

THE FOURTH OF JULY BY FREDERICK DOUGLASS

- *Focus of Speech.* The focus of Frederick Douglass's speech is indicated in the title: "What to the slave is the Fourth of July." In his highly rhetorical speech, Douglass contrasts the freedoms granted to the white man, which the slave cannot participate in.

- Rhetorical Devices and Figures of Speech

Be able to discuss the purpose of the rhetorical devices.

- * *allusion:* Douglass makes many Biblical allusions in his speech. Douglass's allusion "lame man leap like a hart" is from the Old Testament, particularly Isaiah 35:6 (KJV). Frederick Douglass quoted a larger passage from Psalm 137 in which the Psalmist contemplates the misery of the enslaved people of Israel being taken captive to Babylon: *By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down. Yes! We wept when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. . .*
- * *antithesis:* "This Fourth of July is yours, not mine. You may rejoice, I must mourn." This antithesis supports the theme by drawing the audience's attention between the contrast of the freeman with the slave.
- * *metaphor:* "To drag a man in fetters into the grand illuminated temple of liberty, and call upon him to join you in joyous anthems, were inhuman mockery and sacrilegious irony." The metaphor "temple of liberty" works well as Douglass expands on the idea of the slave's inability to participate in society as a free member of society.
- * *hypophora:* "But I fancy I hear some one of my audience say it is just in this circumstance that you and your brother abolitionists fail to make a favorable impression on the public mind. Would you argue more and denounce less, would you persuade more and rebuke less, your cause would be much more likely to succeed." "Am I to argue that it is wrong to make men brutes, to rob them of their liberty, to work them without wages, to keep them ignorant of their relations to their fellow men, to beat them with sticks, to flay their flesh with the lash, to load their limbs with irons, to hunt them with dogs, to sell them at auction, to sunder their families, to knock out their teeth, to burn their flesh, to starve them into obedience and submission to their master? [. . .] No, I will not."
- * *apophasis:* Douglass uses the rhetorical device of apophasis when he says that it is fruitless to argue a point that is so obvious, and goes about proving it. Specifically, he mentions that it is unnecessary to prove that a slave is a man and yet gives proof that a slave *is* a man: 1) the law is evidence 2) the intellectual "manhood" of a slave in that it is against the law to teach a slave to read and write 3) the occupations of slaves are readily acknowledged, such as "plowing, planting, using all kinds of mechanical tools, erecting houses, constructing bridges, building ships, working in metals of brass, iron, copper, silver, and gold; that while we are reading, writing, and cyphering, acting as clerks, merchants, and secretaries, having among us lawyers, doctors, ministers, poets," etc.
- * *suspension.* Frederick Douglass has a very long dependent clause in which his audience has to wait for its conclusion: "Is it not astonishing that, while we are plowing, planting, and reaping, using all kinds of mechanical tools, erecting houses, constructing bridges, building ships, working in metals of brass, iron, copper, silver, and gold; . . . and above all, confessing and worshipping the Christian God, and looking hopefully for life and immortality beyond the grave—we are called upon to prove that we are men?"
- * *claim of inability.* Many authors claim not to be able to express something, but they prove themselves wrong. Such is the case with Douglass, who competently expresses himself with "thunder," "storm," "whirlwind,"

and “earthquake,” yet he says, “Oh! had I the ability, and could I reach the nation’s ear, I would today pour out a fiery streak of biting ridicule, blasting reproach, withering sarcasm, and stern rebuke.”

THE GETTYSBURG ADDRESS BY ABRAHAM LINCOLN

- *Focus of Speech.* Abraham Lincoln came to Gettysburg by train to dedicate ground the fallen soldiers in one of the most bloody combats of the Civil War. His purpose is to bring meaning to the event, lend significance to the death of so many soldiers, and encourage the nation to winning the war to reunite the nation. Although the speech only took two minutes long, it has remained a timeless and memorable expression of liberty and government as well. Edward Everett also gave a speech, evidently much less memorable, that lasted two hours. Everett, the former dean of Harvard University and a man famous for his oratory, was so impressed by Lincoln’s speech , that he wrote him: “I wish that I could flatter myself that I had come as near to the central idea of the occasion in two hours as you did in two minutes.”¹
- *Interesting Background Facts about the Battle and Speech.*
 - * *a bloody battle:* The Battle of Gettysburg was fought in the heat of the summer in basically three days from July 1 through July 3. The commanding generals in the battle were Robert E. Lee (confederate) and George Gordon Meade. The casualties included approximately 23,000 Union soldiers and 20,000 Confederate soldiers. The battle scene after the Confederate victory was gruesome. One New Jersey soldier described the dead soldiers who lay “in crevices of the rocks, behind fences, trees and buildings; in thickets, where they had crept for safety only to die in agony” : *Some with faces bloated and blackened beyond recognition, lay with glassy eyes staring up at the blazing summer sun; others, with faces downward and clenched hands filled with grass or earth, which told of the agony of the last moments. Here a headless trunk, there a severed limb; in all the grotesque positions that unbearable pain and intense suffering contorts the human form, they lay.*² Because of the heat, stench was unbearable to the area residents. The decaying flesh not only consisted of the dead soldiers, but also horses and mules.³ The dead obviously had to be buried, and burying parties were sent out to do the job. The Confederates were buried separately from the Union soldiers.
 - * *The Writing of the Gettysburg Address.* The Lincoln Collection, a joint venture between Indiana State University and Allan County Public Library avers that Lincoln did not write the address on the back of an envelope during a bumpy train ride to Gettysburg. Lincoln worked on the speech before he boarded the train and after the trip to Gettysburg and he wrote it on official stationery.⁴ However, some continue to hold on to

¹ National Geographic. *Resource Library*. “Gettysburg Address.” <https://www.nationalgeographic.org/encyclopedia/gettysburg-address/>. Accessed February 8, 2022.

² Allie Ward. *The Gettysburg Compiler*. “Burying the Dead.” <https://gettysburgcompiler.org/2012/08/02/burying-the-dead-by-allie-ward-54463/>. Accessed February 8, 2022.

³ Historynet. “Gettysburg after the Storm.” <https://www.historynet.com/gettysburg-after-the-storm.htm>. Accessed February 8, 2022.

⁴ The Lincoln Collection. <https://www.lincolncollection.org/discover/ask-an-expert/qa-archive/did-lincoln-write-the-gettysburg-address-on-the-back-of-an-envelope/>.

the idea that he *did* in fact write it on the train ride, but others say it was written weeks before his delivery or at David Wills' house where he was staying shortly before the address was given.⁵

- * *Copies of the Speech*. There are several copies of the Gettysburg Address in Lincoln's own hand, two of which are the Nicolay and Hay manuscripts. Lincoln wrote out these copies to his private secretaries, John Nicolay and John Hay shortly before or after the address was given. When Nicolay dies, his manuscript was passed on to Hay, and both manuscripts remained in the Hay family until 1916, when both were donated to the Library of Congress.⁶
- * *Reminiscence of the Address*. William V. Rathvon, who was in the audience when Lincoln gave the address when he was nine years old, gave an audio account of the address in 1938.⁷

- Rhetorical Devices and Figures of Speech

Be able to discuss the purpose of the rhetorical devices.

- * *scesis onomaton*. "... we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground"
- * *climax*. "... we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground"
- * *asyndeton*. "... we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground"
- * *antithesis*. "The world will little note, nor long remember, *what we say here*; but it can never forget *what they did here*"
- * *symploce*. "The world will little note, nor long remember, *what we say here*; but it can never forget *what they did here*"
- * *epitrophe*. "of the *people*, by the *people* and for the *people*"

INAUGURAL ADDRESS BY ABRAHAM LINCOLN

- *Focus of Speech*. Of course the looming issue of the secession of the Southern States imbues every sentence that Lincoln speaks in the address. In the speech, then, he talks about his intention to respect the power and authority of all states, but at the same time preserve the Union.

INAUGURAL ADDRESS BY GEORGE W. BUSH

- *Focus of Speech*. While touching on some of the issues of his day, George Bush also tries to reconcile a very politically divisive nation by affirming a course of "compassion" in a Republican administration and reaffirm America's commitment to freedom through compassion, civility, economic prosperity, reduced taxes, reduction of poverty, personal responsibility. It is interesting to see Bush reconcile Republican values (e.g., personal responsibility) at the same time as make an appeal to Democrats who believe in government assistance.
- Rhetorical Devices and Figures of Speech
Be able to discuss the purpose of the rhetorical devices.

⁵ Cornell University. *The Gettysburg Address*. https://rmc.library.cornell.edu/gettysburg/good_cause/five_copies_p2.htm. Accessed February 8, 2022.

⁶ Cornell University. "The Gettysburg Address." https://rmc.library.cornell.edu/gettysburg/good_cause/five_copies_p2.htm. Accessed February 8, 2022.

⁷ NPR. "Eyewitness at Gettysburg." <https://www.npr.org/1999/02/15/1045619/eyewitness-at-gettysburg>. Accessed February 8, 2022.

- * *antithesis and isocolon*: “It is the story of a new world that became a friend and liberator of the old, a story of a slave-holding society that became a servant of freedom, the story of a power that went into the world to protect but not possess, to defend but not to conquer.” In this excerpt, Bush juxtaposes and contrast the past and the present using parallel structure.
- * *asyndeton*. “The grandest of these ideals is an unfolding American promise that everyone belongs, that everyone deserves a chance, that no insignificant person was ever born.”
- * *metaphor*. “Through much of the last century, *America’s faith in freedom and democracy was a rock in a raging sea.*” There is also alliteration in this excerpt: *faith* and *freedom*; *rock* and *raging*.
- * alliteration. “Through much of the last century, America’s faith in freedom and democracy was a rock in a raging sea.” “Our democratic faith is more than the *creed* of our *country*, it is the inborn *hope* of our *humanity*, an ideal we carry but do not own, a trust we bear and pass along.” “And sometimes our differences run so deep, it seems we share a continent, but not a country.”
- * *allusion*. “I know this is in our reach because we are guided by a power larger than ourselves who creates us equal in His image.” “In His Image” is taken from the account of creation in Genesis. Bush is referring to the Parable of the Prodigal Son when he says: “And I can pledge our nation to a goal: When we see that wounded traveler on the road to Jericho, we will not pass to the other side.”
- * *anaphora and plocce*. “Never tiring, never yielding, never finishing . . .”