



Text Martin Luther King's and President Obama's speeches

King and Obama make arguments against and for violence respectively; however, King's rhetoric utilizes emotion and idealism, or pathos, to advance his idea of a "genuine civilization," while Obama uses logic and a realism to advance his idea of facing the "world as it is" (62, 80).

King begins his speech by reminding the audience of the grave atrocities that occurred to those trying to seek justice and equality (P2). His use of dramatic imagery such as "wounded justice, lying prostrate on the blood-flowing streets" stirs emotions in his audience (48). King also repeats certain phrases such as "I am mindful" and later on "I refuse" and "I believe," which give his speech an emotional tone (P2, P6-P7). Furthermore, he uses idealistic language when he argues that the "foundation of such a [nonviolent] method is love," and that he has faith in a "brighter tomorrow" (27, 46). Finally, King invokes an idealistic and religious tone in decreeing that, "one day mankind will bow before the altars of God and be crowned triumphant over war and bloodshed" (53).

In contrast to King's use of emotion and idealism, Obama relies on logic and realism to argue the need of war to secure peace. He begins by confirming that "war, in one form or another, appeared with the first man," implying that war has always been present (27). Even though humans have come up with institutions to control the violence, "this old architecture is buckling under the weight of new threats" (59-60). Obama points out that "modern technology allows a few small men with outsized rage to murder innocents on a horrific scale" (62-63). Aware of the context of his speech, Obama assures the audience that he values the "creed and lives of Gandhi and King" and there acts of nonviolence (77-78). In the end though, the President asserts that he must "face the world as it is" and acknowledges that "the instruments of war do have a role to play in preserving the peace" (80, 96).