

Headteachers assembly

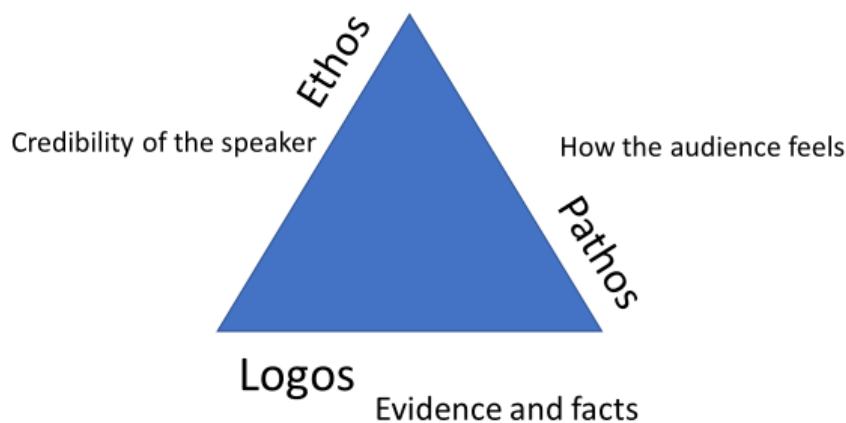
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## Rhetoric and the Art of persuasion

There have been many great public speakers in the past whose words and delivery have changed people and, in some cases, changed the course of history.

Rhetoric and public speaking has along tradition dating back 2500 years ago to Cicero. He outlined the 3 key parts of rhetoric Ethos/Pathos and Logic meaning the credibility of the speaker (Ethos), How the audience feels (Pathos) and the Evidence and Facts (Logos).

### Rhetorical Triangle



When England was facing invasion by The Spanish Armada a as yet still uncertain new Queen, Elizabeth had to rally her forces behind a female leader for the first time.

At Tilbury Docks on the Thames Estuary she spoke to the frightened English soldiers and said

*"I know I have the body of a woman; but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and a king of England too."*

She chose her words carefully, establishing her credentials (Ethos) by referencing her famous father Henry 8<sup>th</sup>.

Henry V faced similar odds before the battle of Agincourt but his words were written by Shakespeare in the subsequent play long after.

"We few, we happy few, we band of brothers.

For he that sheds his blood with me shall be my brother

And gentlemen of England now a-bed  
Shall think themselves accursed they were not here  
And hold their manhood cheap”

He employs Pathos, stirring an emotion of brotherhood in his soldiers. His credibility here is as a fellow soldier not a lofty king (Ethos). He’s one of them, equal on the battlefield.

In more modern time Barack Obama has been a consummate orator. For his victory speech in 2009 he deployed Pathos.

“Yes we can” repeated for emphasis and the allusion to a representative black woman who had gone through the civil rights movement

“She was there for the buses in Montgomery, the hoses in Birmingham., a bridge in Selma, and a preacher from Atlanta who told people “We shall overcome”

Yes we can!

But perhaps the best speech writer and one of the best speeches appears in Shakespeare’s Julius Caesar. Caesar has been assassinated for being too ambitious. Brutus addresses the mob to explain his actions and those of the other senators who killed him. He deploys Logic, sating the things that Caesar had done and the logical conclusion that they had no choice. Then Mark Antony, Caesar’s friend speaks to a hostile crowd.

Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears;  
I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him.  
The evil that men do lives after them;  
The good is oft interred with their bones;  
So let it be with Caesar. The noble Brutus  
Hath told you Caesar was ambitious:  
If it were so, it was a grievous fault,  
And grievously hath Caesar answer’d it.  
Here, under leave of Brutus and the rest—  
For Brutus is an honourable man;  
So are they all, all honourable men—  
Come I to speak in Caesar’s funeral.  
He was my friend, faithful and just to me:  
But Brutus says he was ambitious;  
And Brutus is an honourable man.  
He hath brought many captives home to Rome  
Whose ransoms did the general coffers fill:  
Did this in Caesar seem ambitious?  
When that the poor have cried, Caesar hath wept:  
Ambition should be made of sterner stuff:  
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious;  
And Brutus is an honourable man.  
You all did see that on the Lupercal  
I thrice presented him a kingly crown,  
Which he did thrice refuse: was this ambition?  
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious;  
And, sure, he is an honourable man.  
I speak not to disprove what Brutus spoke,  
But here I am to speak what I do know.

You all did love him once, not without cause:  
What cause withholds you then, to mourn for him?  
O judgment! thou art fled to brutish beasts,  
And men have lost their reason. Bear with me;  
My heart is in the coffin there with Caesar,  
And I must pause till it come back to me.

Mark Anthony skillfully deploys Ethos, his credibility as Caesar's grieving friend, something everyone can identify with but also Pathos, speaking to the crowd on an emotional not rational level. he knows his audience and what will move them.

The crowd turns on Brutus and his fellow senators and a Civil War erupts.

What we learn from these examples is how important rhetoric is. It is a skill to learn and to practice and when deployed effectively can move people, inspire, influence and persuade. It is this skill we wish you to learn here at NHGS.