

Ethos, Pathos, and Logos in Speeches

Ethos Examples:

1. Barack Obama

"I will end this war in Iraq responsibly, and finish the fight against al Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan. I will rebuild our military to meet future conflicts. But I will also renew the tough, direct diplomacy that can prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons and curb Russian aggression.

"I will build new partnerships to defeat the threats of the 21st century: terrorism and nuclear proliferation; poverty and genocide; climate change and disease. And I will restore our moral standing so that America is once again that last, best hope for all who are called to the cause of freedom, who long for lives of peace, and who yearn for a better future."

In his speech in 2008, Barack Obama couldn't be any more transparent in his use of ethos. He said, "I will restore our moral standing" as a free, yet powerful, nation. Most people want to be on the "right side of history" and fight a noble war, if a war must be fought at all. And that's precisely what Obama tries to hone in on in this speech.

2. Ronald Reagan

"I hope we once again have reminded people that man is not free unless government is limited. There's a clear cause and effect here that is as neat and predictable as a law of physics: As government expands, liberty contracts."

In Ronald Reagan's farewell address to the nation in 1989, he made an appeal using ethos. It's one thing to make a statement that knocks on morality's door. It's another thing to make a sound argument, relying heavily upon the people's moral code.

Few things in life are more important than freedom. It's the foundation upon which America was built. Before he left the Oval Office, Reagan made one final appeal. He encouraged government leaders not to overstep their bounds because, if they did, it would be detrimental to the people's right to liberty.

Pathos Examples:

1. I Have a Dream

“Five score years ago a great American in whose symbolic shadow we stand today signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This momentous decree is a great beacon light of hope it millions of Negro slaves who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice. It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of their captivity. But 100 years later the Negro still is not free.”

Logos Examples:

1. Susan B. Anthony

It was we, the people; not we, the white male citizens; nor yet we, the male citizens; but we, the whole people, who formed the Union. And we formed it, not to give the blessings of liberty, but to secure them; not to the half of ourselves and the half of our posterity, but to the whole people - women as well as men. And it is a downright mockery to talk to women of their enjoyment of the blessings of liberty while they are denied the use of the only means of securing them provided by this democratic-republican government - the ballot.

Susan B. Anthony came right out of the gate with it. It's plainly written in the Constitution that we "the people," not we "white males" have certain inalienable rights. Just like Shakespeare's character in *The Merchant of Venice*, logic can be applied simply by taking words at their literal, face value. How could that be refuted?

The Constitution sure does say "we the people," not "we the men." Anthony then goes on to use forceful language. "It is a downright mockery to talk to women of their enjoyment of the blessings of liberty while they are denied the use of the only means of securing them." Indeed, Anthony had a leg to stand on and she used it well.

2. Donald Trump

So here are just a few statistics on the human toll of illegal immigration. According to a 2011 government report, the arrests attached to the criminal alien population included an estimated 25,000 people for homicide, 42,000 for robbery, nearly 70,000 for sex offenses, and nearly 15,000 for kidnapping. In Texas alone, within the last seven years, more than a quarter-million criminal aliens have been arrested and charged with over 600,000 criminal offenses. ... Sixty-three thousand Americans since 9/11 have been killed by illegal aliens. This isn't a problem that's going away; it's getting bigger.

President Trump repeatedly tries to apply logic to his defense for a border wall between Mexico and the United States. He cites a statistic which states 63,000 Americans have been killed by illegal immigrants since the 9/11.

This statistic is meant to draw a straight, logical line between the crimes against Americans and the need for a border wall. Here's where the waters get murky. Liberal media outlets refute this statistic, citing it as faulty. Meanwhile, one of the biggest conservative news outlets says the number of illegal immigrants that have entered the US may be much higher than what's reported.

It kind of makes you think about George Orwell, doesn't it? There's no denying President Trump was applying logic to his argument. (Perhaps there was a little bit of an emotional appeal in there too.) However, some would say this is almost like Orwell's two plus two equals five example. Does truth reign in politics?