Critical Reading Questions

“Speech in the Virginia Convention”

1. If you had been in the audience, how would you have responded to Henry’s speech? Why?
2. What measures does Henry say the colonist have already tried in their dealings with England?
3. What examples does he provide to support his position that comprise with the British is not a workable solution?
4. What course of action does Henry want the colonist to take?
5. What is Henry’s answer to the objection that the colonists are not ready to fight against the British?
6. Do you think Henry was prepared to stand behind his words when he exclaimed, “Give me liberty or give me death”? Explain why or why not
7. What does his willingness to make such an assertion reveal about his character?
8. What types of people living in the colonies at the time of Henry’s speech might have reacted negatively to his words? Why?

“Speech in the Convention”

1. Based on Franklin’s argument, would you have ratified the Constitution? Why or why not?
2. Why does Franklin feel that unanimity among the delegates is essential to the success of the United States?
3. What is his purpose in suppressing his “opinions” for the “public good”?
4. According to Franklin, why would any document created by committee be faulty?
5. What, then, is Franklin saying about human nature?
6. What three reasons does Franklin give for finally agreeing to accept the Constitution?
7. How effectively does he convey the thought process that brought him from doubt about the Constitution to a decision to accept it? Explain.

\*\*What connections do both Henry and Franklin make between the ability to face hard realities and ideas of loyalty to one’s nation?

1. What is the persuasive message of each speech? What do the writers want their audiences to think and do?
2. Complete the following chart

Example from each Effect of each example

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Restatement | a.  b. |  |
| Repetition | a.  b. |  |
| Parallelism | a.  b. |  |
| Rhetorical  question | a.  b. |  |

1. Recall the definition of allusion. Identify one allusion from each speech and discuss how the meaning of each allusion adds to the meaning of the speech.

a.

b.

1. How is Franklin’s experience as a diplomat reflected in the nature of his argument and the types of language he uses? How is Henry’s experience as a lawyer reflected in this?