

George Saunders in 2018



Taken 5 years after this speech.

About this speech to graduates

GRAMPS

Genre: Speech (aimed at graduates)

Register: Mixed

Audience: Graduates at Syracuse University

Mode: Spoken

Purpose: Give advise to graduates leaving the university.

Subject: Saunders discusses making mistakes and giving advise to people "with all of their best years ahead of them". He speaks about regrets, and reflects on the past, and highlights the importance of kindness.

Further reading

Essay: "Rhetorical Analysis of George Saunders speech"

<https://www.ipl.org/essay/George-Saunders-The-Convocation-Speech-FKMSP2NFI486#:~:text=George%20delivered%20an%20eye-opening,others%20goes%20a%20long%20way.>

Analysis

Colloquial language: "old fart" Creates humour as well as being an understatement which makes him more approachable.

Parallelism, contrastive pair: "(that would be me) and (that would be you)" brings a sense of liveliness and humour to the speech.

Humour through anecdotes, hyperbole, rhetorical question: "So: what do I regret? [...] I don't even regret that"

Noun phrase: "what I regret most in my life are failures of kindness" centre of the speech and with the **superlative** it elevates the moral of his point

Syndetic listing of triads: "dogs and swing-sets, and the State of Nebraska and low-hanging clouds and you know other people" creates a sense of familiarity for the audience as they would've experienced one or all of those things.

Metaphor: "in our hearts" creates an emotive tone

Syntactic parallelism, anaphora: "High kindness periods and low kindness periods" the syntactic parallelism stresses the anaphora "-good" which is backed by examples to emphasise his point.

Colloquial language, idiom "we get our butts kicked by real life" creates humour

Engages the audience by referencing someone they would know: "The great Syracuse poet Hayden Carruth"

Synthetic personalisation: "you" comforts the audience as they enter the world of adulthood and can live their own lives to the fullest as they start the next chapter of their life

Repetition: "we" the inclusive pronoun allows the audience to feel included as well as unifying everyone.