

Analyzing an Historical Speech

Introduction

Since almost the beginning of time, people have found reasons to give speeches. We're going to look at ways we can break down what the speakers said and try to understand why they said it and why they said it the way they did. We'll look at what impact it had on people and why it had the impact it did. It sounds hard, but it won't be. We'll just take it one step at a time. Understanding how authors and speakers made their points will help us learn to write clearly in ways that communicate our ideas to others and might just change the world!

Step One:

Read the speech thoughtfully and carefully out loud. Then read it silently to yourself. Are there any words of which you aren't sure of the meaning? Write them down.

Step Two:

What do you think the words mean from their context in the speech? Write down your thoughts and then look the words up in a dictionary. Revise or expand their definitions based on what you learn.

Step Three:

Who gave the speech? When and where was it given?

Step Four:

What was the occasion for giving it? Who was the audience?

Step Five:

Was the speaker the author of the speech? If not, who was the author, and why was that person given the task?

Step Six:

What kind of speech was it? Was it an argument, an informative speech, a speech meant to entertain, or something else? What clues tell you this?

Step Seven:

What was the speech's purpose, or what were the speaker's goals in giving the speech?

Step Eight:

How did the speaker get the audience's attention in the beginning of the speech?

Step Nine:

How did the speaker appeal to the listener's mind or intellect? What words or phrases were used to do this?

Step Ten:

How did the speaker appeal to the listener's emotions? What words or phrases were used to do this?

Step Eleven:

How did the speaker connect with the audience? If you felt connected, what words or phrases made you feel like the speaker cared about you or shared something in common with you? If you didn't feel connected, how could the speaker have done better?

Step Twelve:

If the speech was an argument meant to persuade, how did the speaker make his or her point and encourage a reaction from the audience?

Step Thirteen:

Did the speaker's tone change through the speech? If so, how and for what purpose?

Step Fourteen:

Did the speaker make any claims in the speech? If so, what were they?

Step Fifteen:

Did the speaker offer any evidence or proof of his or her claims in the speech? If so, what was offered?

Step Sixteen:

Are any of the claims able to be disproven? If so, how?

Step Seventeen:

Are there any logical fallacies in the speech? If so, what are they?

Step Eighteen:

Did the speaker make any promises in the speech? If so, what were they?

Step Nineteen:

Write a brief outline of the speech, highlighting the key points made at different points in the speech.

[illegible]

Step Twenty:

Why do you think the author structured the speech in this way?

Step Twenty-One:

What literary and rhetorical devices can you identify in the speech? There are many to consider, but some you could look for are tone, diction, figurative language, repetition, parallel structure, hyperbole, understatement, statistics, examples, anecdotes, imagery, metaphor, alliteration, personification, allegory, allusion, assonance, hyperbole, and simile.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Step Twenty-Two:

What purpose or purposes were the devices used for? What did they accomplish?

Step Twenty-Three:

Can you think of anything related to the topic or setting of the speech that the author did not include or mention? If so, why do you think it was left out?

Step Twenty-Four:

If it's possible to know this, how did the audience respond?

Analysis and Summary:

Now it's time to summarize the speech, take what you've learned and noticed about the speech, and write it all out together. Think of what you would tell someone about the speech that would help them understand what it was about and why it was important if they had never heard it before.

[illegible]

A blank sheet of lined paper. It features a solid black border and a dashed black border. The writing area is filled with horizontal lines. There are 20 lines in total, with the first line being a dashed line and the remaining 19 being solid lines.

President Abraham Lincoln's
Proclamation of Thanksgiving
Issued, October 3, 1863

The year that is drawing towards its close has been filled with the blessings of fruitful fields and healthful skies. To these bounties, which are so constantly enjoyed that we are prone to forget the source from which they come, others have been added, which are of so extraordinary a nature that they cannot fail to penetrate and soften the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever watchful providence of almighty God.

In the midst of a civil war of unequalled magnitude and severity, which has sometimes seemed to foreign states to invite and provoke their aggressions, peace has been preserved with all nations, order has been maintained, the laws have been respected and obeyed, and harmony has prevailed everywhere, except in the theater of military conflict; while that theater has been greatly contracted by the advancing armies and navies of the Union.

Needful diversions of wealth and of strength from the fields of peaceful industry to the national defense have not arrested the plow, the shuttle, or the ship; the axe has enlarged the borders of our settlements, and the mines, as well of iron and coal as of the precious metals, have yielded even more abundantly than heretofore. Population has steadily increased, notwithstanding the waste that has been made in the camp, the siege, and the battlefield; and the country, rejoicing in the consciousness of augmented strength and vigor, is permitted to expect continuance of years with large increase of freedom.

No human counsel hath devised, nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy.

It has seemed to me fit and proper that they should be solemnly, reverently and gratefully acknowledged as with one heart and voice by the whole American people. I do, therefore, invite my fellow-citizens in every part of



the United States, and also those who are at sea and those who are sojourning in foreign lands, to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next as a day of thanksgiving and praise to our beneficent Father, who dwelleth in the heavens. And I recommend to them that, while offering up the ascriptions justly due to him for singular deliverances and blessings, they do also, with humble penitence for our national perverseness and disobedience, commend to his tender care all those who have become widows, orphans, mourners, or sufferers in the lamentable civil strife in which we are unavoidably engaged, and fervently implore the interposition of the almighty hand to heal the wounds of the nation and to restore it, as soon as may be consistent with the Divine purposes, to the full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquility, and union.

In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my hand, and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the city of Washington, this third day of October, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, and of the independence of the United States the eighty-eighth.

Abraham Lincoln

By the President: William H. Seward, Secretary of State.



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Handwriting practice paper with a dashed border and multiple sets of three horizontal lines (top, middle dashed, bottom) for writing practice.

This image shows a full page of handwriting practice paper. It features a large rectangular area enclosed by a thick black dashed border. Inside this area, there are 12 sets of horizontal lines for writing practice. Each set consists of three lines: a solid top line, a dashed middle line, and a solid bottom line. These sets are arranged in two columns of six rows each, providing ample space for practicing letter formation and alignment.

Handwriting practice paper with a dashed border and multiple sets of three horizontal lines (top solid, middle dashed, bottom solid) for writing practice.

Handwriting practice paper with a dashed border and 10 sets of three horizontal lines (top solid, middle dashed, bottom solid) for writing practice.

This is a handwriting practice sheet. It features a large rectangular area enclosed by a thick black dashed border. Inside this area, there are 12 sets of horizontal lines for writing practice. Each set consists of three lines: a solid top line, a dashed middle line, and a solid bottom line. These sets are arranged in two columns of six rows each, with a significant gap between the two columns. The entire sheet is designed to help children practice letter formation and alignment.

A large rectangular area for handwriting practice. It is enclosed by a thick black border with a dashed line pattern. Inside, there are 20 sets of horizontal lines. Each set consists of a solid top line, a dashed middle line, and a solid bottom line, providing a guide for letter height and placement.

Handwriting practice paper with a dashed border and multiple sets of three horizontal lines (top solid, middle dashed, bottom solid) for writing practice.

Handwriting practice paper with a dashed border and multiple sets of three horizontal lines (top solid, middle dashed, bottom solid) for writing practice.

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