons had commenced bombing in the American island of Oahu, the Japanese ambassador to the United States and his colleague delivered to our Secretary of State a formal reply to a recent American message. And while this reply stated that it seemed useless to continue the existing diplomatic negotiations, it contained no threat or hint of war or of armed attack.

It will be recorded that the distance of Hawaii from Japan makes it obvious that the attack was deliberately planned many days or even weeks ago. During the intervening time, the Japanese government has deliberately sought to deceive the United States by false statements and expressions of hope for continued peace.

The attack yesterday on the Hawaiian islands has caused severe damage to American naval and military forces. I regret to tell you that very many American lives have been lost. In addition, American ships have been reported torpedoed on the high seas between San Francisco and Honolulu.

Yesterday, the Japanese government also launched an attack against Malaya.

Last night, Japanese forces attacked Hong Kong.

Last night, Japanese forces attacked Guam.

Last night, Japanese forces attacked the Philippine Islands.

Last night, the Japanese attacked Wake Island.

And this morning, the Japanese attacked Midway Island.

Japan has, therefore, undertaken a surprise offensive extending throughout the Pacific area. The facts of yesterday and today speak for themselves. The people of the United States have already formed their opinions and well understand the implications to the very life and safety of our nation.

As Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy, I have directed that all measures be taken for our defense. But always will our whole nation remember the character of the onslaught against us.

No matter how long it may take us to overcome this premeditated invasion, the American people in their righteous might will win through to absolute victory.

I believe that I interpret the will of the Congress and of the people when I assert that we will not only defend ourselves to the uttermost, but will make it very certain that this form of treachery shall never again endanger us.

Hostilities exist. There is no blinking at the fact that our people, our territory, and our interests are in grave danger.

With confidence in our armed forces, with the unbounding determination of our people, we will gain the inevitable triumph—so help us God.

I ask that the Congress declare that since the unprovoked and dastardly attack by Japan on Sunday, December 7th, 1941, a state of war has existed between the United States and the Japanese empire.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt — December 8, 1941

The first words Roosevelt proclaims in his iconic speech describe the attack as:

“A day that will live in infamy”.

Infamy means to be known far and wide for a bad nature. Thousands of Americans died during the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Still, after World War I, Americans were hesitant to enter a world war. To overcome this, Roosevelt uses words like infamy to evoke hostility. Roosevelt’s choice of words describing the attack makes it unpatriotic to not rally behind the Allies’ cause.

Continuing, Roosevelt declares:

"It will be recorded that the distance of Hawaii from Japan makes it obvious that the attack was deliberately planned many days or even weeks ago".

This sentence is designed to make Americans fearful. Roosevelt conveys that Japan's attack was planned very carefully. It might have been a surprise attack for Americans, but this was not true for the Japanese. This implication places the idea in the minds of Americans that another attack is plausible. This thought puts Americans on edge. Roosevelt's speech attempts to persuade young men to join the military, and all other citizens to ready themselves for whatever sacrifices they must make for the war effort, united in one goal: protecting America from foreign attacks.

Roosevelt starts again:

"The attack yesterday on the Hawaiian islands has caused severe damage to American naval and military forces. I regret to tell you that very many American lives have been lost. In addition, American ships have been reported torpedoed on the high seas between San Francisco and Honolulu".

This section of the speech is heartbreaking. It confirms the death of innocent Americans. "Regret" is a very poignant word. Roosevelt makes it sound as though Japan had no real reason to attack America and that by killing thousands during the attack, Japan thought it would make America afraid to fight back. Roosevelt uses the word "regret" to show that joining the war is not what he intended to do, but America has been pushed too far.

The president continues the speech by telling Americans where else Japan had attacked, including Malaya, Hong Kong, the Philippine Islands, Guam, and the Midway Islands. The president says:

"The people of the United States have already formed their opinions and well understand the implications to the very life and safety of our nation".

By continuously using the words "Japan" and "attacked," Roosevelt drives home his key point that America must declare war on Japan. If the United States does not declare war, it would be harmful to America's safety. Roosevelt confirms this by saying:

"As Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy, I have directed that all measures be taken for our defense"

Roosevelt then rallies Americans behind the cause with this sentence:

"No matter how long it may take us to overcome this premeditated invasion, the American people in their righteous might will win through to absolute victory"

He gives Americans hope with words like overcome, righteous, and victory: America will overcome the Axis Powers; America's righteous soldiers will fight, no matter how long it takes; eventually, victory will come. Even

with Pearl Harbor's devastation, he doesn't admit defeat. Roosevelt asserts that it was an attack, but not a defeat; this gives hope to the devastated Americans who were blindsided by the bombing.

Roosevelt tries to comfort America with the next section of the text:

"I assert that we will not only defend ourselves to the uttermost, but will make it very certain that this form of treachery shall never again endanger us".

To comfort America, he doesn't just promise to defend the country. He also swears that a tragedy like this will never happen ever again. Americans want to believe that this is the worst they will face, and Roosevelt's words make this possible.

The president then hits America with the hard truth:

"Hostilities exist. There is no blinking at the fact that our people, our territory, and our interests are in grave danger"

With these words, Roosevelt ensures Americans understand that the country has enemies, and the country can be attacked at any time. Then, he again comforts Americans by stating the following:

"With confidence in our armed forces, with the unbounding determination of our people, we will gain the inevitable triumph—so help us God."

Roosevelt's words convey confidence, but he also asks God for help. With these words, Roosevelt has invokes religion and the idea that God is on the side of the Americans, so anyone against the Americans is also against God.

In the final words of the speech, Roosevelt asks Congress to declare war on Japan for killing innocent Americans. Consider this excerpt:

"I ask that the Congress declare that since the unprovoked and dastardly attack by Japan on Sunday, December 7th, 1941, a state of war has existed between the United States and the Japanese empire"

Roosevelt's speech is effective. On that very same day, Congress declared war on Japan. The American people no longer felt hopeless, but rather united in the cause of defeating Japan. For this reason, the Pearl Harbor speech will always be remembered as an iconic speech given by a great leader.



Problem Solving: Skill Reflect

In reading these contrasting essays, consider how you may have been persuaded. What techniques were effective and which were ineffective? Consider how many messages you get each day - from marketing and advertisements, the news, research papers, politicians, and friends and family. How can you apply what you learned about analyzing arguments to be an effective problem solver?



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you looked at two examples of persuasive essays: **Chief Joseph's 1877 Surrender Speech** and **President Franklin D. Roosevelt Pearl Harbor Speech**. These two texts help demonstrate how writers can use rhetorical appeals to develop strong arguments. By taking a close look at the rhetorical appeals and word choice, we can evaluate the effectiveness of those appeals and of the argument overall. Finally, you gained insight into how analyzing arguments strengthens your problem solving skill. You will practice writing your own analysis in your touchstone 1.1.

Best of luck in your learning!

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