

2020

AP  CollegeBoard

AP[®] English Language and Composition

Sample Student Responses - Packet 3

Rhetorical Analysis Question - Obama

AP English Language and Composition
Rhetorical Analysis Free-Response Question (2020)
Sample Student Responses

Sample A

[1] It is not an uncommon thing for eulogies to be delivered at funerals. The point in mind is to immortalize in language the person who has passed for their most admirable qualities, and remember them for the things they achieved in life. In some cases it is done more effectively than in others, as can be seen in Obama's eulogy in 2009, which he delivered to remember the loss of Ted Kennedy. With appeals to both pathos and logos, the application of anecdote, and a respectful, admiring tone, Obama's intended purpose in his eulogy for Kennedy is clear; he paints the late Ted Kennedy in a respectable, memorable light, which those attending the funeral would forever remember the late Senator by.

[2] Perhaps the most frequently applied and effective device employed by Obama in his speech is the use of personal anecdotes from the late Senator's life. In one striking tale about Kennedy, Obama says that "Ted Kennedy was the baby of the family who became its patriarch... he was the sunny, joyful child, who bore the brunt of his brothers' teasing, but quickly learned to brush it off." This familial dynamic described in the quote is one that most people can relate to on some level, as most families have a member who is an underdog in the social pecking order. Obama describes Kennedy's rise to respect within his family and in life as a whole, painting him as a human being, not an untouchable political figure.

[3] That ability to relate to Kennedy on such a personal level enhanced the effects of Obama's appeal to pathos, which is used frequently throughout the entirety of the speech. "[Kennedy] lost two siblings by the age of sixteen. He saw two more taken violently from the country that loved them... and experienced personal failings and setbacks in the most public way possible. It is a string of events that would have broken a lesser man." If there is one thing that allows an audience to empathize with a person in a situation such as this, it is the mention of tragedy. It is the one thing that all human beings can understand to some degree, and in this situation serves to show just how human Kennedy was. Obama later mentions that this suffering only increased Kennedy's drive to do good, which is an admirable trait.

[4] Obama also appeals to ethos, or credibility, by mentioning Kennedy's long list of successes, which juxtaposed the personal losses and failures experienced by the same man. Obama mentions Kennedy's role in the creation of law, stating that Kennedy's name "graces nearly one thousand laws, and who penned more than three hundred himself." A man with the power to shape the law itself is a respectable position. On top of this, Obama at the time was also a Senator, which gives his opinion a certain level of credibility.

[5] The tone throughout the entire speech is no doubt one of admiration, which can be seen through Obama's word choice. Of the things Obama described him as, some described the tone particularly well; "the 'Happy Warrior'", a "restless dreamer", and a "voice to those left unheard" are a select few phrases used to describe Kennedy which paint him a truly great man,

AP English Language and Composition
Rhetorical Analysis Free-Response Question (2020)
Sample Student Responses

who achieved many things in his life. Based on Obama's description of him throughout the speech, he is a truly admirable man.

[6] It was Obama's appeal to ethos and pathos, use of anecdote and admiring tone which immortalized the memory of Kennedy as a man worthy of respect.

AP English Language and Composition
Rhetorical Analysis Free-Response Question (2020)
Sample Student Responses

Sample B

[1] In August of 2009, President Barack Obama gave the eulogy of Senator Ted Kennedy to those attending the funeral. In the Eulogy, Obama pays tribute to both the hardships and accomplishments Kennedy faced and made in his lifetime. While bringing emotion and pride to his audience, Obama uses the rhetorical modes of causal analysis, description, and exemplification to best emphasize Kennedy's life.

[2] Throughout the eulogy, Barack Obama uses causal analysis to explain how the hardships in Kennedy's life built him into the man he was. The first place this is seen is when Obama reminisces of a story from Ted's childhood. Obama uses the device of anecdote when he tells the audience of how when Ted was thrown off of a boat at age six, and instead of getting upset, he climbed back on the boat and learned how to sail. His brothers constantly teased him in many instances such as this. Because of it, Kennedy was able to toughen himself up to those around him. This story of Kennedy's childhood not only provides the audience with a joyful story to brighten the usually melancholy mood at most funerals, but also points out the determined nature in Ted's character. Obama also uses cause- and- effect to build on Kennedy's character when he mentions the many tragedies Ted went through. Obama tells the audience how Kennedy faced the loss of multiple siblings starting when he was very young. But Obama explains that these losses did not hinder Kennedy's greatness, and instead helped him become a more aware and selfless person. This cause- and- effect relationship between tragedy and Kennedy's character appeals to the audience's emotions, by leading them to recognize the sadness Ted felt, as well as inducing pride towards Kennedy's ability to push through it all. Obama's use of causal analysis develops Ted's character and evokes many emotions within his audience that lead them to memorialize Ted for who he was.

[3] Within the eulogy, Obama uses description to continue building on the strength and resilience Kennedy had. Towards the beginning of the eulogy, Obama describes Kennedy as a child, saying, "He was the sunny, joyful child, who bore the brunt of his brothers' teasing but learned quickly how to brush it off". This description shows the audience how Kennedy's persistent personality began at a young age. Obama also uses description when talking about Kennedy as an adult. He describes Kennedy's voice in the Senate as a "force of nature" which effectively conveys a prideful mood towards the audience. The audience hears this description and is led to remember how they heard Kennedy within the Senate chamber and feels the power behind his voice. Obama uses both the description from Kennedy's childhood and his adulthood to provide separate times where Kennedy established his confidence in order to cause the audience at the funeral to praise and memorialize Ted and his character.

[4] The final rhetorical mode used by Barack Obama within the eulogy is exemplification. One of the main ideas within the eulogy is how Kennedy was able to push past obstacles that the

AP English Language and Composition
Rhetorical Analysis Free-Response Question (2020)
Sample Student Responses

average man would not be able to face. Obama provides many examples of these obstacles, from witnessing death within his family to surviving horrific events like a plane crash. These examples provoke pride within the audience. Those attending the funeral are able to recognize that the things that Kennedy went through were more traumatic than they themselves would likely be able to handle. This means that Kennedy was a stronger man than most and should be recognized as extraordinary for it. Obama also uses exemplification by listing the many laws Kennedy was able to pass that helped a massive amount of people. Despite the trauma Kennedy faced, he was able to help many others from feeling the same. This appeals to the audience's sense of pride once again, in that they are grateful for all that Kennedy did within his life to help as many people as he could. By providing examples of both traumatic obstacles and the accomplishments Kennedy made despite them, Barack Obama is able to memorialize the late Senator and cause the audience to feel pride and gratitude towards his character.

[5] Barack Obama uses exemplification, description, and causal analysis to invoke pride within his audience and memorialize Ted Kennedy. The use of exemplification recognized exactly what Kennedy faced as well as the many ways he helped others within his life. The descriptions provided gave detailed accounts of Kennedy at two distant points of his life that showed who he was. The use of causal analysis explains to the audience how Kennedy became who he was. All of the rhetorical modes were able to recognize how great Kennedy was as both an individual and a Senator.

AP English Language and Composition
Rhetorical Analysis Free-Response Question (2020)
Sample Student Responses

Sample C

[1] Entering a global financial crisis and an age of national divide, forty-fourth U.S. president Barack Obama stood as a figure that was either praised or condemned by bipartisan politicians. Through some of the backlash he received through media outlets and a lot of American people, it is no surprise that he was deeply affected by a likewise public figure such as Ted Kennedy, and he communicated this dejection to an audience of American people and interpersonal relationships. In the eulogy delivered at Kennedy's funeral, President Barack Obama employs a bittersweet tone and imagery in order to completely memorialize and praise a public individual he stood by and looked up to.

[2] Obama's tone directly signifies both celebration and deepened sadness in a way that presents Kennedy as a true hero by purposefully stating his hardships not only as a public figure, but as a person. These adversities are then directly counteracting in stating how he rose above them to show his legacy as a figure to the American people. For example, Obama speaks about his losses he accrued in his family, how he had to lose two brothers "from the country that loved them." The speaker purposefully makes this distinction to communicate to his audience the heroicness of Kennedy, as he had to see those in his life taken away from the country that he fought for. In order to prove that Kennedy stood high amidst this harsh reality, Obama directly quotes Kennedy himself, stating that these mentally tolling adversities were "no excuse to give in," directly proving the character of the man he commends. This setup is directly enacted in order to make the audience, American people amongst politicians and relatives to the passed, feel as though there was no doubt that Kennedy was a true warrior. Through listing hardships and portraying how he rose above, the audience has no other choice other than to see how Kennedy's passing was on to be remembered and grieved, and his life to be celebrated. Without communicating both the bitterness of his life and the sweetness of how the figure remained a fighter in the politics of America, there would be no reason for memorialization. However, because of Obama's tone, the reality of Kennedy's eulogy remained that he was an impactful figure that deserved every shred of praise and respect throughout all of American thought.

[3] Furthermore, imagery is utilized in order to directly signify the true valiance of Kennedy. This strategy is conveyed through the comparison of Kennedy through concepts all Americans valued, regardless of political standing. Obama notes that Kennedy's passion is exhibited through a man "face reddened, fist pounding the podium, a veritable force of nature." This picture is specifically painted in order to show the passion Kennedy had towards civil rights. He specifically portrayed this aspect of Kennedy's standing in order to exemplify a thought every critic or politically divided person could get behind, a choice which makes the audience directly feel the impact that he had on America in a positive and honorable way. With this portrayal of Kennedy, the message of his influence is not lost within the audience, as they are now presented with a vision that perceives Kennedy as a valourous figure. This imagery directly influences the

AP English Language and Composition
Rhetorical Analysis Free-Response Question (2020)
Sample Student Responses

audience to mourn a great soul's passing, and therefore Kennedy's funeral is represented in pride and memory.

[4] These purposeful choices of bittersweet tone and imagery directly influence the entire audience to mourn and celebrate the loss of Ted Kennedy, no matter their political alignment. Obama successfully encapsulates his audiences through his choices, and brings a divided nation together for a second in order to commemorate and memorialize a truly dedicated and great politician, friend, and American soul.

AP English Language and Composition
Rhetorical Analysis Free-Response Question (2020)
Sample Student Responses

Sample D

[1] In his eulogy speech at the funeral of Senator Ted Kennedy in 2009, President Barack Obama asserts that Kennedy was a great man who persevered through life's most difficult challenges to make the country a better place for everyone. Obama utilizes descriptive imagery and anecdotes from Kennedy's personal life in order to praise and memorialize the image of the senator. Obama utilizes a glorifying tone in order to immortalize the memory of Kennedy not only in the funeral attendees, but also the American people.

[2] Obama begins his speech by repeatedly naming nouns that describe Kennedy's role in the world in which he lived, and the impact he had on it. Using familial connotations such as "child," "son," and "Father" he is able to build a sense of emotional loss within the audience by associating the senator with lost family- a deep emotional connection unbound by the physical walls of death. His loss is not only a loss to the government, but a loss to their personal lives.

[3] Obama then utilizes tragic personal anecdotes and details from Kennedy's life and childhood in order to emphasize the senator's strength and resilience despite the turmoil of his life. The "pain and tragedy" of his life "would have broken a lesser man," however Kennedy did the opposite and "became more alive to the plight and suffering of others"-- particularly those who were less fortunate and suffering. Obama's virtuous diction glorifies Kennedy's ability to persevere in the face of adversity. Obama highlights Kennedy's mental strength despite seemingly insurmountable odds in order to illustrate how his personal tragedies led him to become a champion of the common people, not a champion of those in wealth and power. Through this emphasis, Obama praises Kennedy's values and achievements in order to create a sense of deep loss for the saintly senator that causes the audience to feel as if they owe it to him to immortalize his memory and legacy.

[4] Obama concludes the eulogy by describing Kennedy as a product of a time when politics was more than personally rooted arguments, but rather a time of respect and cooperation between all members of government. His idealization of Kennedy's image and work persuades the audience that it is their moral duty to uphold his legacy and image for years to come.

AP English Language and Composition
Rhetorical Analysis Free-Response Question (2020)
Sample Student Responses

Sample E

[1] Ted Kennedy was the youngest child of Rose and Joseph Kennedy. Ted Kennedy also served in the Senate and advocated for the rights of many Americans and Immigrants. He was a great man who simply advocated for the people and wanted everyone to have equal rights. Following Ted Kennedy's death the acting president Obama gave a speech in honor of the Kennedy's with a goal of praising them and memorializing them. Throughout the speech President Obama told the many challenges of Ted Kennedy and memorable moments that won't be forgotten throughout his life in order to praise him and honor his legacy.

[2] Throughout the speech President Obama told Ted Kennedy's Challenges in life to honor his legacy. One example of this from the speech is, " This Spirit of resilience and good humor would see Ted Kennedy through more pain and tragedy than most of us will ever know..." (Obama paragraph 4). This quote from his speech refers to Kennedy's many losses in his family and throughout his life these include his siblings and nephews. Kennedy uses this rhetoric to show people that even though Kennedy faced many challenges in life he still carried on and stayed strong turning him into the person he became. An example of this is, " Through his own suffering, Ted Kennedy became more alive to the plight and suffering of others" (Obama paragraph 6). This rhetoric also supports the previous quote and statement as he refers to Kennedy's pain and suffering at an early age attributing to the kind and giving person he became. This also led Kennedy to pass landmark cases in the senate such as Civil Rights ACT, Disabilities ACT, and Immigration Reform.

[3] Throughout Obama's speech he told memorable moments about his life and how he will not be forgotten in order to honor his legacy. The quote, " When a photographer asked the newly-elected Bobby to step back at a press conference because he was casting a shadow on his younger brother, Teddy quipped, " It'll be the same in Washington"(Obama Paragraph 3). The president said this to show Ted Kennedy's humor throughout his life and the smiles he would have put on many people. Kennedy also left a major imprint in life and will be forgotten, Obama said that in the following quote. " We can still hear his voice bellowing through the Senate chamber, face reddened, fist pounding the podium, a veritable force of nature, in support of health care or workers' rights or civil rights" (Paragraph 8). Obama used this rhetoric in this quote to show Kennedy's dedication to his work and that he left a major impact on America that will never be forgotten.

[4] In conclusion Ted Kennedy was an amazing American that strove to help others throughout society using his senate position. Obama used his rhetoric throughout his speech so show this, and to show the many great things he did in fact do for citizens. Obama also used his rhetoric in order to emphasize the tragedies that occurred throughout Kennedy's life and how he overcame those challenges in order to greatly benefit the people. Kennedy also had many

AP English Language and Composition
Rhetorical Analysis Free-Response Question (2020)
Sample Student Responses

memorable moments that can't be forgotten which Obama spoke of in his speech. Obama using his rhetoric in these ways overall was able to convey to the audience that Ted Kennedy was a great man that strived to help others and overcame his challenges in life.

AP English Language and Composition
Rhetorical Analysis Free-Response Question (2020)
Sample Student Responses

Sample F

[1] In the eulogy speech given to senator Ted Kennedy in Boston Massachusetts, President Barack Obama uses antimetabole, pathos and other rhetorical devices to convey how he felt about the loss of Ted Kennedy. These rhetorical devices really help Obama deliver his speech to the people. Barack Obama is a very successful speaker because of how he can pull an audience in, and this eulogy is a very good speech showing how he uses his devices.

[2] Barack Obama was the perfect man to give this speech since he is since he is such a good speaker. He was a friend of Ted Kennedy, so there were many pieces of pathos used in his speech. In the second paragraph, "But those...a friend", he uses pathos to connect with the audience by saying what his nieces used to call him. In the end of the paragraph, he then concludes that part of his speech by explaining that Ted Kennedy was a friend to everyone who met him. This rhetorical device was a great one to use at a eulogy. In the end of the excerpt, he uses pathos again by saying that everyone had a mutual respect for Kennedy and was a great man.

[3] Throughout this whole speech, Barack Obama gave many rhetorical devices to explain how saddened he was over the death of Ted Kennedy, but one of the main devices he used was Antimetabole. In the middle of this excerpt, Obama used a William Wordsworth to show how great of a man Kennedy was even though he went through many lows in his life. This really pulled the speech together and was a great rhetorical device in Obama's speech.

[4] In conclusion, Barack Obama used very good rhetorical devices in this eulogy. He was the perfect man for this speech and delivered it with great diction and syntax.

AP English Language and Composition
Rhetorical Analysis Free-Response Question (2020)
Sample Student Responses

Sample G

[1] President Barack Obama used many rhetorical choices in the eulogy he gave about Ted Kennedy. Obama made this speech very passionately which helped get many of his stories about Kennedy across to the audience. Obama used pathos, metaphors, and similes throughout the speech

[2] In the first paragraph of the speech, Obama used a plethora of sentences that referred to pathos because of how emotional they were. In the second paragraph, Obama said “ Uncle Teddy, or as he was often known to his younger nieces and nephews, “The Grand Fromage,” or “The Big Cheese.” This sentence is a metaphor because it uses the word “as” to compare who Kennedy was to his family.

[3] Obama also used similes in this eulogy about Kennedy. One simile he used was “ I, like so many others in the city...”. In this sentence Obama used a simile to compare how everyone was feeling at the time of losing Ted Kennedy. Obama's eulogy to Kennedy was very easy to understand because of the way Obama used all these rhetorical strategies.

[4] Overall, Obama’s eulogy to Ted Kennedy was very thought out and given very well. It showed a plethora of emotion and used the right amount of rhetorical devices to make it very comparable for other people.