

## Rhetorical Analysis Essay Example: Condoleezza Rice's Commencement Speech

On May 17th, 2009, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice delivered the commencement address at Boston College. In her address, she discussed the importance of service and encouraged students to go out and make a difference in the world. While her speech was widely praised by many, there is much more to be said about its effectiveness as a rhetorical device. Let's take a closer look at some of the rhetorical strategies Rice used in her speech and how they impacted her audience.

Rice begins her speech with an appeal to authority by citing examples of famous graduates from Boston College who have gone on to do great things. She then moves into an emotional appeal by encouraging students to "go forth from this place inspired and determined to serve" and "make our lives count for something greater than ourselves." This serves to create a sense of unity between Rice and the audience, as well as inspiring them with a sense of purpose that goes beyond just attending college or getting good grades.

Rice then transitions into an ethical appeal by stressing the importance of service in making a real difference in the world. She cites examples such as teaching in inner-city schools or working with underprivileged children as ways that individuals can truly make a difference. By stressing these points, she is able to not only inspire her audience but also motivate them to actually act on their newfound sense of purpose.

Finally, Rice ends her speech with an appeal to history by referencing John F. Kennedy's call for Americans to "ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country." By connecting this message back to prior American presidents, she is able to reinforce its significance while also reminding listeners that they are part of something bigger than themselves—a powerful nation that has been built by generations before them and will continue through generations yet unborn.

At its core, Secretary Rice's commencement address was both inspirational and motivating—two elements that are crucial when delivering any kind of speech or presentation. Through effective use of rhetorical devices such as appeal to authority, emotional appeals, ethical appeals, and appeals to history, Rice was able to effectively convey her message while simultaneously connecting with her audience on an emotional level. Her words were both inspiring and meaningful which ultimately served their intended purpose—to empower graduates with a sense of purpose and inspire them to use their education for good in the world around them.