“Give Me Liberty Or Give Me Death” adapted --Patrick Henry
St. John’s Church, Richmond, VA (March 23, 1775)

Mr. President, no man thinks more highly than I do of the patriotism and intelligence of the worthy gentlemen who have just addressed the house. But reasonable men sometimes disagree. I intend no disrespect toward the other speakers. Still, entertaining, as I do, opinions of a character very opposite to theirs [disagreeing with their viewpoint], I shall speak my thoughts freely and without reserve [openly and honestly].

In your own words, explain what he is saying.

Why is he saying this?

This is no time for ceremony [false respect or courtesy]. The question before the house is one of grave importance to this country. For my own part, I consider it nothing less than a question of freedom and slavery. The issue is that significant. The debate must be uncompromising. It is only in this way that we can hope to arrive at the truth and fulfill the responsibility we owe to God and our country. If I held back my opinions at such a time, for fear of giving offense [insulting someone], I would consider myself guilty of treason toward my country. I would be lying before God.

Henry says it is not a time for “ceremony,” but for serious action. To what does he compare the country’s situation?

Explain why he thinks it would be treason not to speak his opinion on the matter?

Mr. President, it is only natural to hope for the best in any situation. In times of peril, though, hope may be a dangerous illusion. Hope may mean that we are shutting our eyes to avoid seeing a painful truth. Hope may mean that we are listening to a siren's song until she turns us into beasts [ignoring reality and only hearing what we want to hear]. Is this the role that wise men should play when they are engaged in a great and difficult struggle for liberty? Do wise men pretend that all is well when their eyes and ears tell them different? For my part, whatever anguish of spirit it may cost [no matter how painful it is to me], I am willing to hear the whole truth: to know the worst that can happen and make plans to avert it.

Henry tells his audience that we must fight. Going to war is a difficult decision. Henry tells his audience he understands them. For what are they hoping?

Circle & ID ways to persuade

Devices/ways to persuade: Rhetorical Question, Hyperbole, Metaphor, Allusion, Simile, Parallelism, Repetition
I have but one lamp by which my feet are guided \([\textit{know only one way to find my path in the dark}]\). That is the lamp of experience. I know only one way to predict the future. That is by the experience of the past. Judging by the past, I would like to know what the British have done to make us believe there is hope for peace. The last time we asked them to consider our rights as royal subjects, they smiled. Trust not that smile, sir, it will prove a snare to your feet \([\textit{will turn out to be a trap}]\). Do not allow yourself to be betrayed by a kiss \([\textit{deceived by a false show of friendship}]\).

Find a metaphor: ____________ is a _________________________________.
Explain the comparison:

Find another metaphor: ____________ is a _________________________________.
Explain this one too:

Hey! Who else was, \(\text{“betrayed by a kiss?”} \) _______________ This is an example of an _______________.

Compare their words with their actions. Why do warlike preparations cover our waters and darken our land? Are fleets and armies necessary if peace is the British intention? Have we appeared so committed to rebellion that they must use force to win back our loyalty? Let us not deceive ourselves, sir. Fleets and armies are the implements of war and enslavement. When threats have failed, fleets and armies are the arguments to which kings resort. I ask you, gentlemen, I ask you, sir, what means this martial array \([\textit{what is the purpose of this military buildup}]\)?

Seems like we might have a theme going here. List all the words that have some sort of “war” connotation:
They mean to force us into submission. Can gentlemen think of another possible motive for their actions? Has Great Britain any threatening enemy in this part of the world? No sir, she has none. These armies and navies are meant for us. They can be meant for no other. They are sent over the sea to bind and rivet those chains which the British ministry has been forging for so long.

How can we oppose them? Shall we try logic? Sir, we have been trying that for the last ten years. Have we anything new to say upon the subject? Nothing. We have discussed the subject from every possible viewpoint. Shall we resort to entreaty and supplication *(pleading and begging)*? What can we say that has not been said before? Let us not, I beseech you sir, deceive ourselves any longer.

If the same comparison, theme, or symbol continues to be mentioned paragraph after paragraph, then we can safely say, “It seems we have an *extended metaphor* in this work!” Identify the metaphor and list some words from above that help it to grow from paragraph to paragraph!

Metaphor:

Words that grow the metaphor:

Sir, we have done everything that could be done to avert the coming storm. We have petitioned; we have protested; we have pleaded. We have knelt before the king and asked for his justice. Our petitions have been slighted. Our protests have led to additional violence and insult. Our pleas have been ignored; and we have been spurned with contempt by the king.

Here’s an example of parallelism: “…petitioned…protested…pleaded.” List another example of parallelism:

And 2 different examples of repetition:
Do we wish to be free? Do we mean to preserve unbroken those precious rights for which we have so long fought? Do we plan on continuing this noble struggle? Will we keep our pledge not to abandon the struggle until our liberty is won? Then we must fight! I repeat it, sir, we must fight. An appeal to arms and God Almighty is all that is left us [our only hope].

Please identify another example of parallelism:

Identify an example of a rhetorical question:

They tell us, sir, that we are weak. They say we cannot cope with so formidable an adversary [so strong a foe]. But when shall we be stronger? Will it be next week, next year? Will it be when we are completely disarmed, and when a British guard is stationed in every house? Shall we grow strong through indecision and delay? Shall we acquire the means of effective resistance lying on our backs, hugging the delusive phantom of hope [clinging to a false hope] until our enemies have bound us hand and foot?

Sir, we are not weak if we make a proper use of the means at our disposal. We number three million. Three million people, armed in the holy cause of liberty, in such a country as this, can defeat any force our enemy sends against us. Besides; sir, we shall not fight alone. There is a just God who presides over the destinies of nations [rules the universe]. He will raise up friends to fight alongside us.

Patrick Henry is trying to convince his audience, “that we are not weak.” What two examples of “proof” does he supply to support his claim that “we are strong enough”?
The battle, sir, is not won by strength alone. Battles are won by the vigilant, by the active, by the brave. Besides, we have no choice. If we were dishonorable enough to desire peace at any price, it is not too late to retire from the contest [surrender]. We could retreat and accept submission and slavery. The British have already forged the chains of our bondage. Their rattling can be heard on the plains of Boston.

Henry uses many words that are antonyms [opposite] of “peace and freedom.” List them:

The war is inevitable. Let it come. I repeat, sir, let it come. There is no need to extenuate the matter [no need for further discussion]. Gentlemen may cry "Peace, peace" -but there is not peace. The war is actually begun! The next gale that sweeps [strong 'wind’ that blows] from the north will bring to our ears the clash of resounding arms [the sounds of battle]! Our brethren are already in the field. Why stand we here idle? What is it that gentlemen wish? What would they choose? Is life so precious, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!

Remember, this is a persuasive speech. At the end of his speech, what is Henry asking his audience to consider?

Vocabulary

**grave** (GRAYV) of a threatening nature; indicating great danger

**significant** (sig NIF uh kant) important; momentous

**treason:** act of betraying your country

**siren** (SY run) in Greek and Roman mythology, a sea nymph represented as part bird and part woman who lured sailors to their death by singing

**array** (uh RAY) an orderly arrangement of troops

**petitioned** (puh TISH und) a formal document making a request of someone in authority

**adversary** (AD vur ser ee) opponent; enemy

**delusive** (dih LOO siv) misleading; unreal

**phantom** (FAN tum) something that seems real but does not exist