

Patrick Henry's "Speech in the Virginia Convention" Analysis Questions

1. Why do you think Henry begins his speech with the statement "Mr. President: No man thinks more highly than I do of the patriotism, as well as abilities of the very worthy gentlemen who have just addressed the house. But different men often see the same subject in different lights."
2. Henry states his view in saying that, "I consider it as nothing less than a question of freedom or slavery." What does he mean by "it" and what fallacy in logic does he use here to be persuasive? What appeal does he create?
3. What is the appeal created by juxtaposing God as the Majesty of Heaven with earthly kings? What is the effect of his using the word Majesty for God and king for King George III?
4. What part of the argument is it when he says, "Mr. President, it is natural to man to indulge in the illusions of hope."
5. What rhetorical device is he using when he says, "listen to the song of that siren till she transforms us into beasts"? Explain it and discuss what appeal it creates.
6. Henry says, "Are we disposed to be of the number of those who having eyes see not, and having ears hear not, the things which so nearly concern their temporal salvation." What rhetorical device is he using? Explain its persuasive effect and what appeal it creates.
7. What opposing argument does Henry begin with in paragraph six? How does he concede to it? How does he refute it? What rhetorical devices and strategies does he use in the presentation of these arguments which are persuasive? What appeals does he create?
8. In the last sentence, Henry once again makes his point that he equates British rule with death by saying, "but as for me, give me liberty, or give me death!" What syntactical devices does he use in this clause which makes it persuasive? What appeal does he create? He can be using death here in a literal sense, but he also can be using it metaphorically. Explain his persuasive use of this metaphor.

