Literary Non-Fiction: Speeches

**Rhetorical Devices:**

**Repetition** is the repeated use of the same word or phrase—usually for emphasis.  
**Parallelism** is the repetition of similar words, phrases, sentences, or grammatical structure.

* Shows that ideas are related or equally important.
* Helps to stress a phrase or idea.

**Reading Skill: Comparing and Contrasting**:  
Writers often make their points by comparing similarities and contrasting differences on a subject.   
  
**Background Information:**

*Not everyone agrees on what we should teach or on how it should be taught. Often what is considered important to learn depends on where and when we’re living. For example, the speech and letter that follow were written before Native American cultures received much respect from European Americans. Native American leaders have had to argue that their culture, language, history, and way of life are useful knowledge.*

*In the 1700s, the British and the French were competing for land and resources in North America. English colonists thought that by offering Iroquois boys the chance to attend the university in Virginia, they would convince the Iroquois to support their side. Chief Canasatego of the Onondaga Tribe was an influential leader in the Iroquois Confederacy, a group of tribes in the upper New York State area.*

*In 1927, Mayor William Hale Thompson of Chicago raised a protest against school textbooks he believed presented history in a way that was prejudiced in favor of Great Britain. The mayor wanted to revise textbooks to be what he called “100 percent American.” The members of the Grand Council Fire of American Indians—led by its president Scott H. Peters, a Chippewa Indian—wanted to point out that the British were not the only group portrayed inaccurately in textbooks. They wrote a letter asking the mayor to change texts to reflect the perspectives and accomplishments of Native Americans. They wore full ceremonial dress and war paint when presenting the mayor with their letter.*

**Educating Sons**

*Chief Canasatego, delivered in 1744, Pennsylvania on behalf of the Iroquois Confederacy of Nations*

We know you highly **esteem** the kind of learning taught in these colleges. And the maintenance of our young men, while with you, would be very expensive to you. We’re convinced, therefore, that you

mean to do us good by your proposal, and we thank you heartily. But you who are so wise must know that different nations have different conceptions of things. And you will not, therefore, take it amiss1 if our

ideas of this kind of education happens not to be the same with yours. We have had some experience of it. Several of our young people were formerly brought up in the colleges of the northern province. They were instructed in all your sciences. But when they came back to us, they were bad runners, ignorant of every means of living in the woods, unable to bear either cold or hunger, knew neither how to build a cabin, take a deer, or kill an enemy, spoke our language imperfectly, and therefore were neither fit for hunters nor warriors nor councilors. They were totally good for nothing. **a**

We are, however, not the less **obliged** for your kind offer, though we **decline** accepting. To show our grateful sense of it, if the gentlemen of Virginia will send us a dozen of their sons, we would take great care in their education, instruct them in all we know, and make men of them.

The Grand Council Fire of American Indians **December 1, 1927**

*The First Americans*

**To the mayor of Chicago:**—

You tell all white men “America First.” We believe in that. We are the only ones, truly, that are 100 percent. We therefore ask you while you are teaching school children about America First, teach them truth about the First Americans.

We do not know if school histories are pro-British, but we do know that they are unjust to the life of our people—the American Indian. They call all white victories, battles, and all Indian victories, massacres. The battle with Custer1 has been taught to school children as a fearful massacre on our part. We ask that this, as well as other incidents, be told fairly. If the Custer battle was a massacre, what was Wounded Knee?2

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History books teach that Indians were murderers—is it murder to fight in self-defense? Indians killed white men because white men took their lands, ruined their hunting grounds, burned their forests, destroyed their buffalo. White men penned our people on reservations, then took away the reservations. White men who rise to protect their property are called patriots—Indians who do the same are called murderers. **b**

White men call Indians **treacherous**—but no mention is made of broken treaties on the part of the white man. White men say that Indians were always fighting. It was only our lack of skill in white man’s warfare that led to our defeat. An Indian mother prayed that her boy be a great medicine man3 rather than a great warrior. It is true that we had our own small battles, but in the main we were peace-loving and home-loving. **c**

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White men called Indians thieves—and yet we lived in frail skin lodges and needed no locks or iron bars. White men call Indians **savages.** What is civilization? Its marks are a noble religion and philosophy, original arts, stirring music, rich history and legend. We had these. Then we were not savages, but a civilized race.

We made blankets that were beautiful that the white man with all his machinery has never been able to duplicate. We made baskets that were beautiful. We wove in beads and colored quills, designs that were not just decorative motifs, but were the outward expression of our very thoughts. We made pottery—pottery that was useful and beautiful as well. Why not make school children acquainted with the beautiful handicrafts in which we were skilled? Put in every school Indian blankets, baskets, pottery.

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We sang songs that carried in their melodies all the sounds of nature— the running of waters, the sighing of winds, and the calls of the animals. Teach these to your children that they may come to love nature as we love it.

We had our statesmen—and their **oratory** has never been equalled. Teach the children some of these speeches of our people, remarkable for their brilliant oratory. We played games—games that brought good health and sound bodies. Why not put these in your schools? We told stories. Why not teach school children more of the wholesome proverbs and legends of our people? Tell them how we loved all that was beautiful. That we killed game only for food, not for fun. Indians think white men who kill for fun are murderers. **d**

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Tell your children of the friendly acts of Indians to the white people who first settled here. Tell them of our leaders and heroes and their deeds. Tell them of Indians such as Black Partridge4 ,Shabbona 5 and others who many times saved the people of Chicago at great danger to themselves. Put in your history books the Indian’s part in the World War. Tell how the Indian fought for a country of which he was not a citizen, for a flag to which he had no claim, and for a people that have treated him unjustly. **e**

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The Indian has long been hurt by these unfair books. We ask only that our story be told in fairness. We do not ask you to overlook what we did, but we do ask you to understand it. A true program of America First will give a generous place to the culture and history of the American Indian.

We ask this, Chief, to keep **sacred** the memory of our people.

**Literary Non-Fiction**: **Name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Per. \_\_\_\_\_**

**I. Analysis  
Structure/Organization:** What organizational pattern do the authors use?   
“Educating Sons” -

“The First Americans” -

**Purpose**: What conclusions can you make about the common purpose of these speeches based on the organizational patterns?

**RHETORICAL DEVICES** (Group Answers)

“Educating Sons” (text)

What phrase is repeated in these lines? What word is repeated? What is the effect of repetition in this speech?

How does Chief Canasatego use parallelism in his speech?

“First Americans” (text)

Give one example of parallelism used in this text (cite line numbers) and explain the point the author is making with this example.

**II. Narrative (Dialogue)**

1. Read the “Rules Governing the Court of Indian Offenses”. Pretend that you are one of the judges on the Indian Court, or that you have committed one of the four offenses listed, or that you are an accuser or witness. You are at court as either the judge, the accused, or the witness. Write at least 10 sentences describing that scene. You must use a few lines of dialogue. Write your response on the back of this paper.