

ETHOS, LOGOS, AND PATHOS

This paper was written in response to the following prompt: Analyze King Richard's "Oration to His Army" for examples of logos, ethos, and pathos. Compare the first speech with the King Richard's "Oration to His Soldiers." Which of the two speeches is the most convincing?

In King Richard III's oration to his army, King Richard utilizes ethos, logos, and pathos, emphasizing pathos in particular, in order to inspire his soldiers before battle and to arouse a passion that would make the men fight harder. King Richard maintains an infuriated and enthusiastic tone throughout his speech which, serves to motivate and rile up his army. As he begins his speech, he refers to the enemy as, "A sort of vagabonds, rascals, and runaways, a scum of Bretons, and base lackey peasants."* This phrase elevates his own status and integrity by discrediting the opposition, through the use of harsh words such as "vagabonds" and "scum", while also serving to set the enraged tone of the speech, which ultimately appeals to the emotion of the soldiers by inflaming them. Through the next part of the speech, King Richard persistently bashes the enemy, calling them "famish'd beggars", "poor rats", "stragglers", and "bastard Bretons", each insult adding ethos and pathos in the same manner as before. Afterwards, King Richard further motivates his men by making an appeal to logic, stating that his men must fight to preserve their lands and wives or the enemy will "restrain the one, distain the other." This statement strongly implies that the soldiers have no choice but to fight, in order to protect what is theirs. King Richard then returned to his use of ethos and pathos. King Richard calls their leader "a paltry fellow" that "never in his life felt so much cold as over shoes in snow", revealing Richmond's cowardice. Insulting the enemy's leader not only makes King Richard's cause more credible, but it also encourages the troops who would have been eager to fight a group of feeble men. In the final lines of the speech, King Richard appealed to all three components of rhetoric, while also heightening his enraged tone. He first recites history, reminding his army how their ancestors "beaten, bobb'd, and thump'd and

in record, left [the enemy] the heirs of shame.” He then concludes the speech by asking his men, “Shall these enjoy our lands? lie with our wives? Ravish our daughters?” These final words appeal to logic because if their ancestors beat the enemy in battle, so will they. In addition, King Richard appears even more credible because his ancestors fought for this same country in previous battles. Most importantly though, the final three rhetoric questions King Richard asks focus on ethos. The thought of the enemy taking their land and defiling their family paints a vivid and infuriating picture in his soldiers’ minds. The word “Ravish” matches the tone of the speech perfectly and evokes anger towards the enemy. By the end of the speech, King Richard has appealed to logos, ethos, but most importantly, pathos. As a result, his army would be filled with fury and motivation, ready to fight with passion. This is the exact response any general would hope for right before battle.

In Richmond’s oration to his soldiers, he is also faced with the task of preparing his army for battle. Richmond, unlike King Richard III, emphasizes logos and lacks a strong appeal to emotion. Consequently, Richmond’s speech, while logically sound, was not as effective in inspiring the soldiers. To begin, Richmond says, “God and our good cause fight upon our side.” He continues to talk about the support within them, claiming that “The prayers of holy saints and wronged souls, Like high-rear’d bulwarks, stand before our faces.” While this may logically convince the men that they should fight this battle, Richmond’s tone lacks the energy and the emotional appeal that King Richard achieved. Richmond then shifts to take an approach similar to King Richard’s, Richard is attempting to discredit the enemy and appeal to ethos. Richmond calls the King, “A blood tyrant and a homicide; One raised in blood, and one in blood establish’d.” Following these insults, Richmond makes the logical argument that King Richard is God’s enemy thus, if you fight God’s enemy, God will protect you. Once again, even though Richmond uses ethos and logos to convince his men that they have God’s favor and will be protected, he fails to use a word choice that energizes and enrages his men. While King Richard referred to the enemy in harsh terms, including “scum”, “vagabonds”, and “bastards”, Richmond merely labeled his opposition as “God’s enemy.” This same pattern continues

as Richmond's speech progresses. He makes another logical argument, "If you do fight in safeguard of your wives, Your wives shall welcome home the conquerors; If you do free your children from the sword, Your children's children quit it in your age," but fails to appeal to pathos in the way King Richard did. King Richard was able to inspire passion and rage by describing the awful things the enemy would do to the soldier's families, rather than simply describing the soldiers' families back home as supportive. Finally, to end the speech, Richmond cheered on his men as he urged them to march. While these final lines may have had some appeal to the emotions of the soldiers and even uplifted their spirits, these feelings still pale in comparison to the rage and infuriation King Richard created in his army. When men have feelings of rage, they tend to fight with more passion. King Richard's ability to appeal to pathos allowed him to give the better speech. Subsequently, King Richard's speech was more compelling and energizing, the exact outcome a general should hope to achieve from a pre-battle speech.

Although all three components of rhetoric: pathos, logos, and ethos are useful in creating a compelling and convincing argument, different appeals may be more effective depending on the setting and desired outcome. For example, in a presidential election, candidates are attempting to win votes of educated citizens by appearing to be the best leader with the best policies. The best way to convince people of this is through ethos and logos, the two most common aspects of rhetoric used by actual presidential candidates. In the instance of King Richard and Richmond's speeches, they are both preparing an army for war. The best way to do so, unlike in a presidential election, is by invigorating their soldiers to make them fight with passion. Pathos, appealing to emotion, is the best way to truly invigorate and inspire a soldier. While logos and ethos contributed to King Richard's cause, pathos is ultimately what made his speech more convincing than Richmond's speech. In order to make the most convincing speech or piece of writing, it is important to first identify the purpose of that writing. In this case, the speeches were intended to prepare soldiers for war. Afterwards, the best method of achieving this purpose must be identified. The best way to prepare soldiers

to fight a battle is by invigorating them and inspiring passion, each of which are done best through an appeal to emotion. Finally, this method should be the component of rhetoric emphasized in the writing. However just because one scenario may require more of a certain type of rhetorical appeal than another, does not mean a speech should appeal to only one type of rhetoric. A truly persuasive speech still appeals to all three aspects of rhetoric, while also emphasizing the rhetorical component needed most, just as King Richard's speech did.

***NOTE:**

This and all subsequent reference are to: William Shakespeare, *The RSC Shakespeare: William Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, eds. Jonathan Bate, Eric Rasmussen, Heloise Senechal and Royal Shakespeare Company. (London: Macmillan, 2007).