

and let it come! I repeat it, sir, let it come! ⑥
It is in vain, sir, to extenuate¹⁵ the matter. Gentlemen may cry peace, peace—but there is no peace. The war is actually begun! The next gale that sweeps from the north will bring to our ears the

15. extenuate v.: weaken.

⑥ **?** What fiery language and loaded words does Henry use in this paragraph? What effect do you think his words would have had on the audience?

clash of resounding arms! Our brethren are already in the field! Why stand we here idle? What is it that gentlemen wish? What would they have? Is life so dear, 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! ⑦

⑦ To wrap up his speech, Henry uses a final strong **appeal to emotion**. **?** What makes his conclusions so powerful?

Response and Analysis



Indiana Academic Standards
11.2.1

Reading Check

1. According to the first two paragraphs of this speech, why is Henry speaking out?
2. In the third paragraph, what facts does Henry offer to convince his listeners that Great Britain will not respond to peaceful petitions?
3. In the fourth paragraph, what facts does Henry offer to prove that the colonists have tried everything and that war is now the only solution?
4. According to the fifth paragraph, what answers does Henry give to those who say that the colonists cannot win the war?
5. In the sixth paragraph, how does Henry wrap up his argument?

Thinking Critically

6. Review your two-column chart, noting especially the appeals you starred and those you marked with an X. What made these appeals powerful or weak? Explain whether you are more convinced by Henry's appeals to **reason** or his appeals to **emotion**.
7. In the fourth paragraph, what **metaphors** does Henry use to describe the coming war?

8. Henry makes use of the **rhetorical question**—a question that is asked for effect. Rhetorical questions, which are often used in **persuasion**, presume that the audience agrees with the speaker on the answers and so no answer is expected or required. Find the series of rhetorical questions in the fifth paragraph of this speech. How does this technique make Henry's speech more persuasive?
9. Because his audience knew the Bible, as well as classical mythology, Henry knew he could count on certain **allusions** to produce emotional effects. Look up the classical or biblical passages that Henry alludes to in each of the following statements from his speech. How would each allusion relate to the conflict in Virginia in 1775? Could any of them relate to life today? Explain.
 - "We are apt to . . . listen to the song of that siren, till she transforms us into beasts." (*Odyssey*, Books 10 and 12)
 - "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?" (Ezekiel 12:2)

SKILLS FOCUS

Literary Skills
Analyze the effect of persuasive language.

Reading Skills
Analyze the effect of persuasive language, including appeals to reason and appeals to emotion.

Writing Skills
Write an essay comparing contrasting speeches with a sermon.

Vocabulary Skills
Understand the meaning of synonyms.

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Keywords: