

Gettysburg Address: Analysis of Literary and Rhetorical Devices

Directions: Follow the first four steps below for each of the excerpts, then complete step five.

Steps

1. Identify: Identify the example and type of literary device(s) used
2. Examine: Break down the pieces of the literary device and write a sentence explaining the parts
3. Analysis: Assess the device used by asking the following questions:
 - Why did the author use this particular device?
 - How effective is the use of this device as it relates to the particular topic the author is writing about?
4. Explanation (As a wrap to each device): Put all of the information above into an explanation of how an author effectively structures a text to convey a message/theme. The explanation should include words from the definition and an explanation as to why that device was used.
5. Summary Explanation of the Text as a Whole

Text

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Sample

1. Identify: Anchoring, “Four Score and seven years ago” and “all men are created equal”
Lincoln brings the audience back 87 years (score is 20 years and also a reference to biblical text) to the signing of the *Declaration of Independence* and then uses the famous line contained in it “*We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal*”
2. Examine: Lincoln makes two irrefutable statements that his audience will know are true with the hope that they will believe the rest of what he is saying
3. Analyze: Lincoln is structuring the beginning this way in order to remind the audience what principles have always been and are still important to remember, even at an event that pays respect to the men that fought and died at Gettysburg
4. Explain: When Lincoln uses the two facts that all members of the audience can agree upon, whether or not they agree or disagree with the war, he establishes a reason for the audience to trust that what he will have to say in the rest of the speech will be true as well. By pulling actual words from the *Declaration of Independence* and referring to the writing of the document 87 years prior, Lincoln focuses the audience on the basic principle the Founding Fathers fought for.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation or any nation so conceived and so dedicated can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting-place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

1. Identify:

2. Examine:

3. Analyze:

4. Explain:

But in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead who struggled here have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain, that this nation under God shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth.

1. Identify:

2. Examine:

3. Analyze:

4. Explain:

Putting it all together:

Write one summary explanation that discusses the structure of the Gettysburg Address, how effectively Lincoln employed literary and rhetorical devices, and why this address is considered one of the most important addresses in American history.

Now that you know about the devices employed, how different is your first summary of the Address from the one above? Why do those differences matter?