 Narrative and rhetoric: Speech extracts

Barack Obama - election victory speech 2008

‘…This election had many firsts and many stories that will be told for generations. But one that's on my mind tonight's about a woman who cast her ballot in Atlanta. She's a lot like the millions of others who stood in line to make their voice heard in this election except for one thing: Ann Nixon Cooper is 106 years old.

She was born just a generation past slavery; a time when there were no cars on the road or planes in the sky; when someone like her couldn't vote for two reasons - because she was a woman and because of the color of her skin.

And tonight, I think about all that she's seen throughout her century in America -- the heartache and the hope; the struggle and the progress; the times we were told that we can't, and the people who pressed on with that American creed: Yes we can.

At a time when women's voices were silenced and their hopes dismissed, she lived to see them stand up and speak out and reach for the ballot. Yes we can.

When there was despair in the dust bowl and depression across the land, she saw a nation conquer fear itself with a New Deal, new jobs, a new sense of common purpose. Yes we can.

When the bombs fell on our harbor and tyranny threatened the world, she was there to witness a generation rise to greatness and a democracy was saved. Yes we can.

She was there for the buses in Montgomery, the hoses in Birmingham, a bridge in Selma, and a preacher from Atlanta who told a people that "We Shall Overcome." Yes we can.

A man touched down on the moon, a wall came down in Berlin, a world was connected by our own science and imagination.

And this year, in this election, she touched her finger to a screen, and cast her vote, because after 106 years in America, through the best of times and the darkest of hours, she knows how America can change.

Yes we can.

America, we have come so far. We have seen so much. But there is so much more to do. So tonight, let us ask ourselves -- if our children should live to see the next century; if my daughters should be so lucky to live as long as Ann Nixon Cooper, what change will they see? What progress will we have made?

This is our chance to answer that call. This is our moment.

This is our time, to put our people back to work and open doors of opportunity for our kids; to restore prosperity and promote the cause of peace; to reclaim the American dream and reaffirm that fundamental truth, that, out of many, we are one; that while we breathe, we hope. And where we are met with cynicism and doubts and those who tell us that we can't, we will respond with that timeless creed that sums up the spirit of a people: Yes, we can…’

<http://obamaspeeches.com/E11-Barack-Obama-Election-Night-Victory-Speech-Grant-Park-Illinois-November-4-2008.htm>

How does Obama combine rhetoric and narrative devices to present his vision?

Kevin Rudd - Parliamentary apology to the stolen generation - 2008

I MOVE that today we honour the Indigenous peoples of this land, the oldest continuing cultures in human history.

We reflect on their past mistreatment. We reflect in particular on the mistreatment of those who were Stolen Generations—this blemished chapter in our nation’s history.

The time has now come for the nation to turn a new page in Australia’s history by righting the wrongs of the past and so moving forward with confidence to the future.

We apologise for the laws and policies of successive Parliaments and governments that have inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss on these our fellow Australians. We apologise especially for the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, their communities and their country.

For the pain, suffering and hurt of these Stolen Generations, their descendants and for their families left behind, we say sorry.

To the mothers and the fathers, the brothers and the sisters, for the breaking up of families and communities, we say sorry.

And for the indignity and degradation thus inflicted on a proud people and a proud culture, we say sorry.

We the Parliament of Australia respectfully request that this apology be received in the spirit in which it is offered as part of the healing of the nation.

For the future we take heart; resolving that this new page in the history of our great continent can now be written.

We today take this first step by acknowledging the past and laying claim to a future that embraces all Australians.

A future where this Parliament resolves that the injustices of the past must never, never happen again. A future where we harness the determination of all Australians, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to close the gap that lies between us in life expectancy, educational achievement and economic opportunity.

A future where we embrace the possibility of new solutions to enduring problems where old approaches have failed.

A future based on mutual respect, mutual resolve and mutual responsibility. A future where all Australians, whatever their origins, are truly equal partners, with equal opportunities and with an equal stake in shaping the next chapter in the history of this great country, Australia.

What is Rudd’s speculative vision and how does he convey it using the rhetoric of speech?

Julia Gillard - Parliamentary Misogyny Speech - 2012

I will not be lectured about sexism and misogyny by this man. I will not. And the Government will not be lectured about sexism and misogyny by this man. Not now, not ever.

The Leader of the Opposition says that people who hold sexist views and who are misogynists are not appropriate for high office. Well I hope the Leader of the Opposition has got a piece of paper and he is writing out his resignation. Because if he wants to know what misogyny looks like in modern Australia, he doesn't need a motion in the House of Representatives, he needs a mirror…

…The Leader of the Opposition says “If it's true, Stavros, that men have more power generally speaking than women, is that a bad thing?”

And then a discussion ensues, and another person says “I want my daughter to have as much opportunity as my son.” To which the Leader of the Opposition says “Yeah, I completely agree, but what if men are by physiology or temperament, more adapted to exercise authority or to issue command?”…

… And then of course, I was offended too by the sexism, by the misogyny of the Leader of the Opposition catcalling across this table at me as I sit here as Prime Minister, “If the Prime Minister wants to, politically speaking, make an honest woman of herself…”, something that would never have been said to any man sitting in this chair. I was offended when the Leader of the Opposition went outside in the front of Parliament and stood next to a sign that said “Ditch the witch.”

I was offended when the Leader of the Opposition stood next to a sign that described me as a man's bitch. I was offended by those things.

Misogyny, sexism, every day from this Leader of the Opposition.

Every day in every way, across the time the Leader of the Opposition has sat in that chair and I've sat in this chair, that is all we have heard from him…

How has Gillard used the rhetoric of speech and narrative conventions to create a particular representation of the character of Tony Abbott, Leader of the Opposition?

Deng Thiak Adut - Australia Day Address - 2016

…Let me share with you parts of my story. It may be unfamiliar to those who have been born and grown up in a peaceful Australia. To those who have come as refugees from the world's trouble spots, parts of this story will be too familiar. A point of this story is to emphasise how very lucky we are to enjoy freedom from fear, and how very unlucky are many, many others who neither choose, nor deserve their fate.

I was born in a small fishing village called Malek, in the South Sudan. My father was a fisherman and we had a banana farm. I am one of eight children born to Mr Thiak Adut Garang and Ms Athieu Akau Deng. So the parts of my name are drawn from both my parents. My given name is Deng which means god of the rain. In those parts of this wide brown land that are short of water my name might be a good omen. I have a nickname: Auoloch, which means swallow. Alas I couldn't fly and as a young boy, about the age of a typical second grader in Sydney, I was conscripted into an army.

As they took me away from my home and family I didn't even understand what freedoms I had lost. I didn't understand how fearful I should have been. I was young. I was ignorant. I lost the freedom to read and write. I lost the freedom to sing children's songs. I lost the right to be innocent. I lost the right to be a child.

Instead, I was taught to sing war songs. In place of the love of life I was taught to love the death of others. I had one freedom – the freedom to die and I'll return to that a little later.

I lost the right to say what I thought. In place of 'free speech', I was an oppressor to those who wanted to express opinions that were different to those who armed me, fed me, told me what to think, where to go and what to do.

And there was something else very special to me that was taken away. I was denied the right to become an initiated member of my tribe. The mark of 'inclusiveness' was denied to me.

I had to wait until I became an Australian citizen to know that I belonged.

As an Australian I am proud that we have a national anthem. It's ours and to hear it played and sung is to feel pride, pride that we are a nation of free people. It has a historical background that is familiar to those who grew up here, but which is not easily understood by newcomers. I found it useful to take some lines from our anthem to bring together what I want to share with you.

To be here today, talking about freedom from fear, about the rewards that come from thinking 'inclusively', rather than thinking 'divisively', is to achieve something that the child conscript Deng could not imagine…

How does Deng’s telling of his personal story make his message more powerful?

Malala Yousafzai - United Nations Address - 2013

…There are hundreds of human rights activists and social workers who are not only speaking for their rights, but who are struggling to achieve their goal of peace, education and equality. Thousands of people have been killed by the terrorists and millions have been injured. I am just one of them. So here I stand. So here I stand, one girl, among many. I speak not for myself, but so those without a voice can be heard. Those who have fought for their rights. Their right to live in peace. Their right to be treated with dignity. Their right to equality of opportunity. Their right to be educated.

Dear friends, on 9 October 2012, the Taliban shot me on the left side of my forehead. They shot my friends, too. They thought that the bullets would silence us, but they failed. And out of that silence came thousands of voices. The terrorists thought they would change my aims and stop my ambitions. But nothing changed in my life except this: weakness, fear and hopelessness died. Strength, power and courage were born.

I am the same Malala. My ambitions are the same. My hopes are the same. And my dreams are the same.

Dear sisters and brothers, I am not against anyone. Neither am I here to speak in terms of personal revenge against the Taliban or any other terrorist group. I am here to speak for the right of education for every child. I want education for the sons and daughters of the Taliban and all the terrorists and extremists.

I do not even hate the Taliban who shot me. Even if there was a gun in my hand and he was standing in front of me, I would not shoot him.

This is the compassion I have learned from Mohammed, the prophet of mercy, Jesus Christ and Lord Buddha.

This is the legacy of change I have inherited from Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela and Mohammed Ali Jinnah.

This is the philosophy of nonviolence that I have learned from Gandhi, Bacha Khan and Mother Teresa.

And this is the forgiveness that I have learned from my father and from my mother.

This is what my soul is telling me: be peaceful and love everyone…

How does Yousafzai’s combination of powerful rhetoric and narrative convey her message of love and peace?