



Friends, Romans..." An Evaluation of Three Rhetorical Tactics

Overview

This specific lesson will be used to develop students' abilities to evaluate information and viewpoints from diverse sources and formats, assessing credibility and accuracy, weighing premises and evidence, and developing an independent point of view.

Standards

- **SL.11-12.2.** Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) in order to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data.
- **SL.11-12.3.** Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, assessing the stance, premises, links among ideas, word choice, points of emphasis, and tone used.

Objectives

- Students will explore the difference between the three classic rhetorical styles, ethos, pathos, and logos, evaluating how speakers establish (or lose) credibility, contrasting two speakers' treatment of the same subject, and assessing stance, premises, links among ideas, diction, tone, and other features of the speaker's argument.

Supplies Needed

- Students should be provided with print copies of the three following speeches:
- Marcus Brutus, [speech to the plebians](#) from Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, Act III, scene ii.
- Marc Antony, [speech to the plebians](#) from Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, Act III, scene ii.
- Video of the two speeches:
 - Speech 1: [Brutus](#) (BBC Version) – speech starts at 3:15 and goes until approximately 7:27. Note: Speaker has bloody hands. Caesar's (toga-shrouded) body is brought out and the toga is bloody.
 - Speech 2: [Marc Antony](#) (Marlon Brando)
- Sojourner Truth, "[Ain't I a Woman?](#)"

Before the Lesson

Students will need to be given some background on the three terms. Please see this link for brief [definitions of the three terms, ethos, pathos, and logos](#).

Activity 1

Lecture

Introduce the topic of three argumentative tactics, ethos, pathos, and logos. Stress the idea that most speakers tend to use some *combination* of these three tactics to persuade. Even a very fact-based argument (e.g., a scientific paper in a peer-reviewed journal) makes use of ethos as well as logos, for instance.



Ethos can be compared with the concept of “street cred,” the idea that one’s credibility, trustworthiness, personal experience, position, profession, or other factor automatically lends the speaker and her argument credence and believability, provided that the speaker is addressing a topic about which she is reasonably supposed to be knowledgeable. (For example, the Surgeon General may have a great deal of ethos if speaking about health issues, but possibly not so much about East Coast/West Coast rap rivalry.)

Pathos can be defined as the appeal to emotion: the classic cry, “But what about the children!” is a form of pathos in that it is mostly designed to use a tool of sentiment to persuade the audience to believe a proposal or take some form of action. An advertising campaign for a charity to prevent starvation might feature a picture of a victim of suffering in order to increase sympathy (an emotion) and provoke the desire to end the calamity. Similarly, a campaign for a politician running for office might feature American flags or other symbols designed to increase feelings of patriotism.

Logos can be defined as the appeal to logic – it is a fact-based argument that very often uses classically logical approaches such as the syllogism to make a point, or uses reliable sources of data as the primary “convincers” in an argument.

Small-Group Discussion

Divide students into small groups to discuss the following issues or questions amongst themselves prior to opening up discussion to include the whole class.

A Brief Note about Small-Group Discussion

Even though the whole-class discussion would just seem to rehash the small-group discussion, the small-group discussion is crucial. Especially for more reticent students, the opportunity to “test-drive” their initial impressions with their peers and compare impressions of the text before taking the larger risk of sharing in front of the whole class can be invaluable.

Small-group discussion also helps negate or eliminate those “Mount Rushmore moments” in which the teacher asks a question about the text, and the class looks back at her with apparently uncomprehending blankness. A helpful response here is often, “Okay, talk about this amongst yourselves for the next few minutes, and then we’ll reconvene as a class and see what you think.” This decision buys students time and allows them to compose fruitful answers – and allows them to understand that in textual interpretation, the onus has to be on them to be active, engaged readers in conversation with the text.

Activity

Show students the famous “daisy picker” advertisement used by Lyndon B. Johnson’s presidential campaign against contender Barry Goldwater. For further information, consult this [article from Wikipedia](#).



See link here: <http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/johnson/media/daisyspot/>

Questions for small-group discussion

1. What was the primary mode of appeal here? Ethos, pathos, or logos?
2. What was the bias of this advertisement? How do you know?
3. What was the message of the advertisement?
4. Does the advertisement's bias undermine the effectiveness of the message? Why or why not?
5. What was the intended emotional reaction? That is, what did the advertising agency who designed this advertisement reasonably expect most viewers to feel? Why do you think so?
6. What elements most effectively conveyed the emotional "punch" of the advertisement?
7. What did the advertisement imply about Johnson's opponent, Barry Goldwater?
8. Was this a credible presentation of reasons to vote for Lyndon Johnson? Why or why not?

Note: Johnson won.

Activity Two

Be a Plebeian!

In this activity, students will evaluate the effectiveness of two different speakers, both of whom have come to speak about the same subject: the murder of Gaius Julius Caesar. Students who have seen Julius Caesar will be familiar with these speeches, but previous knowledge other than background (presented below) is not necessary for this exercise.

Background: Julius Caesar was one of the most successful generals and politicians of ancient Rome, a society that prided itself on having liberated their nation from the tyranny of monarchy – much like America itself does with reference to Great Britain. Rome prided itself on being a republic, a nation in which citizens of Rome could have a voice in public office and be represented in government. Romans feared a return to monarchy, but monarchy was essentially what Caesar represented.

After Caesar triumphed in Gaul and emerged as the victor in a successful struggle for power against Pompey Magna, his political rival, he returned to Rome as an (essentially) unopposed leader, a "Dictator Perpetuus"

(Dictator-for-life). However, this assumption of complete power truly disturbed many prominent Roman senators, among them Marcus Junius Brutus, a man whose ancestors had helped to overthrow the last of the old kings of Rome – the equivalent, in America, of having been a Revolutionary War hero fighting King George III. Though Caesar thought highly of him and trusted him, Brutus was convinced to conspire in Caesar’s assassination, which took place on the Ides of March (March 15) in 44 BC. As Caesar entered the Senate, he was surrounded by a group of sixty senators and stabbed approximately 23 times.

These speeches, from Shakespeare’s play *Julius Caesar*, occur immediately after the death of Caesar. The first to speak is Brutus; the second is Marc Antony, Caesar’s second-in-command. Both men speak to the plebeians, the common people of Rome, who had loved Caesar and who had been instrumental in his political success. Though the members of the conspiracy are reluctant to allow Antony time to speak, Brutus permits it on the condition that Antony maintains the idea that the senators are honorable men and have acted honorably.

Video: Since they are intended to be performed, these speeches should be seen, not just heard or read. Provide students with written copies of the works for annotation or assistance in reading comprehension while viewing the two clips that follow.

Instruct students to watch the video carefully, noting the following elements in the speakers’ speeches. Students should be given time after each speech to write down their impressions and answers to the questions below while the video is still fresh in recollection.

1. What is the speaker’s primary mode of appeal?
2. What is the speaker’s goal? What does he wish to occur as a result of this speech?
3. What is the speaker’s argument?
4. What reasons does he offer for his argument being right?
5. Identify at least two different tones with which this speaker speaks. Why does he use this tone? Why does he change it?
6. What rhetorical tactics – appeals to pathos, logos, ethos, or other rhetorical tools – does the speaker use?
7. Are these tools effective? Ineffective? Why?
8. What points or ideas does this speaker particularly emphasize?
9. Why does he emphasize those points and not others?
10. What links between ideas does this speaker create or emphasize?
11. Do you find him convincing? Why or why not?
12. How credible is this speaker?
13. What is his bias?
14. Does his bias invalidate or compromise the validity of his argument?



- Speech 1: [Brutus](#) (BBC Version) – speech starts at 3:15 and goes until approximately 7:27. Note: Speaker has bloody hands. Caesar’s (toga-shrouded) body is brought out and the toga is bloody.



- Speech 2: [Marc Antony](#) (Marlon Brando)

Brutus, Act III, sc. 2, Julius Caesar

Romans, countrymen, and lovers! Hear me for my cause, and be silent that you may hear. Believe me for mine honor, and have respect to mine honor that you may believe. Censure me in your wisdom, and awake your senses that you may the better judge. If there be any in this assembly, any dear friend of Caesar's, to him I say that Brutus' love to Caesar was no less than his. If then that friend demand why Brutus rose against Caesar, this is my answer: not that I loved Caesar less, but that I loved Rome more.

Had you rather Caesar were living and die all slaves, than that Caesar were dead, to live all free men? As Caesar loved me, I weep for him. As he was fortunate, I rejoice at it. As he was valiant, I honor him. But, as he was ambitious, I slew him. There are tears for his love, joy for his fortune, honor for his valor, and death for his ambition. Who is here so base that would be a bondman? If any, speak—for him have I offended. Who is here so rude that would not be a Roman? If any, speak—for him have I offended. Who is here so vile that will not love his country? If any, speak—for him have I offended. I pause for a reply.

Then none have I offended. I have done no more to Caesar than you shall do to Brutus. The question of his death is enrolled in the Capitol. His glory not extenuated wherein he was worthy, nor his offenses enforced for which he suffered death.

Here comes his body, mourned by Mark Antony, who, though he had no hand in his death, shall receive the benefit of his dying—a place in the commonwealth—as which of you shall not? With this I depart: that, as I slew my best lover for the good of Rome, I have the same dagger for myself when it shall please my country to need my death.

Antony, Act III, sc. 2, Julius Caesar

Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears. I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him. The evil that men do lives after them; The good is oft interrèd with their bones. So let it be with Caesar. The noble Brutus Hath told you Caesar was ambitious. If it were so, it was a grievous fault, And grievously hath Caesar answered it. Here, under leave of Brutus and the rest—



For Brutus is an honorable man;
So are they all, all honorable men—
Come I to speak in Caesar's funeral.
He was my friend, faithful and just to me.
But Brutus says he was ambitious,
And Brutus is an honorable man.
He hath brought many captives home to Rome
Whose ransoms did the general coffers fill.
Did this in Caesar seem ambitious?
When that the poor have cried, Caesar hath wept.
Ambition should be made of sterner stuff.
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious,
And Brutus is an honorable man.
You all did see that on the Lupercal
I thrice presented him a kingly crown,
Which he did thrice refuse. Was this ambition?
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious,
And, sure, he is an honorable man.
I speak not to disprove what Brutus spoke,
But here I am to speak what I do know.
You all did love him once, not without cause.
What cause withholds you then to mourn for him?
O judgment! Thou art fled to brutish beasts,
And men have lost their reason. Bear with me.
My heart is in the coffin there with Caesar,
And I must pause till it come back to me. (weeps)

But yesterday the word of Caesar might
Have stood against the world. Now lies he there,
And none so poor to do him reverence.
O masters, if I were disposed to stir
Your hearts and minds to mutiny and rage,
I should do Brutus wrong, and Cassius wrong—
Who, you all know, are honorable men.
I will not do them wrong. I rather choose
To wrong the dead, to wrong myself and you,
Then I will wrong such honorable men.
But here's a parchment with the seal of Caesar.
I found it in his closet. 'Tis his will.
Let but the commons hear this testament—
Which, pardon me, I do not mean to read—
And they would go and kiss dead Caesar's wounds
And dip their napkins in his sacred blood,
Yea, beg a hair of him for memory,
And, dying, mention it within their wills,
Bequeathing it as a rich legacy
Unto their issue.

Have patience, gentle friends. I must not read it.
It is not meet you know how Caesar loved you.
You are not wood, you are not stones, but men.



And, being men, hearing the will of Caesar,
It will inflame you, it will make you mad.
'Tis good you know not that you are his heirs.
For, if you should—Oh, what would come of it!

Will you be patient? Will you stay awhile?
I have o'ershot myself to tell you of it.
I fear I wrong the honorable men
Whose daggers have stabbed Caesar. I do fear it.

You will compel me, then, to read the will?
Then make a ring about the corpse of Caesar,
And let me show you him that made the will.
Shall I descend? And will you give me leave?
If you have tears, prepare to shed them now.
You all do know this mantle. I remember
The first time ever Caesar put it on.
'Twas on a summer's evening in his tent,
That day he overcame the Nervii.
Look, in this place ran Cassius' dagger through.
See what a rent the envious Casca made.
Through this the well-belovèd Brutus stabbed.
And as he plucked his cursèd steel away,
Mark how the blood of Caesar followed it,
As rushing out of doors, to be resolved
If Brutus so unkindly knocked, or no.
For Brutus, as you know, was Caesar's angel.
Judge, O you gods, how dearly Caesar loved him!
This was the most unkindest cut of all.
For when the noble Caesar saw him stab,
Ingratitude, more strong than traitors' arms,
Quite vanquished him. Then burst his mighty heart,
And, in his mantle muffling up his face,
Even at the base of Pompey's statue,
Which all the while ran blood, great Caesar fell.
O, what a fall was there, my countrymen!
Then I, and you, and all of us fell down,
Whilst bloody treason flourished over us.
Oh, now you weep, and, I perceive, you feel
The dint of pity. These are gracious drops.
Kind souls, what, weep you when you but behold
Our Caesar's vesture wounded? Look you here,
Here is himself, marred, as you see, with traitors.
(lifts up CAESAR's mantle)

Good friends, sweet friends! Let me not stir you up
To such a sudden flood of mutiny.
They that have done this deed are honorable.
What private griefs they have, alas, I know not,
That made them do it. They are wise and honorable,
And will, no doubt, with reasons answer you.



I come not, friends, to steal away your hearts.
I am no orator, as Brutus is,
But, as you know me all, a plain blunt man
That love my friend. And that they know full well
That gave me public leave to speak of him.
For I have neither wit nor words nor worth,
Action nor utterance nor the power of speech,
To stir men's blood. I only speak right on.
I tell you that which you yourselves do know,
Show you sweet Caesar's wounds, poor poor dumb mouths,
And bid them speak for me. But were I Brutus,
And Brutus Antony, there were an Antony
Would ruffle up your spirits and put a tongue
In every wound of Caesar that should move
The stones of Rome to rise and mutiny.

Small-Group and Whole-Class Discussion

After they have had sufficient time to evaluate both speakers, students should be allowed to compare their answers before discussing both speeches in a whole group. The primary question which should define the whole-group discussion should be the essential one: **What elements in Antony's speech made it the more successful of the two? Why did Brutus' fail?**

A Brief Note About Whole-Class Discussion

The role of the teacher in class discussion is primarily to keep students *focused on the words*. In discussion, require students to explain what element or elements within the words led them to their conclusion. Four questions are absolutely essential to ask students during discussion – and to encourage students to ask of themselves and each other.

WHY?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why do you think so? • Why does your line/your word/your evidence prove your point? • Why did the author use this particular word and not another, similar word?
WHERE?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where in the story/play/poem did you find your information? • Can you literally put your finger on the place in the text that proves your point?
WHAT?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you mean when you say "___"? • What does this quote you chose mean? Can you rephrase it? • What else could the author have said here? • What "work" is this word doing that a similar one would not do?

For some teachers, this role may represent a change from the usual classroom discussion. **The goal of the teacher is not to lead the students to a predetermined insight, but to communicate the crucial idea that although there may not be one "right answer," there are better and worse ones – and the better ones *are* better because they are supported by the words of the author.**

Conclusion and Assessment

At the end of the discussion period, students can come to closure about the methods of persuasion they have seen used in the two Caesar speeches by applying their understanding of persuasive techniques, logical links, point of view, bias, and use of rhetorical tools to an analysis of the following famous speech by activist Sojourner Truth, ["Ain't I a Woman?"](#)

Prompt

In a forcefully-argued essay, evaluate the following elements of Truth's speech and argue whether her speech effectively conveyed the speaker's message – and why.

In your essay, please account for or address all of the following:

- The speaker's use of ethos, pathos, logos (with examples)
- The speaker's bias or stance
- The speaker's main message or point
- The speaker's goal
- The premises of her argument (that is, the reasons she offers to explain why she is right)
- Her use of reasoning – what basic reasoning does she offer?



- What elements is she particularly emphasizing?
- Identify at least two different tones used in this speech. Why is this tone effective (or not)? Why does the speaker change from tone A to tone B?
- Did you find the speech persuasive or effective? Why or why not?

Activity 4: Small-Group and Whole-Class Discussion

Conclusion and Assessment

At the end of the discussion period, students can come to closure

Activity 5: Discussing the Text

Other Writing

Compare the preamble of the Declaration of Independence with Jefferson’s “rough draft” copy here: