# Speaking to Convince: Sample answer - choosing Malala Yousafzai

This year’s Nobel Peace Prize recipient, the young, teenaged Pakistani girl Malala Yousafzai is one of today’s most prominent defenders of education for all. Yousafzai has raised her voice against extremism, having defied the Taliban’s ban on educating girls. She rose to international prominence after surviving an attack from the Taliban while on the bus with her friends from school. In the summer of 2013, she spoke to the UN General Assembly. This paper analyses her speech based on the three modes of rhetoric: ethos, pathos, and logos.

Ethos builds on the credibility of the speaker. Yousafzai claims credibility to call for education for all. She presents herself as an ordinary girl and as a representative of girls who desire an education when she writes: “I am just one of them. So here I stand, one girl among many. I speak not for myself, but so those without a voice can be heard.” This is not someone who is full of hot air, but a girl who sees herself as one of many. She insists on being the same girl as before, despite living under the constant threat of further attacks. Furthermore, she establishes connection with her audience by referring to them as her “sisters and brothers.” Still, it is clear that her real credibility comes from what she has been through. She plainly tells her audience that “…on 9 October 2012, the Taliban shot me on the left side of my forehead.” The very presence of her in the room after having been targeted by a notorious extremist organization gives credibility to her message on the rights for all to receive an education.

The second mode of rhetoric, pathos, is about engaging the audience at an emotional level. Yousafzai’s own story of being shot by a Talib evokes strong reactions in the audience. After all, she is but a young girl in the beginning of her life. She pulls the heartstrings of her audience when she discusses the wishes the girls she represents have: the wish to live in peace and safety and to receive an education. The girls’ wishes contrasted to the brutality of the Taliban paints a vivid mental image of innocent victims standing up to extremism. Yet, Yousafzai is optimistic.

“Today is the day,” she declares, while telling her audience that they can take action and do their part. Hope is still alive, she insists. Her optimistic tone is inspiring and uplifting as she insists that friends of education can stand up against extremism and let all children receive quality education.

Last, logos is a rhetorical mode that deals with the structure and logic of your argument. Yousafzai contrasts the intentions of the Taliban with the consequence the attack really had. She says “…weakness, fear and hopelessness dies. Strength, power and courage was born.” Later, she juxtaposes light with darkness, having a voice with being silenced, and pens with books-guns. These clear opposites effectively emphasize her message of the importance of her mission in life. Yousafzai’s speech ends with a call for action. By using parallel structures such as “We call upon…,” “We will…,” and “We must not…”, she underlines the message. Using the Rule of Three, she invites her audience to join her in “a glorious struggle against illiteracy, poverty and terrorism,” promoting social justice and education as means to end terrorism. In the end, she shifts gear and breaks the Rule of Three with her message that “One child, one teacher, one book and one pen can change the world.” By moving away from the usual pattern of three, she captures the attention of the audience and powerfully asserts her solution to important social and political issues.

Yousafzai’s speech captured the attention of the world because she managed to present her message to her audience by using a wide range of rhetorical devices. She established herself as a credible person, she connected with her audience by appealing to their emotions, and her speech was structured in a logical and systematic way. Together, these devices made her speech a compelling one.