

Sample Account Paragraphs (Ms. Lang and Dr. Kilgore)

In his historic “I Have a Dream” speech, Martin Luther King claims that America has not yet made significant progress in awarding civil rights and fair treatment to African-Americans. He invokes an event that the vast majority of Americans, of all races, will recognize: “Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand today, signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This momentous decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice.” In this introduction to his speech, King **establishes** what should be a basic and universally accepted premise: the notion that all people are equal. King **mimics** Lincoln’s marking of time for two reasons. First, he is **aligning** himself with Lincoln, suggesting that the speech he is about to deliver is as important as Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address. This helps to strengthen his credibility and persuade his audience to listen to his words. Secondly, King is **highlighting** the length of time that has passed since the Emancipation Proclamation – a time even longer than the “four score and seven years” that Lincoln originally marks. Surely King’s audience would think that if a “great beacon light of hope” appeared to African-American slaves as long as “five score years ago,” it would not be unreasonable to expect a significant amount of progress in race-relations. But as King continues in his speech, it becomes clear that this is not the case.

Topic Sentence: presents sub-claim from the argument

Quote: introduces and presents an accurate and “meaty” quote from the text

Analysis/Explanation of Rhetorical Work: explains how the quote works; identifies the moves it makes and how/why they are likely to work to persuade the audience

At the beginning of her keynote speech to the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848, Elizabeth Cady Stanton wants to assure her audience that she is not advocating for a radical cause. She explains, “We have met here today to discuss our rights and wrongs, civil and political and not, as some have supposed, to go into the detail of social life alone.” She first **clarifies** what her speech will be about and what it will not be about. She **wants to persuade** skeptical audience members that she is not advocating for radical changes in social life, but only for civil and political rights. In this spirit she **anticipates the objections** of skeptical audience members by **contrasting** the speech she will give with the speech some in the audience expect her to give. She explains in her next sentence, “We do not propose to petition the legislature to make our husbands just, generous, and courteous [...] and to clothe every woman in male attire.” By doing this, **Stanton rejects** more radical ideas, including the one fear that many skeptical men and women had about the women at the Seneca Falls Convention: that they wanted all women to dress and be like men. In this sentence, Stanton also **pokes fun** at those more radical ideas (having laws passed to make men more generous), getting the skeptical audience to **laugh with her** about the exaggeration. Stanton will continue to **use humor** in the next two paragraphs—all about men and women’s clothing—to soften up her audience and prepare them for her **main claim** about civil and political rights for women.

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Top Ten Common Examples of Rhetorical Work

(all can be phrased differently)

1. **TOPIC/CONTEXT**
Writer introduces the topic of...
Writer provides context...
2. **ILLUSTRATION**
Writer tells a story to illustrate...
3. **CLAIM**
Writer states a claim / the main claim.
Writer claims that...
Writer argues that...
4. **REASON**
Writer gives a reason.
5. **EVIDENCE / EXAMPLE**
Writer provides evidence. Writer gives an example.
6. **WARRANT / ASSUMPTION**
Writer supports an implied warrant.
Writer supports an implied assumption.
7. **APPEAL TO AUTHORITY**
Writer references an authority. Writer quotes an authority.
8. **APPEAL TO EMOTION**
Writer appeals to the audience's emotion. Writer wants the audience to feel...
9. **POSITIONING FOR/AGAINST OTHER WRITERS**
Writer agrees with Jones' position because...
Writer disagrees with Jones' position because...
Writer agrees and disagrees with Jones' position...
On the one hand... on the other hand...
10. **DEALING WITH COUNTER-ARGUMENTS**
Writer explains the other side of the argument (counter-argument)
Writer rebuts the other side of the argument
Writer anticipates the objection that...
Writer concedes the point that...