

Deconstructing Inspirational Speeches

🔦 C1+/C2 Level

🔦 Duration: 1 h

🔦 Individual lesson

🔦 Age: adults

🔦 Lesson goals

The student can identify the attitude of each speaker in an animated discussion characterized by overlapping turns, digressions and colloquialisms that are delivered at a natural speed in accents that are familiar to the listener.

The student has a good command of a very broad lexical repertoire including idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms; shows awareness of connotative levels of meaning.

1

Warm-up

Exercise 1: Comment on this quote by Stephen Hawking. What do you think he means?

“ The greatest enemy of knowledge is not ignorance,
it is the illusion of knowledge. ”

- Stephen Hawking

How do you think speakers can create the ‘illusion of knowledge’?

2

Listening

Exercise 2: Watch this video and answer the questions below:



1. What is the main message of this video?
2. Mention at least 3 rhetorical devices described in the video.
3. **“If you want love to be a part of your life, you must first make life a part of your love”** - which rhetorical device is this an example of? Do you think it’s effective?

Additional question:

Have you ever seen or heard misleading public speeches? Where did this happen? What was the speech about?

3**Reading**

Exercise 3: Skim the text and briefly summarise the information about the rhetoric devices that were not mentioned in the video.

The Art of Persuasion

In today's world, speeches are often used to persuade people to think or act in a certain way. Rhetoric devices are often used by speakers to achieve this aim. However, these devices can also be used to mislead people.

One of the most commonly used rhetoric devices is hyperbole. This involves exaggerating a point to make it seem more important than it really is. For example, a politician might say that their opponent's policies will lead to the destruction of the country. This kind of language is designed to create fear and panic among voters, even if there is no evidence to support the claim.

Another commonly used device is ad hominem attacks. This involves attacking the person rather than their argument. For example, a speaker might attack their opponent's character or personal life instead of addressing the issues at hand. This kind of tactic is often used to distract listeners from the real issues and to discredit the opposing viewpoint.

Appeals to emotion are also frequently used in persuasive speeches. These involve using emotional language to evoke a particular response from the audience. For example, a speaker might use vivid descriptions of suffering or injustice to provoke feelings of anger or sadness. While appeals to emotion can be effective in getting people to take action, they can also be manipulative and misleading.

Finally, speakers often use logical fallacies to make their arguments seem more convincing than they really are. A logical fallacy is an error in reasoning that makes an argument appear stronger than it actually is. For example, a speaker might use circular reasoning, where they assume the truth of their conclusion in order to prove it. This kind of tactic can be difficult to spot for those who are not familiar with logical fallacies, making it easier for speakers to mislead their audiences.

In conclusion, while rhetoric devices can be powerful tools for persuasion, they can also be used to mislead people. It is important for listeners to be aware of these tactics and to critically evaluate the arguments presented to them. By doing so, we can avoid being misled by persuasive speeches and make informed decisions based on evidence and reason.

4**Discussion**

Exercise 4: Answer the questions below:

1. Can you give an example of **circular reasoning** in a speech?
2. Do you think that **appeals to emotion** always affect the credibility of a speaker's argument?
3. What steps can we take to **make informed decisions** when listening to speeches that use **hyperbole** to **get people to take action**?

5**Vocabulary**

Let's explore some useful collocations from the text.

rhetoric devices

hyperbole

to exaggerate a point

ad hominem attacks

to address the issues at hand

appeals to emotion

to get people to take action

logical fallacy

circular reasoning

to assume the truth

to make informed decisions

to support the claim

Exercise 5: Fill in the blanks in this exercise by completing or inserting the phrases from above. Multiple options are possible. You might need to change the form of the words given.

The debater lost credibility when he started resorting to ____ (1) instead of addressing his opponent's arguments.

The author used ____ (2) to create a humorous effect by describing a trivial event as the end of the world.

To ____ (3) that technology is detrimental to human relationships, the researcher cited numerous studies that showed how excessive use of social media decreases face-to-face interactions.

Julia: "We need to _____ (4) on this climate change initiative."

Michael: "I agree. How do you propose we do that?"

The defendant's defence crumbled under scrutiny as it became apparent that ____ (5) was at the core of his argument.

Sarah: "Your argument is full of ____ (6), you need to use more valid evidence."

Ben: "I see what you mean, I'll try to be more careful with my reasoning in the future."

6**Speaking**

Exercise 6: Think of 1 myth within your field of work / interest. Prepare a short convincing speech that would make the listener believe that the myth is true. Use the rhetoric devices that you learned about in this lesson.

Preparation time: 5 min

Speech length: 2-3 min

Writing (Homework)

Exercise 7: Choose one of the creative writing tasks and write your creative piece (word count 250–300 words). Use as many words from the ‘Vocabulary’ section as you can but try to keep your text natural.

- 1 Write a fake news article that misleads the public about a current event, using at least three rhetoric devices and two logical fallacies. Convince your readers to take action based on your article.
- 2 Create a promotional post for a product that exaggerates its benefits using hyperbole and appeals to emotion. Use at least two logical fallacies to support your claims and get people to take action and buy the product.
- 3 Write an email or letter to a company or public figure, addressing the issues at hand and using hominem attacks to make your point. Use circular reasoning to support your claims and assume the truth of your argument. Conclude your message with a call to action for the recipient to make informed decisions based on your perspective.



Correct answers and teaching tips

Exercise 1: Comment on this quote by Stephen Hawking. What do you think he means?

Created in the “Find Quotes” tool

Exercise 2: Watch this [video](#) and answer the questions below:

Created in the “Questions for a YouTube video” tool

2. Slowing down the speech, anti-metabole, simplistic categorising
3. Anti-metabole

Exercise 3: Skim the text and briefly summarise the information about the rhetoric devices that were not mentioned in the video.

Created in the “Create a text” tool

Exercise 4: Answer the questions below:

Created in the “Create discussion questions” tool

Exercise 5: Fill in the blanks in this exercise by completing or inserting the phrases from above. Multiple options are possible. You might need to change the form of the words given.

Created in the “Sentences with target vocabulary” tool + “Communicative situations” tool + “Fill in the Gap”

Correct answers:

1. Ad hominem attacks
2. Hyperbole
3. Support the claim
4. Get people to take action
5. Circular reasoning
6. Logical fallacies

Teacher tip

To make the exercise more dynamic, you can ask the student personal questions, such as “Do you tend to hyperbolise when telling others about events?” (in relation to pt. 2)

Exercise 6: Think of 1 myth within your field of work / interest. Prepare a short convincing speech that would make the listener believe that the myth is true.

Teacher tip

Do not forget to provide your student with feedback upon completion of this task. In addition to commenting on possible errors, tell them if you were or were not convinced by their arguments, and why.