

SOAPSTone analysis: Shirley Chisholm's 'Equal Rights for Women'

Part I: SOAPSTone analysis

Read Shirley Chisholm's landmark address, 'Equal Rights for Women' (delivered to the House of Representatives on May 21, 1969):

<https://openbooks.library.umass.edu/giftsofspeech/chapter/shirley-chisholm-equal-rights-for-women-1969/>

Context: Shirley Chisholm (NY) was the first Black woman elected to Congress. In this 1969 speech, she urges support for the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA).

Note: The transcript uses historical discriminatory language. You may paraphrase it in your analysis.

Analytical vocabulary

- **Speaker (rhetor):** The voice delivering the message, including their background, perspective, and credibility (ethos).
- **Occasion:** The historical context, immediate setting, and specific problem or social issue (exigence) prompting the response.
- **Audience:** The primary and secondary groups being addressed, whose values and expectations shape the message.
- **Purpose:** The ultimate goal, call to action, or specific change the speaker urges the audience to support.
- **Subject:** The central topic, main idea, or core issue examined in the text.
- **Tone:** The speaker's attitude toward the subject and audience, conveyed through deliberate word choice.

SOAPSTone is a lens for our analysis. It does not establish how Chisholm planned her speech.

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1. Speaker (rhetor): Who is delivering this address? Describe her background and perspective using relevant historical context, and explain how she establishes credibility (ethos) using located textual evidence from the speech.

2. Occasion (exigence): What is the immediate context, date, and location of this speech? What specific problem or social issue (exigence) prompted Chisholm to speak at this moment? Support your answer with located textual evidence or historical context.

3. Audience: Who is the primary, immediate audience being addressed, and who is the secondary audience? How does Chisholm tailor her arguments to appeal to these different groups? Support your answer with located textual evidence.

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4. Purpose: What is Chisholm's ultimate goal or call to action? What specific change is she urging her audience to support? (Clearly distinguish this from the general subject, and support your answer with located textual evidence).

5. Subject: What is the central topic or main idea of the speech? (Clearly distinguish this from the speaker's purpose, and support your answer with located textual evidence).

6. Tone: What is Chisholm's attitude toward her subject and audience? Select a defensible tone, quote a short phrase or paraphrase a located passage from the speech, and explain its rhetorical effect.

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Part II: Rhetorical synthesis & précis

Complete Q8. Q7 is an optional extension. Use specific passages to support your interpretation.

7. Rhetorical synthesis & evaluation (optional extension): Evaluate one rhetorical choice Chisholm makes (e.g., her appeal to ethos, her logical structure, or her direct tone). How might this choice influence her intended audience, and what is a potential limitation of this strategy? A critical judgement is welcome.

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8. The four-sentence rhetorical précis: Use the structured frame below to write a complete, cohesive four-sentence précis of Chisholm's speech.

1. Sentence 1 (author, title, date, genre and main claim): [Author], [credentials], in her [genre] '[Title]' (1969), argues that [claim].
2. Sentence 2 (development of the argument): She develops this claim by [how she develops/proves thesis].
3. Sentence 3 (purpose and intended outcome): Her purpose is to [action] in order to [outcome].
4. Sentence 4 (audience and tone): Addressing [audience], she establishes a [tone] tone to [effect].
