

Emmeline Pankhurst's "The Plight of Women"

Q – "In what ways is Emily Pankhurst's 1908 speech ~The Plight of Women an effective speech?"

A – Emily's speech is effective in many ways. She uses many different methods such as rhetorical questions, facts and many other things besides, to make the crowd agree with her and follow her lead. Rhetorical questions are used in the speech, to help question the crowd's mind. The question is answered in each of the crowd's mind and this gives them the information, of what they really think of the situation. Such questions are "What security of maintenance has the married woman?" and "I ask you, if women had the vote, should we have had such laws?" These are very effective in a speech, and are among the most important factors, as it shows what the speechmaker's thoughts and answers are too.

Personal experience is sort of used in the speech, but in a different way. Emily speaks of personal experience as she has seen it happen with her very eyes, but does not mention it happening to her herself. Such an example is when she speaks of the woman she saw in Herefordshire during her by-election. She says that the woman was a "domestic servant" and has put the child out to nurse and had gone to jail for three months for this. Personal experience is important and effective in such a way that the crowd knows that the speechmaker has seen the situation herself or has had it done to herself. This tells the crowd that the speechmaker can be trusted and that she understands the situation, and is not just a pawn for somebody else.

Emotion is used a bit in this speech, but only in sentences where she expresses a point with severe emotion. Such a sentence is – "If he is not, if he chooses almost to starve his wife, she has no remedy." Emotion is used for demonstrating the real picture of the situation. It brings the listener to look for their feelings and also shows the reader's opinions better and emotions too, but it really helps the reader picture the situation more.

Short sentences are an important part of this speech too. These sentences include "That parent is the father" and "We turn to the Divine Court" These sentences are not long, boring and confusing like many others. But these are short, sharp and dramatic, which takes the bore out of them. Crowds acknowledge these sentences and remember them better.

There are quite a few facts in the speech too, but most of them were laws, where laws are mentioned. Such facts are "All to be decided by Act of Parliament" and when she speaks of marriage laws, where she starts off with "They are made by men for women" These are important in a speech, as they show the research has been done, and the whole speech has a ground to work on. These provide evidence and adds weight to the argument as well as put a bit of emotion in there as well. The facts are effective in these ways.

Emily focuses on the opposition's view a lot in this speech. She focuses on the views of the husband and of the law-makers. She uses sentences such as – "Men politicians are in the habit of talking to women as if there were no issues that affect women" and "The child, according to our marriage laws, has only one parent, That parent is the father" (a bit is cut out of this example). These opposition's laws are very important because it is a basis to criticize and break down, to show how the opposition can be wrong. This gives you something to oppose against and therefore it is very important and effective as a point to break down and then rectify.

Emily's tone is arguably serious and severe all around. Sentences such as "What he thinks sufficient is what she has to be content with" have a hint of anger in them, but are very serious. Also we sense a bit of anguish when she talks of the women who disowned her child going to court without a proper trial. She speaks of the father being superior so not being on trial. Tone is important in a speech as it should always match the subject. In a serious subject, you would not speak in a joking way, as in a light topic speech you would not speak in a serious way. Tone is always important on how you say something, and should always match, or you will not be taken seriously. As this speech is very serious, there are serious sentences such as "In the eyes of the law, she is not the parent of her child" Here we hint a touch of severe speech too.

Opinion statements are also important in this speech too. Such statements are, "The law ought to be altered so that those men could be dealt with." And "That parent is the mother, the unfortunate mother" These statements are important because they show what Emily or the speech maker really thinks of the situation, and that she has genuine feelings and opinions, not just speaking from somebody else's speech. Also she speaks for other's opinions, not just her own. These are very important because of these factors.

Use of the pronouns we and you really help the speech too, and they are used a few times. Examples are "We have repeated this so often at our meetings, that I think the echo of what we have said must have reached many" and "don't you agree with me that the law ought to be altered" These are effective because,

they involve the people personally and individually. They make the audience think she is talking to them personally, and that they have actually achieved some thing together rather than her herself. It helps make the crowd stay and help her.

These are all of the factors that make the speech effective. They are used to help keep the audience interested, involved and make them trust Emily and see the big picture of what is actually happening and the solutions to these problems. She has a good conclusion too, where she finishes off with a rhetorical question, asking what the children would be like if women had a say in the law, and this gives the crowd something to think about as they go away.

There are not many improvements that could be made, only a few more personal experience problems. There were not enough in this speech, there were only a few where she actually saw what happened but never experienced it.