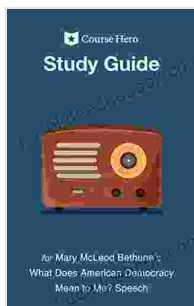


A Comprehensive Study Guide for Mary McLeod Bethune's "What Does American Democracy Mean to Me?"

Mary McLeod Bethune was an African American educator, civil rights activist, and philanthropist who dedicated her life to fighting for the advancement of her people. In her famous speech, "What Does American Democracy Mean to Me?", delivered in 1935, Bethune eloquently articulated her vision of a truly democratic America, one that embraced the principles of equality, justice, and opportunity for all. This study guide provides an in-depth analysis of Bethune's speech, examining its historical context, key themes, and rhetorical strategies.



Study Guide for Mary McLeod Bethune's What Does American Democracy Mean to Me? Speech by Course Hero

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

Language : English

File size : 572 KB

Screen Reader : Supported

Print length : 15 pages

Lending : Enabled



Historical Context

Bethune's speech was delivered at a time of great turmoil and racial tension in the United States. The Jim Crow era was in full force, and African Americans faced systemic discrimination and violence. The Great

Depression had also taken a heavy toll on the nation, exacerbating economic inequalities and social unrest.

Key Themes

1. The Promise of Democracy

Bethune began her speech by emphasizing the lofty ideals upon which the United States was founded. She argued that the principles of liberty, equality, and justice for all were not simply abstract concepts, but rather fundamental rights that all Americans deserved to enjoy.

2. The Reality of Discrimination

While Bethune acknowledged the promise of democracy, she also candidly addressed the glaring gap between this ideal and the lived experiences of African Americans. She spoke out against the pervasive racism and discrimination that Black people faced in education, employment, housing, and voting.

3. The Importance of Education

Bethune believed that education was the key to unlocking the potential of African Americans and achieving true equality. She dedicated her life to founding and running schools that provided quality education to Black children. In her speech, she emphasized the transformative power of education, arguing that it could empower individuals to overcome adversity and fight for their rights.

4. The Role of Citizenship

Bethune believed that African Americans had a duty to be active participants in American democracy. She urged her audience to vote, run

for office, and speak out against injustice. She argued that citizenship was not a passive status, but rather an active commitment to the betterment of society.

Rhetorical Strategies

1. Pathos

Bethune's speech is deeply rooted in pathos, the use of emotional appeals to connect with the audience. She uses vivid imagery and personal anecdotes to illustrate the struggles and triumphs of African Americans. Her use of language is both powerful and evocative, designed to stir the emotions of her listeners.

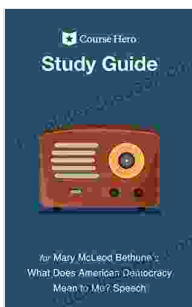
2. Ethos

Bethune establishes ethos, or credibility, through her own personal experiences and accomplishments. She draws on her decades of work in education and civil rights activism to demonstrate her expertise and authority on the subject of American democracy. She also uses her platform to elevate the voices of other African Americans, giving them a chance to share their stories of discrimination and oppression.

3. Logos

While Bethune's speech is primarily based on emotional appeals, she also incorporates elements of logos, or logical reasoning, to support her arguments. She cites historical examples and statistics to illustrate the systemic nature of racism in America. She also uses logical fallacies, such as faulty analogy, to expose the weaknesses of segregationist arguments.

Mary McLeod Bethune's "What Does American Democracy Mean to Me?" is a powerful and moving speech that continues to resonate today. Her words remind us of the unfinished work of democracy and the importance of fighting for the full inclusion of all Americans. This study guide has provided an in-depth analysis of Bethune's speech, examining its historical context, key themes, and rhetorical strategies. By understanding the nuances of this seminal work, we can better appreciate the legacy of Mary McLeod Bethune and the ongoing struggle for social justice.



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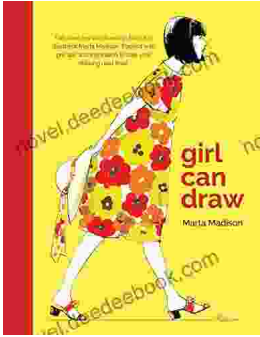
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