

Written Task #3 with Rationale

English A Standard Level Language and Literature

Part I, Language in cultural context (Gender, Humor, Taboo, Power)

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Rationale

In July 2017, Donald Trump delivered a rally speech in Youngstown, Ohio, “a state that was a key to his success over Hillary Clinton in the 2016 election”. (Time) My written task, motivated by this speech, is a blog post written by a (fictional) strong supporter of the US Democratic Party, Zoey Robinson, telling people that Trump is deceiving the public through analyzing his Youngstown speech. As someone who always writes about US politics, the blogger aims to target people with a similar political ideolog as she does.

The blogger analyzes Trump’s text including its content and stylistic features to argue that Trump is playing with the language to incite the audience. Thus, my written task aims to meet the first learning outcome in Part I of the IB English course.

I choose blog as my text type because it is more personal than official accounts or magazines of the Democratic Party; therefore, analysis of the speech can best focus on my chosen topic “language and power”. I utilize satire throughout the blog to make the blog lighter since it is a personal account. To fulfill the text type, I use relatively short paragraphs to let readers get the main ideas more easily.

Trump is Deceiving Us



Zoey Robinson · July 26, 2017

America's self-styled "greatest" president Donald Trump came to Youngstown, Ohio, last night, and gave an inciting rally speech. I went, and, as someone who gives her whole heart to the Democratic Party, I was horrified among the enthusiastic crowd. All the issues, even including the recent policy fights Trump has been embroiled in, ranging from the health care to the Russia investigation, were "left behind in the beltway" (Time).

I couldn't sleep last night, mulling over his words "I can be more presidential than any president."

But HOW? How come? Was I incited hearing his speech?

This morning, as I read the text of his speech, I got a partial answer as someone who is sensitive about language. Our president, who is more presidential than any president, is so good at playing with language that he successfully drove his audience's (my) emotion to achieve his purpose. His purpose was simply to make us, citizens, support him. He clearly knew that our state was important to him since Ohio was "a key to his success over Hillary Clinton in the 2016 selection" (Time).

Let's see what he did to us in his speech...



First of all ...

Our "smart" president knows what to say in front of the public. He emphasizes what he does, what his goals are, and what will he do to achieve them - all, he says, to benefit the public. In order to show his accomplishments and to show that he puts American citizens first, he uses a lot of comparisons, including with Obamacare and with the past. Words such as "disaster", "nightmare", and "horrific", are frequently used to describe Obamacare. I wonder if our dearest

president knows the word “respect”? I doubt it. Our “considerate” president further claimed that in the past, we offered a lot of support to others – “other countries”, “other nations” – and now we have finally stopped this “charity” thanks to his policy. He was speaking in front of the public, a group of people who do not have to care about international relations; and therefore, he hopes they will advocate for him. However, he, as president, SHOULD consider these relations. We are not the only country in the world. I wonder, does our dearest president know this simple principle that even I know? I doubt it.

The content is only his first tool; what makes the greater agitative impact is the stylistic features he employs.

“WE”: “we want...”, “we all believe...”, “we support...”, “we celebrate...”

Our easy-going president used “we” 196 times in that speech. The purpose is obvious: he wants to be among us; he wants to sound like he is one of us who sees our benefits as his own benefits; he wants to unite us as a great nation. By closing the distance between himself and the public, he makes the crowd consider what he says as relatable; and thus, people choose to believe in him.

“We will make America wealthy again. We will make America proud again. We will make America safe again. And we will make America great again.”

Here, “we” is used as the subject for each sentence, but, more importantly, it contains the most frequently used stylistic features throughout the speech – juxtaposing.

By juxtaposing the four uses of “we will make...” to gradually reach an emotionally maximum point to end his speech, our “promising” president is trying to build our confidence in him and in the future led by him. Scanning the whole text, we see that he is extremely good at shouting out his ambitions: “We’re going to fix our roads, our bridges, our tunnels, our airports. We are going to fix all of the things that once made us great. And we are going to use American iron, American steel, American aluminum.” Here, he not only juxtaposes “we’re going to...”, but also phrases inside each “we’re going to...” such as “American iron”, “American steel”, “American aluminum”. When listening to a speech, unlike reading, sometimes it is hard to grab the main points. However, by utilizing juxtapositions, it is not only easier for the listeners to follow the speaker, but also the speaker can make stronger arguments that naturally drive emotions. These juxtapositions are effective, undeniably. However, will the public support him just because he is good at shouting out ambitious goals?

Another significant reason why the public gets excited listening to his rally speech is that he is never stingy when praising we Americans - we are “incredible”, “brave”, “impressive”, and “true patriots” ... Our generous president uses these words to identify the listeners at the beginning of the speech. How can the audience not be incited after hearing his affirmation? Psychologically speaking, everyone is pleased to be praised, and all the more so by the lofty president; thus, the happy public are more easily incited to support him.

Finally, let’s consider the most notorious sentence in this speech:

“And I said — and I said with the exception of the late great Abraham Lincoln, I can be more presidential than any President that’s ever held this office.”



Donald Trump, what gave you the courage to say these words confidently?

I don't want to comment on our greatest president any more. He is too great for me to say anything else. But please, everyone, calm down, and review his speech more objectively.

And THINK!

Think. Did he really say something that merits our support of him, or he is just playing with language to incite us – the working people?

Sure, all the above is just my own opinion. I don't deny that he made an effective speech; however, a speech made by a president should be far more than that. Should we not expect any president to be insightful, not inciteful?

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Donald Trump, Ohio Rally Speech: Read Full Transcript, Time,
<https://time.com/4874161/donald-trump-transcript-youngstown-ohio/>