

What Type Of Device Does Susan B Anthony Employ In Her Speech When She Asks ' 'are Woman Persons' '

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Susan B. Anthony's famous rhetorical question, "Are women persons?" delivered during her speech in 1873, is a compelling example of persuasive oratory that leverages specific rhetorical devices to evoke emotion, challenge societal norms, and persuade her audience. This question not only highlights the legal and social disparities faced by women but also employs a strategic use of language and rhetorical techniques to draw attention to the injustice. In analyzing the device Anthony employs, it becomes evident that she primarily uses rhetorical questions, enhanced by emotional appeal and logical reasoning, to craft a powerful argument. This article will explore the nature of this device, its purpose, and how it functions within her speech to influence her audience.

Understanding Rhetorical Questions as a Persuasive Device

Definition and Significance of Rhetorical Questions

A rhetorical question is a figure of speech in the form of a question posed not to solicit an answer but to emphasize a point or provoke thought. It is a common device in persuasive speech and writing, used to engage the audience emotionally and intellectually. When used effectively, rhetorical questions can:

- Highlight contradictions or absurdities
- Force the audience to reconsider their beliefs or assumptions
- Create a sense of shared understanding or moral urgency
- Emphasize the speaker's position without directly stating it

In Anthony's speech, the question "Are women persons?" functions as a rhetorical device that challenges the legal and societal definitions of personhood.

The Context of Anthony's Rhetorical Question

In 1873, women lacked many legal rights, including the right to vote, and were often considered subordinate to men under the law. The question "Are women persons?" was posed in the context of a legal case where the courts refused to recognize women as persons eligible to vote. Anthony's question was not merely rhetorical; it was a strategic move to expose the injustice and compel her audience to confront the contradiction in the law and societal attitudes.

The Rhetorical Power of the Question "Are Woman Persons?"

Challenging Legal and Social Norms

By framing her argument as a question, Anthony invites her listeners to participate in a moral and logical evaluation of the issue. The question implies that the current legal standards are flawed or incomplete, prompting the audience to question the legitimacy of the legal exclusion of women from voting rights.

- Questioning Legality: The question suggests that the law itself is inconsistent or unjust.
- Invoking Moral Reflection: It prompts listeners to consider whether it is morally acceptable to deny women recognition as persons.

Creating an Emotional and Moral Appeal

The question stirs the audience's sense of justice and fairness. It appeals to their moral sensibilities by suggesting that the legal system is denying women their fundamental rights, thus framing the issue as a moral imperative rather than just a legal debate.

- Appeal to Justice: It implies that women are equally deserving of recognition.
- Mobilizing Emotions: The question evokes feelings of injustice, frustration, and moral outrage.

How Anthony's Use of Rhetorical Questions

Enhances Her Argument

Engaging the Audience

Anthony's strategic use of rhetorical questions pulls her audience into the debate, encouraging them to think critically about the issue. Instead of making direct assertions, she prompts reflection, which can be more impactful.

Creating a Sense of Urgency

Repeated or impactful rhetorical questions can create a sense of immediacy. By asking "Are women persons?" in a pointed manner, Anthony underscores the urgency of addressing women's legal and societal status.

Undermining Opposing Views

Rhetorical questions can also serve to undermine opposing arguments. For example, by asking "Are women persons?" she implicitly questions the validity of the legal and societal norms that deny women rights, framing them as outdated or unjust.

Additional Rhetorical Devices Complementing the Question

While the primary device is the rhetorical question, Anthony's speech also employs other persuasive techniques that work synergistically with her question:

1. **Emotional Appeals (Pathos):** She evokes feelings of injustice and moral outrage.
2. **Logical Reasoning (Logos):** She presents logical arguments about the inconsistency of laws.
3. **Repetition:** Repeating "Are women persons?" emphasizes the central issue and ingrains it in the audience's mind.
4. **Analogies:** She compares the legal treatment of women to other injustices to highlight absurdity.

Impact of the Rhetorical Device on the Audience

Mobilizing Support and Action

The question “Are women persons?” is designed to spark reflection and motivate action. By framing the issue as a moral question, Anthony appeals to the audience’s conscience, encouraging them to support women’s rights.

Shaping Public Discourse

Anthony’s use of rhetorical questions helped shape the discourse around women’s rights by framing the debate as an ethical and legal issue. Her question became a rallying cry for the women's suffrage movement.

Legacy and Effectiveness

This rhetorical device remains effective because it is simple, memorable, and provocative. It continues to be a powerful example of how questions can serve as tools of persuasion, prompting society to reconsider long-held beliefs and norms.

Conclusion: The Power of Rhetorical Questions in Advocacy

In Susan B. Anthony’s speech, the question “Are women persons?” exemplifies the strategic use of rhetorical questions as a persuasive device. It functions as a moral challenge, an emotional appeal, and a call for societal reevaluation. Through this device, Anthony effectively engages her audience, questions societal norms, and advocates for change. Her skillful employment of rhetorical questions demonstrates their enduring power in advocacy, enabling speakers to challenge injustices and inspire action through thoughtful, provocative questioning. Ultimately, her question remains a timeless example of how rhetorical devices can shape public opinion and effect social transformation.

Frequently Asked Questions

What type of device does Susan B. Anthony use when asking 'Are women persons' in her speech?

Susan B. Anthony employs rhetorical devices, particularly repetition and rhetorical questions, to emphasize her point about women's rights.

Is the phrase 'Are women persons' delivered using any specific physical device or is it a rhetorical device?

It is a rhetorical device—specifically a rhetorical question—used to challenge the audience's perceptions and highlight gender inequalities.

Does Susan B. Anthony utilize any technological devices during her speech to convey her message?

No, she does not use technological devices; her speech relies on spoken words, tone, and rhetorical devices to persuade her audience.

What speech device is most prominent when Susan B. Anthony asks 'Are women persons'?

The most prominent device is the rhetorical question, which prompts listeners to reconsider their views on women's rights.

Are there any visual or physical devices Susan B. Anthony employs in her speech to make her point?

In her speech, she primarily uses her voice and delivery style; there are no specific visual or physical devices employed.

Why does Susan B. Anthony repeat the question 'Are women persons' in her speech?

She repeats the question to emphasize the injustice of denying women personhood and to provoke thought and debate among her audience.

Additional Resources

Device

Introduction: Unpacking Susan B. Anthony's Speech and Its Context

When examining the historical speeches of influential figures like Susan B. Anthony, it's essential to understand not only the content and intent but also the medium through which their messages were conveyed. Anthony, a pivotal leader in the women's suffrage movement, delivered her powerful speeches at a time when communication technology was vastly different from today. One of her most notable rhetorical moments involves her questioning the legal status of women with the phrase, "Are women persons?" This phrase is more than a rhetorical question; it's a critical point in the struggle for women's rights.

To fully appreciate the significance of her speech and the device she employed—specifically, the manner in which her speech was delivered—we need to explore the communication tools available during her era, the nature of her speech delivery, and how her choice of device amplified her message. This article will analyze the device Susan B. Anthony used during her speech and how it contributed to the effectiveness of her message.

Historical Context: Communication Technology in the 19th Century

Before delving into the specific device used by Susan B. Anthony, it's crucial to set the scene regarding the technological landscape of the late 19th century. The period was characterized by various inventions that transformed communication:

- Oral Speech and Public Speaking: Public speaking was a primary method for advocacy, especially for social reformers.
- Printing Press and Newspapers: Although widespread, these were used mainly for written communication rather than live speech amplification.
- Phonograph (Edison's invention): Invented in 1877, the phonograph was the first device capable of recording and reproducing sound, but it was in its infancy and not widely used for speeches at that time.
- Telegraph and Telephone: These devices revolutionized long-distance communication but were not typically used in live speeches.

Given this technological landscape, it's apparent that live speech was the dominant form of communication for public figures like Anthony. The options for amplifying one's voice or employing devices in speech delivery were limited but not nonexistent.

The Device Susan B. Anthony Used: The Speech Itself as a Rhetorical Device

The Power of Spoken Word in the 19th Century

In the absence of modern amplification technology, the primary "device" Susan B. Anthony employed was her voice—an essential tool for engaging her audience

directly. Her speech was crafted with rhetorical devices that heightened the impact of her message:

- Repetition: She famously repeated the phrase “Are women persons?” to emphasize her point.
- Rhetorical Questions: Used to provoke thought and highlight injustice.
- Tone and Inflection: Her delivery relied heavily on modulation to sway her audience.

The Manuscript and Delivery Technique as a “Device”

While Anthony did not use a mechanical or electronic device, her delivery method itself can be regarded as a critical device – a carefully crafted public speaking technique that served to engage, persuade, and resonate with her audience.

Key Components of Her Delivery as a Device:

- Vocal Projection: Ensuring her voice reached the entire room, making her words powerful and commanding.
- Pacing and Pausing: Strategic pauses before and after her key question, “Are women persons?” to create suspense and emphasize her point.
- Facial Expressions and Gestures: Using physical gestures to reinforce her words, making her speech more memorable.
- Climactic Repetition: Repeating her central question at the end of the speech to leave a lasting impression.

This “device”—her method of speech delivery—became a powerful rhetorical tool, transforming her speech from mere words into a compelling advocacy device.

The Role of the Audience and Venue as Part of the “Device”

Another aspect worth considering is the venue and audience interaction as a form of communicative device:

- Public Assembly: Her speech was delivered in front of a live audience, which allowed immediate feedback and emotional resonance.
- Size and Acoustics of the Venue: Larger halls required her to project her voice effectively.
- Audience Engagement: Her rhetorical questions invited listeners to reflect and participate mentally, making her speech more persuasive.

In essence, her presence and delivery environment functioned as an integral part of her communicative device, amplifying her message’s effectiveness.

Modern Perspective: Was There a Mechanical Device at Play?

Was There a Microphone?

To clarify, during Susan B. Anthony’s time (the late 1800s), microphones and electronic amplification devices did not exist or were not in common use for speeches. The first practical microphones were developed in the early 20th century, well after her most active speaking years.

Possible Confusion: The “Device” as a Rhetorical Tool

Sometimes, the term “device” can be misunderstood. In this context, it’s important to distinguish between:

- Mechanical/Electronic Devices: Microphones, speakers, or sound-recording devices.
- Rhetorical Devices: Repetition, rhetorical questions, tone modulation, gestures, and physical presence.

Given the historical period, Susan B. Anthony’s “device” was primarily her voice combined with rhetorical techniques—a non-mechanical, human-centric device designed to persuade.

Summary: The Effective “Device” in Susan B. Anthony’s Speech

Aspect	Description	Significance
Voice	The primary tool for amplification and expression	Ensured her message reached her audience forcefully and clearly
Rhetorical Techniques	Repetition, rhetorical questions, tone modulation	Amplified emotional impact and memorability
Delivery Environment	Venue acoustics, audience engagement	Created an atmosphere conducive to persuasion
Physical Gestures and Facial Expressions	Reinforced key points and added emphasis	Made her speech more compelling and relatable

In essence, Susan B. Anthony’s “device” was her voice combined with rhetorical mastery and effective delivery techniques. These elements worked together as a sophisticated, human-centric communication device that allowed her to challenge societal norms and provoke thought.

Final Thoughts: The Legacy of Anthony’s “Device”

While modern speech delivery often relies on electronic amplification devices, Susan B. Anthony’s era demonstrated that the true power of a speech lies not in technology but in delivery, conviction, and rhetorical skill. Her ability to ask “Are women persons?” with clarity, conviction, and emotional resonance exemplifies how human agency and technique serve as potent devices for advocacy.

Her “device”—the artful use of voice, timing, physical presence, and rhetorical questions—remains a testament to the enduring power of effective speech in social movements. It’s a reminder that even without modern technology, compelling communication can be achieved through mastery of the spoken word.

In conclusion, Susan B. Anthony’s speech employed a non-mechanical device – her voice combined with rhetorical techniques and physical delivery – which served as a powerful tool in her fight for women’s recognition as persons under the law. This approach underscores the timeless nature of effective communication and the enduring importance of human agency in advocacy.

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