

FYI: This student was responding to a different assignment prompt so doesn't address some of what I'm asking of you in Analysis 2. I offer it here *only* as an example of analyzing figures and ideographs. ~ ddd

Elijah Roden

Professor Davis

RHE 321

April 8, 2013

“The Perils of Indifference”

<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/ewieselperilsofindifference.html>

During World War II, over 6 million people perished during the Holocaust. Over 6 million people died when their deaths could have been prevented by an intervention to stop the bloodshed. Ultimately, the Allies did intervene. Fifty four years later, on April 12, 1999, Elie Wiesel spoke in honor of the anniversary of Franklin D. Roosevelt at the White House. In addressing the key members of the United States government, he urges the U.S. to take a prominent position in world affairs, to act on behalf of the oppressed, to avoid indifference, for indifference, he says, led to atrocities like the Holocaust.

The direct audience of his speech was President Clinton, the First Lady, and various other key members of White House Staff attending the anniversary celebration, but there was a larger, more widespread audience: the public at large. Clinton was a proactive president in terms of attempting to alleviate injustice in the international community. He worked with the Palestinians and the Israelis. He intervened in Kosovo, so it follows that he would have agreed and identified with Wiesel's arguments. The cultural context for this speech also plays an important role in how it was received. At this point in time, Clinton's administration had

intervened in the conflict in Kosovo along with a NATO coalition in order to stop the excessive use of violence by Serbian forces, and he intervened in the Bosnian conflict in Operation Deliberate Force. Therefore, the ideas of ethnic cleansing, intervention, and conflict are fresh on the minds of the audience, both direct and wide. The consequences of failing to intervene are now compared to the results of intervention, though a little late perhaps, and the comparison serves to support the argument asserted by the rhetor.

Wiesel presents a compelling case against indifference and for intervention across the world to stop injustices from occurring. In several instances, he makes rhetorical moves designed to convince the audience at large, to emphasize his point to a crescendo, or to create an image which draws emotions from those listening. When he discusses the horrors of the twentieth century, he lists them out from the two World wars to the “bloodbaths in Cambodia and Algeria, India and Pakistan, Ireland and Rwanda, Eritrea and Ethiopia, Sarajevo and Kosovo.” The *Figures* *enumeration* here highlights the repetition of tragedy, one after another, illustrating his point. *explanation of the rhetorical work being done by each of the figures*

The audience is confronted with a terrible list of atrocities to which many remained indifferent at the time. A similar function is served by his frequent use of *anaphora* and *isocolon*. When he references indifference, he says “Indifference elicits no response. Indifference is not a response. Indifference is not a beginning; it is an end.” Clearly, the structure builds to a *climax*, and ends with a succinct phrase, drawing a response from the listener. Furthermore, this sets the stage for the continuation of his argument. His use of *isocolon* in describing hate functions much the same way. “You fight it. You denounce it. You disarm it.” It continually reinforces his argument that something can be done with hate, that something productive can come of it. *The use of anaphora and isocolon build to a climax*

Wiesel also makes great use of **ideographs** to invoke those suppositions held by the society to express certain ideas and create specific associations. Positive ideographs like democracy, humanity, justice, and hope appear throughout his speech, creating associations between ideas he wishes to portray and those connotations supporting the ideographs. For example, his use of the word “democracy,” which has a positive, revered connotation in American politics as the best form of government, creates a paradoxical situation when he claims that the “greatest democracy, the most generous of all new nations” turned back a ship of one thousand Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi oppression. How would the audience reconcile this situation with their widely held views regarding democracy and generosity? That’s what drives home the message. It forces the audience to consider the problem and his solution. Negative ideographs are used even more frequently throughout the piece. Words like cruelty, injustice, inhumanity, dictatorship, fascism, communism, terrorization of children, ethnic cleansing, dark shadow, seductive, anger, and hatred were all present throughout the speech. He uses fascism, dictatorship, and Hitler to illustrate the nobility of the soldiers who were fighting them. The resulting message perceived by the audience would be that the US soldiers fighting in World War Two were as noble, as valiant as Hitler was evil, was devastating. By using all of these terms, he attempts to turn indifference into a negatively connoted phrase analogous to injustice. He claims “indifference is always the friend of the enemy, for it benefits the aggressor -- never his victim,” so by idolizing the soldiers, by demonizing -to an extent- Roosevelt for his indifference, by demonstrating all of the indifference that made the tragedy of genocide possible, his argument works to eliminate the neutrality associated with indifference.

positive
ideographs and
what work they
do in the
argument

paradox could be
unpacked better

Negative
ideographs

explanation of
how the
negative
ideographs are
used to make
the argument

Although it is difficult to see whether or not his speech properly persuaded those in power, for it would be attempting to persuade against certain types of actions which depend on situations, Elie Wiesel presents a compelling argument against indifference in foreign policy. He addresses the proper audience about a subject at a time when the government was intervening in something analogous to what he experienced. His use of rhetorical figures continually reinforced his ideas within the minds of the audience. They continually reminded the audience of the tragedies of the twentieth century, and why they should never be repeated. The ideographs he employs evoke emotions of pride and frustration, and create paradoxes which highlight the problems of the past within the audience.

Works Cited:

Work Cited

Wiesel, Elie. "American Rhetoric: The Perils of Indifference." *American Rhetoric*.

AmericanRhetoric.com, n.d. Web. 09 Apr. 2013.

www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/ewieselperilsofindifference.html