**11AP Lang. & Comp.**

**Rhetorical Situation**

Background: Let’s start by looking at a speech that so many have either read or heard: the speech that baseball player Lou Gehrig gave at an Appreciation Day held in his honor on July 4th, 1939 at Yankee Stadium. Gehrig had recently learned that he was suffering from amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), a neurological disorder that has no cure (today it is known as Lou Gehrig’s disease). Although Gehrig was a reluctant speaker, the fans’ chants of “We want Lou!” brought him to the podium to deliver one of the most powerful and heartfelt speeches of all time. His moment came at home plate between games of a doubleheader.

**Farewell Speech**

LOU GEHRIG

“Fans, for the past two weeks you have been reading about the bad break I got. Yet today I consider myself the luckiest man on the face of this earth. I have been in ballparks for seventeen years and have never received anything but kindness and encouragement from you fans.

Look at these grand men. Which of you wouldn’t consider it the highlight of his career just to associate with them for even one day? Sure, I’m lucky. Who wouldn’t consider it an honor to have known Jacob Ruppert? Also, the builder of baseball’s greatest empire, Ed Barrow? To have spent six years with that wonderful little fellow, Miller Huggins? Then to have spent the next nine years with that outstanding leader, that smart student of psychology, the best manager in baseball today, Joe McCarthy? Sure, I’m lucky.

When the New York Giants, a team you would give your right arm to beat, and vice versa, sends you a gift – that’s something. When everybody down to the groundskeepers and those boys in white coats remember you with trophies – that’s something! When you have a wonderful mother-in-law who takes sides with you in squabbles with her own daughter – that’s something! When you have a father and a mother who work all their lives so you can have an education and build your body – it’s a blessing! When you have a wife who has been a tower of strength and shown more courage than you dreamed existed – that’s the finest I know!

So I close in saying that I may have had a tough break, but I have an awful lot to live for! Thank you.”

**Questions for analysis:**

1. Why is this an effective speech?

2. What’s the **occasion** for the speech (the time and place the text was written or spoken)? What **context**, if any, can you provide about Gehrig himself that may aid in your comprehension of the significance of this speech (the circumstances, atmosphere, attitudes, and events surrounding the text)?

3. What is the **purpose** of this speech (the goal the speaker wants to achieve)?

**The Rhetorical (Aristotelian) Triangle**

Another important impact of the rhetorical situation is the relationship among **the speaker, audience, and subject.**

Aristotle used a triangle to illustrate how these elements are interrelated. How a speaker perceives the relationships among these elements will go a long way toward determining WHAT he or she says and HOW he or she says it.

**Use the rhetorical triangle to analyze Gehrig’s speech:**

Speaker/Persona (role :

**Subject:** the topic. Subject should not be confused with purpose, which is the goal the speaker wants to achieve.

**Audience:** the listener, viewer, or reader of a text or performance, but it’s important to note that there may be multiple audiences. When making rhetorical decisions, speakers ask what values their audiences hold, particularly whether the audience is hostile, friendly, or neutral and how informed it is on the topic at hand.

**Speaker:** don’t think of the speaker as solely a name, but consider a description of who the speaker is in the context of the text. Sometimes, there is a slight difference between who the speaker is in real life and the role the speaker plays when delivering the speech. This is called a **persona**. It comes from the Greek word for “mask”; it means the face or character that a speaker shows to his or her audience.

Subject

Audience

TEXT