WRITING THROUGH THE RHETORICAL MODES

SECTION 1: A RHETORICAL MODES READER

Chapter Two: The Expository Mode

Comparison and Contrast: Reading 2

Chief Seattle, 1854 Oration

Chief Seattle (1786-1866) was born near Puget Sound and became chief of both the Duwamish and Suquamish tribes of the Northwest. The city of Seattle, Washington bears his name. He is remembered for his accommodations to white settlers; however, in this speech attributed to him, he argues for the respect for the land and for Native Americans' right to live peacefully on it.

http://citytech.ezproxy.cuny.edu:2048/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=f6h&AN=21212610&site=ehost-live&scope=site

Questions for Reading and Discussion

1) What are the reasons Chief Seattle gives for his plan to accept the offer made by the "Big Chief at Washington" (President Franklin Pierce) to buy his people's land?

2) What vision of death and the afterlife does the Chief invoke in this speech? Why do you think he devotes so much of his address to these themes?

3) Is Seattle's speech friendly toward the White Man, or condemnatory? Point to passages in the text to support your answer.

Questions for Writing and Research

1) Make a list of words and phrases Seattle uses to describe the Red Man, his own people; then, make a list of words and phrases he uses to describe the White Man. What implicit argument about the nature of these two types of Man emerges from Seattle's imagery?

2) Several versions of this speech exist, including a much shorter "letter" version. The version you have read was originally published in the *Seattle Sunday Star* on October 29, 1887, and, taking shape 33 years after the original speech, is necessarily of uncertain authenticity. Research the different versions of this speech, including the letter. How do they differ in content? Why might the letter version have been read and circulated by activists during the environmental movement of the 1960s and '70s?

Original content by Ashar Foley.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License.