

PATRICK HENRY'S SPEECH TO THE VIRGINIA CONVENTION – Paragraphs 1 & 2

In the space provided at the right margin, indicate all of the examples of persuasion/appeals (logos, ethos, pathos) being used by Henry, explain how he's using it, and for what purpose. For instance, when you see an allusion to the Bible, explain what is being compared in that allusion and why he uses it (see example below). Where he uses parallel structure, what effect does it have? Where he uses particularly powerful words/phrases, what effect do they have? The paragraphs have been numbered for you.

St. John's Church, Richmond, Virginia

March 23, 1775

RHETORICAL CHOICES

¹¹ MR. PRESIDENT: 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 ¹question of freedom or slavery; and in proportion to the magnitude of the subject ought to be the freedom of ²the 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 offence, I should consider myself as guilty of treason towards my country, and of an act of disloyalty toward the ³majesty of heaven, which I revere above all earthly kings.

¹² 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 ¹listen to the song of that siren till she transforms us into beasts. ²Is this the part of wise men, engaged in a great and arduous struggle for liberty? ²Are we disposed to be of the number of those who, ³having 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

Metaphor(s)

1. **"question of freedom or slavery"** – British rule = form of enslavement; we must consider our current circumstances just as extreme, especially if we do not act soon

2. **to debate** = to arrive at truth, but to ignore = treason & disloyalty ("great responsibility we have to God and country") - We can't be disloyal to God's plan for us; His plan = the responsibility we have to our country; therefore, we must debate this issue now

3. **"majesty in heaven"** – God is ruler of men, *not* King George III

Diction/Syntax

Opposites and contrasts:

Patriotism / treason

Freedom / slavery

Fulfill responsibility / disloyalty

Majesty in heaven / earthly kings

Hold back / speak freely

Suggests:

Freedom = God's plan

Tyranny = slavery

Either / or choices

Christian devotion

¹**allusion to *The Odyssey*** – sirens sing a song so irresistible that none can hear it and escape. Henry warns that there is danger in ignoring the truth and holding onto hope. (appeal to **logos**)

²**rhetorical questions** – grabs their attention with the questions and then gives his personal answer that as a **wise man**, he's willing to pay any cost. (appeal to **ethos**)

³**Biblical allusion** – a reference in Ezekiel 12:2 to foolish and senseless people; makes colonists **feel** as though God is on their side. (appeal to **pathos**)