President Franklin D. Roosevelt found himself in an uncomfortable position on December 8, 1941. After Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, President Roosevelt needed to develop a message for the public to evoke a favorable response. To be specific, he needed to convince Congress and American citizens that his decision to retaliate on the Empire of Japan was indeed the best decision. In using the neoclassical method of criticism, it is evident that President Roosevelt was able to have an effect on the audience in way that reached a desired outcome with his speech, *A Date Which Will Live in Infamy*, by using an effective combination of invention, organizational pattern, style and delivery. After looking at the speech, *A Date Which Will Live in Infamy*, and reviewing the neoclassical method, a good foundation will be reached in order to analyze the invention, arrangement, style, and effect of the speech.

Since the speech, *A Date Which Will Live in Infamy*, was desperate to seek the approval of the intended audience, analyzing it with the neoclassical method of criticism is interesting. According to Hunt, any speech that has an influence on the behavior of the public can be criticized effectively (378). Using the neoclassical method, one can find whether President Roosevelt was able to evoke the intended response from the audience, while using the available means of persuasion (Sillars 87). A speech might be considered successful at the time that it is given due to applause or positive feedback, but analyzing...
it later, in some cases, is more beneficial when measuring whether the desired outcome was achieved. Before determining whether the result was successful, evaluating the context is important.

Franklin D. Roosevelt had been in the office of presidency for nine years before he gave the speech. The American public knew him and he had developed a good deal of credibility after he brought them through the Great Depression. Not only was he their well-loved President, but he was also the Commander-in-Chief of the United States Military. A controversial and tragic message is always better received when it is delivered by a rhetor who has developed credibility and has won the favor of the audience.

The rhetorical situation in which this speech was delivered was unusual. The speech was given in response to an unexpected attack. Since it was not a common situation, it made it more difficult and important to correctly choose the means of persuasion. The speech had to inform the public of the attack, the reason for it, and what was going to be done in response. In a situation such as this, a timely response is very important. The audience was very anxious for the response because like the speech states, it is “a date that will live in infamy,” just like the speech did (Appendix A, 1).

Since neoclassical criticism seeks the audience response, identifying the audience first is important. The audience of President Roosevelt’s *A Date Which Will Live in Infamy* was the world. After the attack of Japan on Pearl Harbor, the whole world was wondering what the United States was going to do in response. More specifically, the immediate audience was Congress; American citizens and the Japanese Army were a part of the audience receiving the message by radio and television. Everyone would have
known of the attack at that point, but they would have known very few details. However, they would have known the rhetor, President Roosevelt, since he was nearing the end of his second term. The immediate audience, both houses of congress, seemed rather pleased with the speech, as applause can be heard in the background.

**Invention**

*Logos*

President Roosevelt made several arguments in *A Date Which Will Live in Infamy*. A rhetor uses logos to persuade the audience to agree and reach the desired outcome by using logical or rational claims (Sillars 88). In this case, President Roosevelt pointed out reasons that would warrant an attack of retaliation against Japan. For example, he said, The attack yesterday on the Hawaiian Islands has caused severe damage to American naval and military forces. Very many American lives have been lost. In addition American ships have been reported torpedoes on the high seas between San Francisco and Honolulu (Appendix A, 4).

The intention of this claim is to evoke a feeling of vengeance from the targeted audience, the American people. After hearing of the losses on American ground, they would naturally agree that military action must be taken. A similar claim is later made to evoke the same response. He said, “Hostilities exist. There is no blinking at the fact that our people, our territory and our interests are in grave danger” (Appendix A, 10). President Roosevelt told the Americans that they were in danger of further attacks so they would respond approvingly to his decision to retaliate.

Another powerful argument that is made is found in paragraph six. He said, “The people of the United States have already formed their opinions and well understand the
implications to the very life and safety of our nation” (Appendix A, 6). This argument has the potential to subconsciously convince a person that if they do not agree, then they are in the minority. As a result, it is a very persuasive argument. In paragraph nine, another claim is made with a very similar effect, he said, “I believe I interpret the will of Congress and of the people when I assert that we will not only defend ourselves to the uttermost but will make very certain that this form of treachery shall never endanger us again” (Appendix A, 9). Both of the statements establish common ground between the rhetor and the audience, by assuming what the audience would want.

Pathos

When making an argument, the use of emotion by a rhetor can be very effective. A rhetor exemplifies pathos when he uses emotions and illustrates values that produce the same feelings from the audience. President Roosevelt wanted the audience to feel calmed, comforted, and warned at the same time. With that in mind, he had to have that same emotion in giving the speech. Carefully, he chose language that would have that effect on the audience. He kept most of the speech very factual instead of focusing on what would happen without retaliation. He also highlighted American values such as confidence, determination, triumph, and faith when he said, “With confidence in our armed forces-with the unbounded determination of our people-we will gain the inevitable triumph-so help us God” (Appendix A, 11). The use of emotion in A Date Which Will Live in Infamy is very evident and effective in working to build credibility for President Roosevelt as well.

Ethos
Credibility or *ethos* is important for a rhetor, especially when he is trying to persuade the audience. President Roosevelt did not have to work very hard for credibility among his audience since they already knew him. However, as Aristotle said, real trust should be developed by the speech and not the reputation (Sillars 100). President Roosevelt needed to remind them that he was going to make decisions that would be pleasing for everyone. He proved to his audience that he was working for a decision that would be in the best interest of them when he said, “I believe I interpret the will of the Congress and of the people when I assert that we will not only defend ourselves to the uttermost but will make very certain that this form of treachery shall never endanger us again” (Appendix A, 9). In saying that, he shows an attempt to put their preferences as his priority, solidifying his established credibility to reach the desired effect.

**Arrangement**

*Organization*

While the opinion of the audience on the rhetor is important, the rhetor must also carefully organize the message. Every speech should be organized in a manner that places the main issues in a logical order (Sillars 103). In *A Date Which Will Live in Infamy*, the organization pattern could be problem-solution, chronological, or cause-effect since he addressed the attack first. The attack was definitely the problem, the beginning or the start of things discussed, and the cause for the speech. He addressed the problem first because the audience knew of the attack and was waiting to hear the response. The solution, the end, and the effect of the three organization patterns would be the response to the attack: retaliation. President Roosevelt waited until the end of the speech to ask the audience to join him in the decision to respond to the attack militarily. He said, “I ask that
the Congress declare that since the unprovoked and dastardly attack by Japan on Sunday, December seventh, a state of war has existed between the United States and the Japanese Empire” (Appendix A, 12). The applause by the audience that can be heard is a good measure for the effectiveness of the organizational pattern used. After the sixth paragraph, there was applause after each paragraph until the end. The organization in *A Date Which Will Live in Infamy* was effective in evoking desirable emotions from the audience.

**Style/Delivery**

President Roosevelt maintains a slow, articulate, and militant verbal style throughout the delivery of *A Date Which Will Live in Infamy*. The way that he spoke was very easy for any type of audience member to understand. His choice to speak slowly and with a militant tone was important to prevent a sense of alarm for the audience. In a situation such as this, the audience could have been very easily worried or scared, but President Roosevelt chose to remain calm and focus on what could be done. The language in the speech was very concise and easy to understand. Unnecessary information was avoided to keep the message simple and effective.

The delivery style used in *A Date Which Will Live in Infamy* was probably manuscript due to the situation to which President Roosevelt was responding. As said before, the correct usage of tone and language was important and relying on an impromptu method of delivery would not be wise. In the case that something was misspoken, the audience would be worried and credibility for the rhetor could potentially be lost. For the same reason, President Roosevelt would not have been likely to memorize the speech. However, he would have memorized the main points to help him speak with
ease and confidence. After analyzing the delivery of *A Date Which Will Live in Infamy* with neoclassical criticism, one can see the important role that it plays in having an effect of the audience.

**Effect**

According to Foss, the main purpose of doing a neoclassical criticism is to analyze the effect of the artifact on the intended audience. After analyzing the other canons of rhetorical theory, the effect of the artifact is clear. Due to the combined use of *logos, pathos,* and *ethos,* by President Roosevelt, his message was well received by the audience. Congress applauded him, the Americans and the allies supported him, and the Empire of Japan was challenged. People were left content after hearing the speech and the decision of President Roosevelt to retaliate. According to Ladd, in 1989, *CBS, New York Times,* and *Tokyo Broadcasting System* conducted a poll and found, “84 percent of Americans and 83 percent of Japanese said that the enmity of World War II is 'all in the past'” (18). The poll shows that the speech, *A Date Which Will Live in Infamy,* helped the audience remain content over the appending war. If the majority of the people are still not bitter over the attack, then one of the most powerful speeches in history must have aided in reaching that sense of peace. A poll was also conducted the day after the nuclear weapon fell on Nagasaki that showed 85 percent approval of the decision by Roosevelt to retaliate (Kohut 152).

The speech, *A Date Which Will Live in Infamy,* delivered by President Roosevelt had a great effect on the audience. His speech played a significant role in guiding public opinion of the war at the time of attack and years later. Americans and the rest of the world were effected in a way that allowed them to hold an opinion of the war and the
attack with the least amount of bitterness. With the proper combinations of *logos, pathos, ethos*, organization, style and delivery, *A Date Which Will Live in Infamy* had a positive effect on the audience. By analyzing the speech with the neoclassical method, one can see that the use of *logos* was effective by the rational claims made by President Roosevelt. His claims were well received because of the *pathos* used when he highlighted American values and spoke with confidence, while demonstrating *ethos* by assuring the audience that he was working to make decisions that were pleasing to all. The speech was also able to achieve the desired outcome due to the way in which it was arranged and delivered. President Roosevelt carefully arranged the speech to touch on the problem initially, gaining attention of the audience and then building up to the decision to retaliate. In using a slow speaking speed and a serious tone, the President was also able to evoke a calm and rational attitude from the audience. *A Date Which Will Live in Infamy* will live in infamy not only because of the attack that happened, but perhaps because of the speech that was given.
Appendix 1-A

1 Yesterday, December 7, 1941 - a date which will live in infamy - the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan.

2 The United States was at peace with that nation and, at the solicitation of Japan, was still in conversation with its Government and its Emperor looking toward the maintenance of peace in the Pacific. Indeed, one hour after Japanese air squadrons had commenced bombing in Oahu, the Japanese Ambassador to the United States and his colleague delivered to the Secretary of State a formal reply to a recent American message. While this reply stated that it seemed useless to continue the existing diplomatic negotiations, it contained no threat or hint of war or armed attack.

3 It will be recorded that the distance of Hawaii from Japan makes it obvious that the attack was deliberately planned many days or even weeks ago. During the intervening time the Japanese Government has deliberately sought to deceive the United States by false statements and expressions of hope for continued peace.

4 The attack yesterday on the Hawaiian Islands has caused severe damage to American naval and military forces. Very many American lives have been lost. In addition American ships have been reported torpedoed on the high seas between San Francisco and Honolulu.

5 Yesterday the Japanese Government also launched an attack against Malaya. Last night Japanese forces attacked Hong Kong. Last night Japanese forces attacked Guam. Last night Japanese forces attacked the Philippine Islands. Last night the Japanese attacked Wake Island. This morning the Japanese attacked Midway Island.

6 Japan has, therefore, undertaken a surprise offensive extending throughout the Pacific area. The facts of yesterday speak for themselves. The people of the United States have already formed their opinions and well understand the implications to the very life and safety of our nation.

7 As Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy, I have directed that all measures be taken for our defense.

8 Always will we remember the character of the onslaught against us. No matter how long it may take us to overcome this premeditated invasion, the American people in their righteous might will win through to absolute victory.

9 I believe I interpret the will of the Congress and of the people when I assert that we will not only defend ourselves to the uttermost but will make very certain that this form of treachery shall never endanger us again.
10 Hostilities exist. There is no blinking at the fact that our people, our territory and our interests are in grave danger.

11 With confidence in our armed forces - with the unbounded determination of our people - we will gain the inevitable triumph - so help us God.

12 I ask that the Congress declare that since the unprovoked and dastardly attack by Japan on Sunday, December seventh, a state of war has existed between the United States and the Japanese Empire."
Anything that influences the values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of the public, anything within the purview of modern persuasion, can be the object or subject of criticism. This is why presidential rhetoric is a favorite of critics since its impact and significance is usually obvious. The statements of other prominent political leaders and legal personalities can also make rhetoric significant by impacting public thinking.