# Speaking to Convince: Sample answer - choosing Emma Watson

Emma Watson is most commonly known for her role in the Harry Potter films, but in the fall of 2014, Watson garnered attention as a spokesperson for the HeForShe-campaign. Watson spoke to the United Nations on the importance of engaging men in the cause of gender equality. In this speech, Watson seeks to reclaim feminism and to invite men to fight for a feminist society. This paper analyses her speech based on the three modes of rhetoric: ethos, pathos, and logos.

Ethos, the first mode of rhetoric, builds on the credibility of the speaker. Watson draws on her own experiences as a child where she was suddenly facing gendered stereotypes at the age of eight. Suddenly, she writes, she was “being called ‘bossy,’ because I wanted to direct the plays we would put on for our parents - but the boys were not.” She continues to build upon her own experiences of growing into her teens and seeing more direct and indirect consequences of gender inequality. She seems aware that her role as a film star might seem irrelevant for her role as a spokesperson for the HeForShe-campaign. But Watson challenges this as she emphasizes the role every decent human being should take upon themselves - namely to fight for justice. Drawing on the English philosopher Edmund Burke, she tells her audience that she asked herself “if not me, who, if not now, when.”

The second mode of rhetoric, pathos, is about engaging the audience at an emotional level. Watson plainly states early in her speech that “I need your help.” As such, Watson appeals to the sense of decency in her audience. She continues to do so when she speaks of the rights of women and men to be treated fairly. She appeals to their compassionate sides by telling compelling stories her audience can relate to: stories of women and men that have faced gender stereotypes and suffered because of them. She tells about how her father’s role in raising her is devalued, of men suffering from mental stress and anxieties because they do not conform to society’s standards. Watson shows the connection with gender stereotypes and misery by using specific examples. For instance, she refers to studies that reveal how suicide causes more deaths among British men than any other cause of death. In the end, she appeals to her audience’s conscience when she ends her speech by turning the questions she asked herself to her listeners: “…ask yourself if not me, who? If not now, when?”

Last, logos is a rhetorical mode that deals with the structure and logic of your argument. Watson expresses her concern that the word “feminism” has become a negative word associated with man hatred. Seeking to reclaim feminism, she contrasts the common understanding of the word with how feminism is defined politically and ideologically. Watson frequently uses parallel structure in order to get her message across. For instance, she writes: “If men don’t have to be aggressive in order to be accepted women won’t feel compelled to be submissive. If men don’t have to control, women won’t have to be controlled.” Another example is that she repeats the words “I’ve seen…,” making her listeners pay attention to what she says.

Watson’s HeForShe speech became a viral phenomenon that launched Watson as a new feminist icon. Undoubtedly, her status as a major film star helped, but her use of rhetorical modes brought her message out in an efficient and elegant way. Watson used ethos when she drew on her own personal experiences, made clever use of pathos with her compelling stories of the effects of gender stereotypes, and she used logos when she redefines feminism. Her choice of language highlights her point.