Unit 5 — Political Discourse — Teacher copy

Track E · Klasse 12 · Niveau E (Basisfach / Leistungsfach)

Niveau E

1. Reading

Read the text and use it for the activities below.

Reading — three excerpts (paraphrased)

Lincoln (1863): Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Thatcher (1980): To those waiting with bated breath for that favourite media catchphrase, the U-turn, I have only one thing to say. You turn if you want to. The lady's not for turning.

COP30 delegate (2024): I am seventeen. The policy you write today is the policy I am eighty-two years old in. I would like, accordingly, to be more than a footnote in this room.

Vocabulary — rhetorical analysis

ethos / pathos / logos, kairos (the right moment), anaphora (repeated opening), antithesis (balanced opposition), tricolon (three-part structure), parallelism, frame-setting, register shift, periodic sentence, asyndeton.

2. Practise

Niveau E — controlled

1. Match: ethos → speaker's authority; pathos → emotional appeal; logos → reasoned argument; kairos → timing.
2. Identify: *Four score and seven years ago* uses what acoustic move? (parallelism / archaic register / both)

Niveau E — productive

3. For each excerpt, identify one structural and one lexical rhetorical move.

3. Your turn

Rhetorical-analysis essay, 400 words. Pick one of the three excerpts. Identify ethos / pathos / logos balance + 3 specific rhetorical moves + 1 kairos observation. Use 4 integrated quotes + 6 academic discourse markers + 1 cleft.

Sample

Margaret Thatcher's 1980 the lady's not for turning line is, technically, one of the most efficient lines of post-war British political rhetoric. The mechanics deserve close reading. The antithesis — *"You turn if you want to. The lady's not for turning"* — sets up two grammatical subjects (*you / the lady*) and two contrastive verb phrases. Accordingly, the second clause borrows the energy of the first while inverting it; the audience laughs at the *you*, then registers the *not* before the speaker has to argue for it. Beneath the antithesis sits a deliberate register shift: *the lady* — third-person, stately, almost fairy-tale — replaces the expected first-person *I*. The shift performs a Thatcher-specific kind of ethos: she presents her position as institutional, as if the lady were not the speaker but the office. More specifically, the line is also a literary allusion to Christopher Fry's 1948 play *The Lady's Not for Burning*; the educated audience hears the reference, the wider audience hears the rhythm. Both registers do work simultaneously. By contrast with Lincoln's high-pathos *"conceived in Liberty"*, Thatcher's pathos is dry — almost an anti-pathos — and the line lands precisely because of the restraint. Logos is implicit rather than argued: the audience supplies the reasoning. Kairos is exemplary: October 1980, three months into a recession, with media speculation about a U-turn at its peak. It is precisely the timing that makes the antithesis political rather than literary. In this regard, the line is a small masterclass in compression. Ten words do the work that a paragraph of conventional defence would have done less well. The lesson, for the rhetorical analyst, is that the most-quoted lines in political speech almost always combine three moves at once.

4. Further reading / listening

- Sam Leith, *You Talkin' to Me? Rhetoric from Aristotle to Obama*.
- Brian MacArthur, *The Penguin Book of Twentieth-Century Speeches*.

5. Teacher answer key

Controlled. 1. all true.

2. archaic register (and also acoustic emphasis through the high vowels).

Productive. 3. Open.