Rhetorical Analysis

Green Speech
Rhetorical Analysis Begins With Understanding the Rhetorical Situation

Speaker

Style

Tone

Text

Audience

Subject

Purpose
What was the intent of this question?

- Analyze persuasive methods used by Alfred M. Green

- Student expectations:
  - Read the speech carefully and recognize methods
  - Explain how these methods are appropriate for his intended audience

- Important!
  - Demonstrating an understanding of how and why Green’s methods were particularly persuasive for his intended audience

- Not So Important!
  - Naming a rhetorical device (parallelism, allusion, etc.)
How well did students perform?

- Generally, students performed well
  - Openness of prompt
  - Wide range of responses

Mean Score = 5.15
How well did students perform?

Best Writers
Discussed Green’s:
● Sense of urgency
● Elevated language
● Anticipated objections
● Demonizing of secessionists
● Appeal to a brighter future

Middle Range
● Less successful in analyses
● Frequently overlooking relationship between Green’s choice and intended audience

Weak Papers
● Superficial analyses
● Never making larger connections
What were common student errors or omissions?

- Many students listed the methods, but failed to explain:
  - *How they worked* and/or
  - *Why they were appropriate for Northern African Americans*

- Spent too much time/Wasted valuable time:
  - Locating Green’s speech in its time and era
  - Providing too much information about the Civil War

- May be interesting, did little to strengthen analysis
Message to Teachers and Students

Students must know:

How does the rhetorical situation influence a speaker’s choices?

- Analyzing argument and language **without** paying attention to
  ✓ Speaker’s purposes
  ✓ Intended audience
- Ends as an **empty** exercise that produces low scoring essays
What’s the Connection?

Rationale:
To effectively analyze language (which is the task of a rhetorical analysis essay!), one must recognize and explain the methods used by speakers. In order to accomplish this, a reader must make connections.