

Grades 9–10 Playlist: Author's use of Rhetoric

Aligns with CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.6:

- Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how an author uses rhetoric to advance that point of view or purpose.

Welcome

Writers use **rhetoric** when attempting to persuade readers to agree with a particular perspective on an issue or topic. Rhetoric refers to the way a writer goes about conveying a persuasive message. Rhetoric can be broken into three different categories: ethos, pathos, and logos. Each of these is a different approach to persuasion. Identifying these types of rhetoric in a text helps readers better understand the author's argument.

Objectives

In this playlist, students will learn how to:

- determine an author's purpose.
- identify instances of rhetoric.
- analyze how an author uses rhetoric to accomplish his or her purpose.

Review

Key Terms

- **Rhetoric** is the way in which a writer tries to persuade readers to agree with his or her perspective on a topic or idea.

Exploring the Standard

When reading a persuasive text, it is important to first identify the author's purpose. What is he or she trying to argue? What does he or she want the reader to believe or do? Next, the reader should determine how the author attempts to persuade the audience. What rhetoric does he or she use? Does the author appeal to the reader through logic (**logos**)? Is the author more interested in an emotional appeal (**pathos**)? Or does the author attempt to show his or her expertise (**ethos**)? Often, writers use more than one type of rhetoric to persuade a reader. Understanding how the author goes about presenting his or her perspective on a topic or idea will help the reader more effectively evaluate the author's claims.

A Closer Look: Determining the Author's Purpose

Persuasive texts intend to convince the reader to agree with the author's point of view on a particular topic or idea. When reading a persuasive text for the first time, focus on identifying the author's purpose. What does the author want the reader to think after reading the text? Look for strong statements, emotional words and phrases, facts and statistics, and author statements about credentials and opinions in order to determine the writer's perspective.



Example 1

In *Democracy in America*, a French author named Alexis de Tocqueville writes about his observations of American society and politics in the 1800s. Read the following excerpt from Chapter 3 of *Democracy in America*, entitled “Social Conditions of the Anglo-Americans.” What is the author’s purpose in this excerpt? What sentences help to show this purpose?

¹Many important observations suggest themselves upon the social condition of the Anglo-Americans, but there is one which takes precedence of all the rest. The social condition of the Americans is eminently democratic; this was its character at the foundation of the Colonies, and is still more strongly marked at the present day...

²[The] law of descent was the last step to equality. I am surprised that ancient and modern jurists have not attributed to this law a greater influence on human affairs... (I understand by the law of descent all those laws whose principal object is to regulate the distribution of property after the death of its owner.) [...]

³When the law of inheritance permits, still more when it decrees, the equal division of a father’s property amongst all his children, its effects are of two kinds: it is important to distinguish them from each other, although they tend to the same end.

⁴In virtue of the law of partible inheritance, the death of every proprietor brings about a kind of revolution in property; not only do his possessions change hands, but their very nature is altered, since they are parcelled into shares, which become smaller and smaller at each division. This is the direct and, as it were, the physical effect of the law. It follows, then, that in countries where equality of inheritance is established by law, property, and especially landed property, must have a tendency to perpetual diminution. The effects, however, of such legislation would only be perceptible after a lapse of time, if the law was abandoned to its own working; for supposing the family to consist of two children (and in a country people as France is the average number is not above three), these children, sharing amongst them the fortune of both parents, would not be poorer than their father or mother.

⁵But the law of equal division exercises its influence not merely upon the property itself, but it affects the minds of the heirs, and brings their passions into play. These indirect consequences tend powerfully to the destruction of large fortunes, and especially of large domains. Among nations whose law of descent is founded upon the right of primogeniture landed estates often pass from generation to generation without undergoing division, the consequence of which is that family feeling is to a certain degree incorporated with the estate. The family represents the estate, the estate the family; whose name, together with its origin, its glory, its power, and its virtues, is thus perpetuated in an imperishable memorial of the past and a sure pledge of the future.

⁶When the equal partition of property is established by law, the intimate connection is destroyed between family feeling and the preservation of the paternal estate; the property ceases to represent the family; for as it must inevitably be divided after one or two generations, it has evidently a constant tendency to diminish, and must in the end be completely dispersed. The sons of the great landed proprietor, if they are few in number, or if fortune befriends them, may indeed entertain the hope of being as wealthy as their father, but not that of possessing the same property as he did; the riches must necessarily be composed of elements different from his.



⁷Now, from the moment that you divest the landowner of that interest in the preservation of his estate which he derives from association, from tradition, and from family pride, you may be certain that sooner or later he will dispose of it; for there is a strong pecuniary interest in favor of selling, as floating capital produces higher interest than real property, and is more readily available to gratify the passions of the moment...

⁸Most certainly it is not for us, Frenchmen of the nineteenth century, who daily witness the political and social changes which the law of partition is bringing to pass, to question its influence. It is perpetually conspicuous in our country, overthrowing the walls of our dwellings and removing the landmarks of our fields. But although it has produced great effects in France, much still remains for it to do. Our recollections, opinions, and habits present powerful obstacles to its progress.

⁹In the United States it has nearly completed its work of destruction, and there we can best study its results.

This excerpt focuses on laws about how property is passed from one generation to the next. De Tocqueville's point of view of these laws is evident near the beginning of the excerpt: "[The] law of descent was the last step to equality." He believes that the law of descent in America was a major cause of its democracy. He goes on to explain two effects of the law to support his argument. His point of view is confirmed in the very last sentence of the excerpt, where he claims that aristocracy has been nearly destroyed by certain laws of descent.

De Tocqueville's purpose in this excerpt is to convince readers that his point of view is valid. Therefore, his goal is to persuade readers that America's laws about inheriting property have created a more democratic society.

Practice!

Complete this quiz to identify the author's purpose and point of view in a famous speech from U.S. history.

- <https://www.opened.com/assessment/author-s-point-of-view-and-purpose-in-texts/1074036>

A Closer Look: Ethos, Pathos, Logos

There are three different kinds of rhetorical approaches that writers can use in persuasive texts: an appeal through **ethos**, an appeal through **pathos**, and an appeal through **logos**.

- **Ethos** has to do with trustworthiness. To connect with a reader through ethos, an author attempts to prove that he or she is an authority on a topic and is someone worth trusting. For example, an author may state his or her credentials or explain why he or she is qualified to talk about a particular topic or idea.
- When an author uses an appeal through **pathos**, he or she attempts to get the reader to understand his or her perspective by using language that is emotionally charged. The author wants to make the reader feel something.



- An appeal through **logos** is an appeal to logic or reasoning. When an author uses this type of rhetorical approach, he or she often includes facts and statistics. An author may also connect facts through logical thinking and reasoning. Appeals through logos do not contain emotional language because they are meant to appeal to the reader's intellect rather than the reader's emotions.

Watch!

Watch this animated video to learn more about the three categories of rhetoric:

- <http://ed.ted.com/lessons/what-aristotle-and-joshua-bell-can-teach-us-about-persuasion-conor-neill>

In the excerpt from *Democracy in America* given in Example 1 above, de Tocqueville uses a variety of rhetorical approaches to persuade his audience. By combining ethos, pathos, and logos, de Tocqueville makes his argument more convincing.

- **Ethos:** In the excerpt below, the author refers to his own experience with the law of partition (which is a type of law of descent). The phrases “daily witness” and “perpetually conspicuous” show that the author himself has seen effects of the law in his own country. Since this law is directly relevant to the point de Tocqueville is making about democracy, his insistence that he has experience with it is a rhetorical appeal through ethos.

Most certainly it is not for *us*, Frenchmen of the nineteenth century, who *daily witness* the political and social changes that the law of partition is bringing to pass, to question its influence. *It is perpetually conspicuous in our country*, overthrowing the walls of our dwellings and removing the landmarks of our fields.

- **Pathos:** The excerpt below contains language that is meant to evoke emotions, so it is an example of a rhetorical appeal through pathos. The phrase “intimate connection is destroyed” emphasizes the powerful effect of the law of descent on a family's property. The image of destruction mirrors the phrase de Tocqueville uses later in the chapter to describe the law: “its work of destruction.”

When the equal partition of property is established by law, *the intimate connection is destroyed* between family feeling and the preservation of the paternal estate;

- **Logos:** In the excerpt below, the author states a fact: that under America's law of descent, property is divided into pieces. This fact can be confirmed by outside sources such as legal documents. The author also uses logical reasoning to describe an effect of this policy. The phrase “It follows, then” signals this logical conclusion.

[His possessions] are parcelled into shares, which become smaller and smaller at each division. This is the direct and, as it were, the physical effect of the law. *It follows, then*, that in countries where equality of inheritance is established by law, property, and especially landed property, must have a tendency to perpetual diminution.



Read!

For more information on how to use rhetoric when writing a persuasive essay, visit this website:

- <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/588/04/>

Applying the Standard

Using the information in this playlist about how writers use rhetoric in order to convey their point of view and purpose, write a short persuasive essay using all three forms of rhetoric. For a list of possible topics, visit this site:

- <http://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/02/05/301-prompts-for-argumentative-writing/>

Work with a partner to analyze a famous speech from U.S. history. Discuss the following questions:

- What is the author's point of view and purpose?
- How does the author use rhetoric to persuade the audience?
- Are there any specific examples of ethos, pathos, and logos?

Visit this website for a list of speeches:

- <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/top100speechesall.html>



Self-Check: RI.9-10.6

Read the passage. Then answer the questions.

“Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death”

Patrick Henry

- 1 No man thinks more highly than I do of the patriotism, as well as abilities, of the very worthy gentlemen who have just addressed the House. But different men often see the same subject in different lights; and, therefore, I hope it will not be thought disrespectful to those gentlemen if, entertaining as I do opinions of a character very opposite to theirs, I shall speak forth my sentiments freely and without reserve. This is no time for ceremony. The question before the House is one of awful moment to this country. For my own part, I consider it as nothing less than a question of freedom or slavery; and in proportion to the magnitude of the subject ought to be the freedom of the debate. It is only in this way that we can hope to arrive at truth, and fulfill the great responsibility which we hold to God and our country. Should I keep back my opinions at such a time, through fear of giving offense, I should consider myself as guilty of treason towards my country, and of an act of disloyalty toward the Majesty of Heaven, which I revere above all earthly kings.
- 2 Mr. President, it is natural to man to indulge in the illusions of hope. We are apt to shut our eyes against a painful truth, and listen to the song of that siren till she transforms us into beasts. Is this the part of wise men, engaged in a great and arduous struggle for liberty? Are we disposed to be of the number of those who, having eyes, see not, and, having ears, hear not, the things which so nearly concern their temporal salvation? For my part, whatever anguish of spirit it may cost, I am willing to know the whole truth; to know the worst, and to provide for it.
- 3 I have but one lamp by which my feet are guided, and that is the lamp of experience. I know of no way of judging of the future but by the past. And judging by the past, I wish to know what there has been in the conduct of the British ministry for the last ten years to justify those hopes with which gentlemen have been pleased to solace themselves and the House. Is it that insidious smile with which our petition has been lately received? Trust it not, sir; it will prove a snare to your feet. Suffer not yourselves to be betrayed with a kiss. Ask yourselves how this gracious reception of our petition comports with those warlike preparations which cover our waters and darken our land. Are fleets and armies necessary to a work of love and reconciliation? Have we shown ourselves so unwilling to be reconciled that force must be called in to win back our love? Let us not deceive ourselves, sir. These are the implements of war and subjugation; the last arguments to which kings resort. I ask gentlemen, sir, what means this martial array, if its purpose be not to force us to submission? Can gentlemen assign any other possible motive for it? Has Great Britain any enemy, in this quarter of the world, to call for all this accumulation of navies and armies? No, sir, she has none. They are meant for us: they can be meant for no other. They are sent over to bind and rivet upon us those chains which the British ministry have been so long forging. And what have we to oppose to them? Shall we try argument? Sir, we have been trying that for the last ten years. Have we anything new to offer upon the subject? Nothing. We have held the subject up in every light of which it is capable; but it has been all in vain. Shall we resort to entreaty and humble supplication? What terms shall we find which have not been already exhausted? Let us not, I beseech you, sir, deceive ourselves. Sir, we have done everything that could be done to avert the storm which is now coming on. We have petitioned; we have remonstrated; we have supplicated; we have prostrated ourselves before the throne, and have implored its interposition to arrest the tyrannical hands of the ministry and Parliament. Our



petitions have been slighted; our remonstrances have produced additional violence and insult; our supplications have been disregarded; and we have been spurned, with contempt, from the foot of the throne! In vain, after these things, may we indulge the fond hope of peace and reconciliation. There is no longer any room for hope. If we wish to be free—if we mean to preserve inviolate those inestimable privileges for which we have been so long contending—if we mean not basely to abandon the noble struggle in which we have been so long engaged, and which we have pledged ourselves never to abandon until the glorious object of our contest shall be obtained—we must fight! I repeat it, sir, we must fight! An appeal to arms and to the God of hosts is all that is left us!

- 4 They tell us, sir, that we are weak; unable to cope with so formidable an adversary. But when shall we be stronger? Will it be the next week, or the next year? Will it be when we are totally disarmed, and when a British guard shall be stationed in every house? Shall we gather strength by irresolution and inaction? Shall we acquire the means of effectual resistance by lying supinely on our backs and hugging the delusive phantom of hope, until our enemies shall have bound us hand and foot? Sir, we are not weak if we make a proper use of those means which the God of nature hath placed in our power. The millions of people, armed in the holy cause of liberty, and in such a country as that which we possess, are invincible by any force which our enemy can send against us. Besides, sir, we shall not fight our battles alone. There is a just God who presides over the destinies of nations, and who will raise up friends to fight our battles for us. The battle, sir, is not to the strong alone; it is to the vigilant, the active, the brave. Besides, sir, we have no election. If we were base enough to desire it, it is now too late to retire from the contest. There is no retreat but in submission and slavery! Our chains are forged! Their clanking may be heard on the plains of Boston! The war is inevitable—and let it come! I repeat it, sir, let it come.
- 5 It is in vain, sir, to extenuate the matter. Gentlemen may cry, Peace, Peace—but there is no peace. The war is actually begun! The next gale that sweeps from the north will bring to our ears the clash of resounding arms! Our brethren are already in the field! Why stand we here idle? What is it that gentlemen wish? What would they have? Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!

1. Refer to “Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death.”

Which details from the passage show Henry’s point of view towards the other congressmen? Select all the correct options.

- A. “No man thinks more highly than I do of the patriotism, as well as abilities, of the very worthy gentlemen who have just addressed the House.”
- B. “The question before the House is one of awful moment to this country.”
- C. “Our brethren are already in the field! Why stand we here idle? What is it that gentlemen wish?”
- D. “They tell us, sir, that we are weak; unable to cope with so formidable an adversary.”
- E. “Gentlemen may cry, Peace, Peace—but there is no peace.”



2. Part-A

Refer to “Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death.”

Which statement **best** describes the author’s purpose for making this speech?

- A. to inform congressmen about the British navy
- B. to persuade congressmen to wage war against the British rulers
- C. to describe the colonists’ problems with the British to the congressmen
- D. to entertain congressmen with stories of past interactions with the British king

Part-B

Which of the following underlined statements **best** supports your answer in Part A?

I ask gentlemen, sir, what means this martial array, if its purpose be not to force us to submission? Can gentlemen assign any other possible motive for it? Has Great Britain any enemy, in this quarter of the world, to call for all this accumulation of navies and armies? No, sir, she has none. They are meant for us: they can be meant for no other. They are sent over to bind and rivet upon us those chains which the British ministry have been so long forging. And what have we to oppose to them? Shall we try argument? Sir, we have been trying that for the last ten years. Have we anything new to offer upon the subject? Nothing. We have held the subject up in every light of which it is capable; but it has been all in vain. Shall we resort to entreaty and humble supplication? What terms shall we find which have not been already exhausted? Let us not, I beseech you, sir, deceive ourselves....In vain, after these things, may we indulge the fond hope of peace and reconciliation. There is no longer any room for hope. If we wish to be free—if we mean to preserve inviolate those inestimable privileges for which we have been so long contending—if we mean not basely to abandon the noble struggle in which we have been so long engaged, and which we have pledged ourselves never to abandon until the glorious object of our contest shall be obtained—we must fight!

- A. “Has Great Britain any enemy, in this quarter of the world, to call for all this accumulation of navies and armies?”
- B. “Sir, we have been trying that for the last ten years. Have we anything new to offer upon the subject?”
- C. “What terms shall we find which have not been already exhausted?”
- D. “If we wish to be free—if we mean to preserve inviolate those inestimable privileges for which we have been so long contending—if we mean not basely to abandon the noble struggle in which we have been so long engaged, and which we have pledged ourselves never to abandon until the glorious object of our contest shall be obtained—we must fight!”



Read the passage. Then answer the question.

Excerpt from *Harriet: The Moses of Her People*
Sarah H. Bradford

This is an excerpt from an 1886 biography of Harriet Tubman, starting with her life as a child. This biography provides accounts of Harriet Tubman from various witnesses.

- 1 “When Harriet was six years old, she was taken from her mother and carried ten miles to live with James Cook, whose wife was a weaver, to learn the trade of weaving. While still a mere child, Cook set her to watching his musk-rat traps, which compelled her to wade through the water. It happened that she was once sent when she was ill with the measles, and, taking cold from wading in the water in this condition, she grew very sick, and her mother persuaded her master to take her away from Cook’s until she could get well.
- 2 “Another attempt was made to teach her weaving, but she would not learn, for she hated her mistress, and did not want to live at home, as she would have done as a weaver, for it was the custom then to weave the cloth for the family, or a part of it, in the house.
- 3 “Soon after she entered her teens she was hired out as a field hand, and it was while thus employed that she received a wound, which nearly proved fatal, from the effects of which she still suffers. In the fall of the year, the slaves there work in the evening, cleaning up wheat, husking corn, etc. On this occasion, one of the slaves of a farmer named Barrett, left his work, and went to the village store in the evening. The overseer followed him, and so did Harriet. When the slave was found, the overseer swore he should be whipped, and called on Harriet, among others, to help tie him. She refused, and as the man ran away, she placed herself in the door to stop pursuit. The overseer caught up a two-pound weight from the counter and threw it at the fugitive, but it fell short and struck Harriet a stunning blow on the head. It was long before she recovered from this, and it has left her subject to a sort of stupor or lethargy at times; coming upon her in the midst of conversation, or whatever she may be doing, and throwing her into a deep slumber, from which she will presently rouse herself, and go on with her conversation or work.
- 4 “After this she lived for five or six years with John Stewart, where at first she worked in the house, but afterward ‘hired her time,’ and Dr. Thompson, son of her master’s guardian, ‘stood for her,’ that is, was her surety for the payment of what she owed. She employed the time thus hired in the rudest labors,—drove oxen, carted, plowed, and did all the work of a man,—sometimes earning money enough in a year, beyond what she paid her master, ‘to buy a pair of steers,’ worth forty dollars. The amount exacted of a woman for her time was fifty or sixty dollars—of a man, one hundred to one hundred and fifty dollars. Frequently Harriet worked for her father, who was a timber inspector, and superintended the cutting and hauling of great quantities of timber for the Baltimore ship-yards. Stewart, his temporary master, was a builder, and for the work of Ross used to receive as much as five dollars a day sometimes, he being a superior workman. While engaged with her father, she would cut wood, haul logs, etc. Her usual ‘stint’ was half a cord of wood in a day.
- 5 “Harriet was married somewhere about 1844, to a free colored man named John Tubman, but she had no children. For the last two years of slavery she lived with Dr. Thompson, before mentioned, her own master not being yet of age, and Dr. T.’s father being his guardian, as well as the owner of her own father. In 1849 the young man died, and the slaves were to be sold, though previously set free by an old will. Harriet resolved not to be



sold, and so, with no knowledge of the North—having only heard of Pennsylvania and New Jersey—she walked away one night alone. She found a friend in a white lady, who knew her story and helped her on her way. After many adventures, she reached Philadelphia, where she found work and earned a small stock of money. With this money in her purse, she traveled back to Maryland for her husband, but she found him married to another woman, and no longer caring to live with her. This, however, was not until two years after her escape, for she does not seem to have reached her old home in the first two expeditions. In December, 1850, she had visited Baltimore and brought away her sister and two children, who had come up from Cambridge in a boat, under charge of her sister's husband, a free black. A few months after she had brought away her brother and two other men, but it was not till the fall of 1851, that she found her husband and learned of his infidelity. She did not give way to rage or grief, but collected a party of fugitives and brought them safely to Philadelphia. In December of the same year, she returned, and led out a party of eleven, among them her brother and his wife. With these she journeyed to Canada, and there spent the winter, for this was after the enforcement of Mason's Fugitive Slave Bill in Philadelphia and Boston, and there was no safety except 'under the paw of the British Lion,' as she quaintly said. But the first winter was terribly severe for these poor runaways. They earned their bread by chopping wood in the snows of a Canadian forest; they were frost-bitten, hungry, and naked. Harriet was their good angel. She kept house for her brother, and the poor creatures boarded with her. She worked for them, begged for them, prayed for them, with the strange familiarity of communion with God which seems natural to these people, and carried them by the help of God through the hard winter.

6 "In the spring she returned to the States, and as usual earned money by working in hotels and families as a cook. From Cape May, in the fall of 1852, she went back once more to Maryland, and brought away nine more fugitives.

7 "Up to this time she had expended chiefly her own money in these expeditions—money which she had earned by hard work in the drudgery of the kitchen. Never did any one more exactly fulfill the sense of George Herbert—

"A servant with this clause
Makes drudgery divine."

8 "But it was not possible for such virtues long to remain hidden from the keen eyes of the Abolitionists. She became known to Thomas Garrett, the large-hearted Quaker of Wilmington, who has aided the escape of three thousand fugitives; she found warm friends in Philadelphia and New York, and wherever she went. These gave her money, which he never spent for her own use, but laid up for the help of her people, and especially for her journeys back to the 'land of Egypt,' as she called her old home. By reason of her frequent visits there, always carrying away some of the oppressed, she got among her people the name of 'Moses,' which it seems she still retains.

9 "Between 1852 and 1857, she made but two of these journeys, in consequence partly of the increased vigilance of the slave-holders, who had suffered so much by the loss of their property. A great reward was offered for her capture and she several times was on the point of being taken, but always escaped by her quick wit, or by 'warnings' from Heaven—for it is time to notice one singular trait in her character. She is the most shrewd and practical person in the world, yet she is a firm believer in omens, dreams, and warnings. She declares that before her escape from slavery, she used to dream of flying over fields and towns, and rivers and mountains, looking



down upon them ‘like a bird,’ and reaching at last a great fence, or sometimes a river, over which she would try to fly, ‘but it ‘peared like I wouldn’t hab de strength, and jes as I was sinkin’ down, dere would be ladies all drest in white ober dere, and dey would put out dere arms and pull me ‘cross.’ There is nothing strange in this, perhaps, but she declares that when she came North she remembered these very places as those she had seen in her dreams, and many of the ladies who befriended her were those she had been helped by in her vision.

...

3. Read the following sentences from paragraph 5.

“But the first winter was terribly severe for these poor runaways. They earned their bread by chopping wood in the snows of a Canadian forest; they were frost-bitten, hungry, and naked. Harriet was their good angel. She kept house for her brother, and the poor creatures boarded with her. She worked for them, begged for them, prayed for them, with the strange familiarity of communion with God which seems natural to these people, and carried them by the help of God through the hard winter.”

How do the sentences use rhetoric to advance the author’s point of view? Select all the correct options.

- A. by using a metaphor to suggest that Harriet had outstanding virtue
- B. by criticizing the runaway slaves to make Harriet seem more appealing
- C. by addressing readers directly to develop a connection with the audience
- D. by repeating the phrase “for them” to emphasize Harriet’s attention to others
- E. by using understatement to downplay the impact that Harriet had on people’s lives

