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**“Sinners in the Hands of an Angry
God”
by Jonathan Edwards**

Think

Think about a time you tried to change someone's mind.
Did you use a gentle approach, scare tactics, or something in between?

Have you ever persuaded someone to do something or share your same belief? How did you do it? What was the outcome?

Analyze the Title

Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God

What inferences can you make about the
tone, purpose, and style of the sermon?

Text, Audience, and Purpose

- A **sermon** is a lecture, speech or talk about moral or spiritual issues, especially when the talk is administered formally in a church or religious setting. It is intended to teach a religious lesson.
- The **audience** of a sermon is usually the church congregation
- The **purpose** of a sermon is to teach a moral lesson and bring about spiritual change.

Religion in the Colonies

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=luCyqzzV0MU>

Background Information

- Important role in the shaping of The Great Awakening (1730-1755)
- Congregational (Puritan) minister.
- Called “the last Puritan.”
- Science, reason, and observation of the physical world confirmed Edward’s deeply spiritual vision of a universe filled with the presence of God.
- Entered Yale at 13 years of age.
- Known for his extremism as a pastor (very strict) resulting in his dismissal in 1750.
- Named president of what later became Princeton University.
- Died of a smallpox inoculation.

The Great Awakening

- Religious revival of Puritanism.
- Edwards' sermons helped to bring The Great Enlightenment about.
- Marked by waves of mass conversions that were intensely emotional, resulting in mass hysteria.
- Forced people to analyze slavery through a moral lens.

“Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” and Purpose

- Edwards’s most famous sermon.
- Originally delivered in 1741.
- **Purpose** is to convince sinners and non-believers to accept Christ as their savior and ask for forgiveness and salvation, known as being “born again.”
- Argues that those who haven’t accepted Christ live on the brink of damnation.
- Uses **Figurative Language** to create effective, frightening imagery.

“Fire and Brimstone” tradition



Literary Devices: Metaphor

Metaphor - a figure of speech that compares or equates two seemingly unlike things. In contrast to a simile, a metaphor implies the comparison instead of stating it directly; hence there is no use of connectives such as *like* or *as*.

Literary Devices: Hyperbole

Hyperbole - is an exaggeration for dramatic purposes.

Literary Devices: Imagery

Imagery - The “word pictures” that writers create to evoke an emotional response.

To create effective images, writers use **sensory details**.

Literary Devices : Repetition

Repetition - The recurrence of sounds, words, phrases, lines, or stanzas in a speech or piece of writing.

Repetition increases the sense of **unity** in a work and can call attention to particular ideas.

Literary Devices: Parallelism

- **Parallelism** is the repetition of words or phrases that have similar grammatical structure.
 - “The devil is waiting for them, hell is gaping for them, the flames gather and flash about them” (79).

Literary Devices: Sensory Detail

Sensory details - Evocative words or phrases that appeal to one or more of the five senses—sight, sound, smell, touch, or taste.

Rhetorical Devices

1. **Ethos** is an appeal to ethics, and it is a means of convincing someone of the character or credibility of the persuader.
2. **Pathos** is an appeal to emotion, and is a way of convincing an audience of an argument by creating an emotional response.
3. **Logos** is an appeal to logic, and is a way of persuading an audience by reason.

Rhetorical Argument

The renouncement of the Devil and the following of God will allow people to live forever in Heaven.

If God's will is not followed, the people who do not follow it will face eternal damnation in Hell.

Literary Analysis

What **literary devices** and **rhetorical strategies** does Jonathan Edwards use in his sermon?

Rhetorical Strategies

Logos: Edwards uses Bible verses to give evidence for the corroboration of his points.

Pathos: Edwards describes Hell and eternal damnation in detail in order to arouse fear in his audience.

Ethos: Edwards uses his position as a preacher to give legitimacy to his message.

Allusion: The sermon alludes to the Bible, and in particular to the Israelites, to describe the situation with Puritans occurring in Massachusetts.

Imagery: Used when describing the damnation that occurs in Hell, as well as the wrath of God.

Syntax: In the sermon, when Edwards gives his description of Hell, he uses long sentences. The sentences seem long and perpetual, which extends and increases the suffering of the audience.

Literary Devices: Imagery

Edward's sermon is filled with images meant to frighten listeners into seeking God and avoiding hell.

1. *What frightening images occur in the first two paragraphs? To what senses do they appeal?*

Images of a fiery pit and lake of brimstone appeal to sight and touch.

Literary Devices: Repetition

Edwards repeats the word *nothing* several times. What effect does this have?

It emphasizes that there is nothing the natural man can do to save himself.

Literary Devices: Imagery

2. What sensory details does Edwards include in the fourth paragraph? What effect does the imagery have on the reader?

**The weight of sin will make the sinner fall.
The images frighten and intimidate.**

Literary Devices: Imagery

3. List five additional images in the sermon, each of which appeals to a different sense.

- Bow and arrow of God's wrath
 - Souls born again
- The sinner held over hell like a spider
- A sinner who is like a venomous serpent
 - Hell as a great furnace