

Lesson Name : 21

Lesson Title : Declaration of Conscience, Section 2

Course Name : English 2 Part 1 [Honors]

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### Essential Instruction

Please read Margaret Chase Smith's speech "Declaration of Conscience" from the section entitled "[A Challenge to the Republican Party](#)" through the end of the speech.



A **rhetorical work** is one that is analyzed to see *how and why* an author spoke or wrote, instead of analyzing *what* the author wrote. This is a different approach is often used in literary analysis, and is done primarily for a speech or a letter that directly addresses a topic of controversy or importance. For example, Margaret Chase Smith's speech "Declaration of Conscience" speech is a response to one of her fellow Senators, Joseph McCarthy's actions.

When you are analyzing a **rhetorical work**, the first thing you should do is identify what it's about. This is the stepping-stone to being able to identify what the author's approach to the subject is. Smith is writing about the degradation, or disgrace, that McCarthy has brought to many government workers and civilians. Although his name is never mentioned, he is the implied subject of this speech. Here is an example from the text.

I don't like the way the Senate has been made a rendezvous for vilification, for selfish political gain at the sacrifice of individual reputations and national unity. I am not proud of the way we smear outsiders from the Floor of the Senate and hide behind the cloak of congressional immunity and still place ourselves beyond criticism on the Floor of the Senate.

After you've identified *what* the text is addressing, then you should think about *how* the author discusses the topic. Is the author writing to inform, to criticize, or to persuade the audience? Many times there may be more than one intent, or purpose, but this awareness will allow you to have more information about *why* the author is writing or speaking.

Now you should think about why the piece is effective (or not.) Smith's speech is effective because she uses many techniques of **rhetoric**. One of these is the **repetition of phrases or words** to accent the speech's central meaning. Here is an example from the text.

America is rapidly losing its position as leader of the world simply because the Democratic Administration has pitifully failed to provide effective leadership.  
The Democratic Administration has completely confused the American people by its daily contradictory grave warnings and optimistic assurances--that show the people that our Democratic Administration has no idea of where it is going.

Clearly, Smith takes issue with “the Democratic Administration” currently in control of the White House. She repeats the phrase to emphasize that this is whom she is speaking out against.

### Cultural and Historical Significance

The **cultural significance** of this speech is also very important to consider. Smith is writing in response to a wave of fear that has many Americans worried about the possible infiltration of Communism in America, and the fear of being bombed by the Soviets. Smith’s speech was the first in the Senate used to try to stop the accusations and slander that Senator McCarthy was causing.

The **historical significance** is important, as well. Senator McCarthy’s accusations against both government officials and civilians ruined their lives in some instances. It also created a fear that the democracy of America would fall to communism. “McCarthyism” is now a term that is used to describe the unfair accusation or investigation of people. McCarthy was ultimately censored, which is one of the only times in history this type of action was taken against a US Senator.

### Context Clues

Smith uses some complex political terms that need to be identified in order to understand the meaning of the speech. As you are reading, you should use **context clues** of “helper” words, to help you to identify unfamiliar words in a sentence. Here is an example of using **context clues** to determine the meaning of an unfamiliar word.

The Democratic Administration has completely confused the American people by its daily **contradictory** grave warnings and optimistic assurances – that show the people that our Democratic Administration has no idea of where it is going.

The **context clues** help the reader determine the meaning of the word, **contradictory**, are as follows: “confused,” “grave warnings” and “optimistic assurances,” (these two phrases are opposites), and “no idea of where it is going.” All of these words indicate confusion and lack of organization. This should lead you to conclude that the word **contradictory** means *inconsistent* and *opposing*.



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### Vocabulary

Understanding the vocabulary can help you to gain meaning from the material. Here are some vocabulary words that are used in this lesson.

1. **integrity** – noun – the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles; moral uprightness
2. **calumny** – noun – false and defamatory statements that damage someone's reputation
3. **bigotry** – noun – intolerance toward those who hold different opinions from oneself
4. **smear** – verb – to damage a reputation through false accusations
5. **exploitation** – noun – the practice of using of someone or something in a way that helps one unfairly
6. **dictatorship** – noun – a country governed by one leader with absolute power
7. **allay** – verb – to diminish or put at rest
8. **sensationalism** – noun – the use of exciting or shocking stories or language at the expense of accuracy
9. **rendezvous** – noun – a meeting at an agreed time and place
10. **vilification** – noun – the act of speaking or writing about someone or something in an abusively critical manner