

Exploring the Text

1. What relationship does James Baldwin establish with his audience in the opening two paragraphs? How does he establish his ethos?
2. What is the “crucial paradox which confronts us here” (para. 2)?
3. Identify four appeals to pathos in paragraphs 3–5.
4. What is the effect of Baldwin’s emphasizing his personal experience when he begins paragraph 6 with “I still remember my first sight of New York”?
5. Analyze Baldwin’s use of pronouns in paragraphs 8 and 9. What is his purpose in alternating between first, second, and third person?
6. How would you describe Baldwin’s perspective on history? What is the effect of using historical events to support his argument?
7. Why, in paragraph 11, does Baldwin use the term *nigger*? What effect would have been lost—or gained—had he used a less provocative term?
8. What does Baldwin mean when he writes, “What passes for identity in America is a series of myths about one’s heroic ancestors” (para. 15)?
9. What is the effect of the short two-sentence paragraph 17?
10. Identify examples of parallelism and repetition in the final, long paragraph. Discuss how Baldwin uses these strategies to achieve his purpose.
11. Where in this speech does Baldwin appeal to logos?
12. How would you describe Baldwin’s overall tone? Cite specific passages to support your description.