Queen Elizabeth Speech to the Troops at Tilbury

Close reading and analysis

Your job

- Follow along and make notes in the margins of the speech/and in your TW response.

- Consider ways that you could have improved your analysis in your response based on the information covered.

Rhetorical situation

Speaker = Queen of England

Occasion = the attack from Spain

Audience = English soldiers - larger world

Purpose = face battle with courage and determination

Subject = Queen Elizabeth's support for her troops

Movement of speech

QE begins by speaking in in first person plural.

- This is the convention: the "royal we," meant to show that the ruling monarch embodies the entire nation.
- This helps QE create a sense of common purpose.

Movement continued

QE quickly switches to the singular pronoun "I" and "my" -- appropriate as she was making the speech on the same ground (literally) as the soldiers.

Movement continued

- QE then acknowledges those who would warn her against walking among her soldiers, those who urge her to "take heed how we commit ourselves to armed multitudes."

QE's response to warning

- She asserts her independence and fortitude here, telling the troops she considers them her "chiefest strength" and assures them she is not that day among them for "recreation and disport."

Summation of 1st movement

- Beginning sentence creates a sense of equity between QE and her troops

- The second sentence builds up the Queen's dramatic commitment to die in the dust with her subjects

3rd sentence shift --most famous

QE reinforces her image as the Virgin Queen. She never married, most likely for political reasons, and considered herself married to England.

She reminds the troops that she is the daughter of a king, however, and is therefore, connected to the long line of royalty and the divine rights of kings --- the belief that royal power is bestowed by God.

References to Spain and Parma

Only when she characterizes herself as a "weak and feeble woman" does she mention the enemies.

- This appeals to the gallantry of the troops who would feel obligated as gentlemen to defend their queen.
- This may also suggest that an attack by Spain is a Catholic threat to English Protestantism
- QE reassures her troops that she is with them every step of the way and that their "virtues in the field" will be rewarded.

Final movement

- This part reinforces the earlier call for national unity and reassurance that QE has the interest of her people at heart.

- The last clause invokes the rule of three - “your obedience,” “your concord,” “your valour” -- to predict a “famous victory over the enemies of my God, of my kingdom, and of my people.”

Tone

- Tone is the speaker's attitude toward the subject as revealed by his/her choice of language, and mood is the feeling created by the work.

- It is important to be able to support yours description of tone and mood with evidence from the text

QE's tone...humble, yet defiant and inspiring

- Begins with a humbling tone - she drops the royal "we"; she puts her subjects before her own safety; she offers her life for the kingdom.
- Transitions from humble to defiant: she dares the Europeans to invade.
- Finally, she makes some practical concessions, promising they will be led by her most loyal lieutenant and amply rewarded for their loyalty.