



Sagemont Preparatory School

AP Language and Composition Summer Assignment 2026-27

Rhetoric in Action: Analyzing and Comparing Famous Speeches

Assignment Overview: Select two famous speeches from the list below and write a comparative rhetorical analysis essay. Your goal is to analyze how each speaker uses rhetorical devices—such as ethos, pathos, logos, diction, syntax, imagery, tone, and structure—to achieve their purpose. Then, compare and contrast the effectiveness of these strategies in the context of the speeches' historical and cultural settings.

1. Choose Your Speeches

Pick two speeches from the list below or propose others. Speeches may be current or from past decades. The speeches you select should reflect multiple viewpoints and perspectives.

Suggested Speeches:

- "I Have a Dream" – Martin Luther King Jr.
- "The Gettysburg Address" – Abraham Lincoln
- "The Perils of Indifference" – Elie Wiesel
- "Ain't I a Woman?" – Sojourner Truth
- "Their Finest Hour" – Winston Churchill
- "We Shall Fight on the Beaches" – Winston Churchill
- "Women's Rights are Human Rights" – Hillary Clinton
- "Yes We Can" – Barack Obama
- "Address to the Nation on the Challenger" – Ronald Reagan
- "Quit India" – Mahatma Gandhi

2. Read and Annotate:

Carefully read and annotate each speech for rhetorical devices, tone, and appeals.

Identify:

- Purpose and audience

- Appeals to ethos, pathos, and logos
- Use of diction, figurative language, syntax, and structure

3. Write a Comparative Essay:

Write a 1000–1300 word essay (3–5 pages, double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12 pt) that:

- Briefly summarizes the context and purpose of each speech.
- Analyzes the rhetorical strategies used in each.
- Compares and contrasts how each speaker's rhetorical approach affects the audience.
- Evaluates the overall effectiveness of the rhetoric in achieving each speech's goals.

Use direct textual evidence (quotations) to support your analysis.

4. Formatting Requirements:

- MLA format
- Works Cited page (include speeches and any secondary sources)
- Proofread for grammar, spelling, etc.

Rubric

Category		Criteria
Analysis of Rhetorical Devices	10	Insightful identification and analysis of rhetorical devices and appeals
Comparative Insight	10	Thoughtful comparison and contrast of rhetorical strategies and their impact
Use of Evidence	5	Effectively integrates and explains quotes from both speeches
Organization and Clarity	5	Logical structure, clear thesis, effective transitions, coherent argument
Grammar and Conventions	3	Grammar, punctuation, spelling, and formatting are correct
MLA Format & Citations	2	Correct in-text citations and Works Cited page
Discussion/presentation	15	Must participate and show understanding

Turn in a printed copy on Google Classroom. A copy will also be put in Turnitin.com.

Work will be checked for plagiarism. Any academic dishonesty will not be tolerated.

Work must be original. Be prepared to discuss your speeches and analysis in class.

We will have at least one day of discussion and presentation of work. You must show understanding of your material.