

The Trial Closing Argument of Atticus Finch from *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee

Background: This excerpt from the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*, set in the U.S. South in the 1930s in a small town, takes place near the end of the novel during the trial of Tom Robinson, a black man. Atticus Finch, a white man, is defending Tom who has been accused of raping a white girl. Here Atticus makes his final case for Tom and ultimately, abolishing racism.

Gentlemen, I shall be brief, but I would like to use my remaining time with you to remind you that this case is not a difficult one, it requires no minute sifting of complicated facts but, it does require you to be sure beyond all reasonable doubt as to the guilt of the defendant. To begin with, this case should never have come to trial. This case is as simple as black and white...

She was white, and she tempted a Negro. She did something that in our society is unspeakable: she kissed a black man. Not an uncle, but a strong young Negro man. No code mattered to her before she broke it, but it came crashing down on her afterwards...

We do know in part what Mr. Ewell did: he did what any God-fearing, persevering, respectable white man would do under the circumstances-he swore out a warrant, no doubt signing it with his left hand, and Tom Robinson now sits before you, having taken the oath with the only good hand he possesses-his right hand...

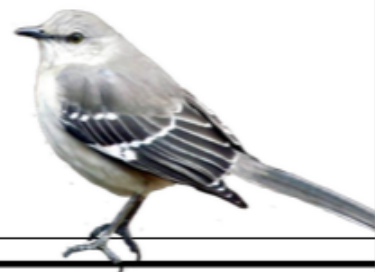
You know the truth, and the truth is: some Negroes lie, some Negroes are immoral, some Negro men are not to be trusted around women-black or white. But this truth that applies to the human race and to no particular race of men. There is not one person in this courtroom who has never told a lie, who has never done an immoral thing, and there is no man living who has never looked upon a woman **without desire**...

One more thing, gentlemen, before I quit. Thomas Jefferson once said that all men are created equal, a phrase the Yankees and the distaff of the Executive branch in Washington are fond of hurling at us. There is a tendency in this year of grace, 1935, for certain people to use this phrase out of context, to satisfy all conditions...

We know all men are not created equal in the sense some people who run public education promote the stupid and idle with the industrious- because all men are created equal, educators will gravely tell you, and children left behind suffer terrible feelings of inferiority...

But there is one way in this country in which all men are created equal- there is one human institution that makes a pauper the equal of a Rockefeller, the stupid man the equal of Einstein, and the ignorant man the equal of any college president. That institution, gentlemen, is a court...

Gentlemen, a court is no better than each of you sitting before me on this jury. A court is only as sound as its jury, and a jury is only as sound as the men who make it up. I am confident that you gentlemen will review without passion the evidence you have heard, come to a decision, and restore this defendant to his family. In the name of God, do your duty.



Martin Luther King's Detroit "I Have a Dream" Speech

Background: This excerpt from MLK, Jr.'s speech is from a speech in Detroit, and not King's March on Washington speech. King had given several "I Have a Dream" speeches in addition to his most famous speech at the March on Washington. This particular version was delivered at a Detroit rally in June 1963, two months before the March on Washington.

And so this afternoon, I have a dream.

It is a dream deeply rooted in the American Dream.

I have a dream that one day, right down in Georgia, Mississippi, and Alabama, the sons of former slaves and sons of former slave-owners will be able to live together as brothers.

I have a dream this afternoon that one day, one day little white children and little Negro children will be able to join hands as brothers and sisters.

I have a dream this afternoon, that one day, one day men will no longer burn down houses and the church of God simply because people want to be free.

I have a dream this afternoon that this will be a day when we will no longer face the atrocities that Emmett Till had to face or Medgar Evers had to face but, that all men can live with dignity.

I have a dream this afternoon that my four little children, that my four little children will not come up in the same young days that I came up within, but they will be judged on the basis on the content of their character, and not the color of their skin.

I have a dream this afternoon that one day, right here in Detroit, Negroes will be able to buy a house or rent a house anywhere that their money will carry them and they will be able to get a job.

Yes, I have a dream this afternoon that one day in this land the words of Amos will become real and justice will roll like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.

I have a dream this evening that one day we will recognize the words of Jefferson that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

I have a dream this afternoon.

I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted and every hill and mountain shall be made low.

The rough places will be made plain and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all the flesh shall see it together.

I have a dream this afternoon that the brotherhood of man will become a reality in this day.

Paired Text Comparing/Contrasting Brainstorming Organizer

When delineating and evaluating the argument and specific claims in a text, there are steps to take. First, be sure to carefully understand the central idea and claim made in each text. Then, determine what techniques from the author's toolbox (ELA terms) that he/she uses to make the case. Finally, evaluate the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence/techniques the speaker uses. Using the Venn diagram below, delineate (outline) the techniques the speakers use to make their claim.

Word Bank:

Ethos, Pathos, Logos, Repetition, Allusion, Simile, Metaphor, Hyperbole, Paradox, Counterclaim, Thesis, Rebuttal, Refute, Call to Action, Propaganda Techniques, Logical Fallacies, Organization, Structure, Parallelism, Imagery, Evidence, Facts, Examples, Audience, Tone

Text 1:	Text 2:
Central Idea _____	Central Idea _____
Main Claim _____	Main Claim _____
