

Aside from the formal powers vested in the office, Presidents derive much power from their ability to persuade. What are the characteristics of effective Presidential rhetoric? What techniques do they (and their speech writers) use to convey authority, to express solidarity with average Americans, to convince people of the rectitude of their decisions, to appeal to the emotions of their listeners? We will restrict our discussion to the following examples of Presidential rhetoric: Gerald Ford's remarks upon granting a pardon to Richard Nixon on Sept 8th, 1974; George W. Bush's address to a joint session of Congress on Sept 20th, 2001; Franklin Roosevelt's first fireside chat on March 12th, 1933; and John F. Kennedy's Inaugural Address on Jan 20th, 1961.

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Let me start off by saying how glad I am you picked which Presidents we should focus on. I think those are great choices. The power to persuade is all over politics. We generally want to believe that our President is one who is educated enough to enlighten and empower us to think differently and openly about issues we may not fully understand. I know that in the past, I have often relied on our Presidents to help keep myself informed and calm about issues of concern.

In Ford's remarks granting a pardon to Nixon what I felt was the most compelling what that he allowed me to understand his thinking. He proposed the idea that Nixon's actions will long be of his own demise and that the process of a fair trial would take a great amount of time and would be greatly compromised as well as the idea that the "years of bitter controversy and divisible debate" was merely enough. What bothered me was that I am not sure many people believed Nixon's actions were dismissable simply because he found something else for others to relate to. How many people felt it was because Ford didn't know what else to do and how many actually agreed with him.

I am 44. I have seen a few Presidents in my day. JFK was killed 10 years before I was born but for some reason I have always been fascinated in him. Right from the very beginning he grabs the hearts of America when he said it was not a victory of party but a celebration of freedom. Symbolizing and end as well as a beginning. Signifying renewal as well as change...

I mean isn't that what we all want ?

Effective rhetoric when it comes to a Presidential speech is so incredibly important. When we have a President who does not care about reason, or the emotional impact what he says has on others, we run into a much more divided country. When they

connect with us, use professionalism and act like a leader of a country by addressing us respectfully, they gain so much more in return.

Bush's speech is one that is the most memorable for me. As a country we wanted him to guide us through this. We wanted him to feel, and lead at the same time. He started off by acknowledging all those who responded and had rushed to others aids during the attacks and who selflessly gave of themselves. He united us right at the very beginning because as a country it was the only hope we had to hang onto that helped us feel better in any slight sense of the matter. He was dignified, simple and yet reserved and never made it about him. He made it about our country, our people and our leaders. He made it about what was and was not acceptable and how we will find our way through it together. I get pretty frustrated at people when they condemn Bush for his response to 9/11 but honestly I would love for any of them to take on the role of Commander in Chief when our country is under attack. I know for me, he touched my soul and allowed me to feel a little safer.

Presidents are supposed to be our example to how we solve things, how we react to issues and how we feel as a nation about each other. He (one day she) is supposed to comfort but be stern in direction and show empathy and compassion for his fellow people. Uniting us instead of dividing us with words and emotions and thoughts most of us can relate to. Well thought out words mixed with the right blend of knowing what he should and being able to stray off to an emotional thought without getting lost in translation. Tough job... I wouldn't want it.