

# Testimony Before the Senate

Speech by Michael J. Fox

VIDEO TRAILER



KEYWORD: HML9-670

## How do you SELL AN IDEA?

### COMMON CORE

**RI 2** Analyze the development of a central idea in a text and provide an objective summary of the text.

**RI 5** Analyze in detail how an author's ideas or claims are developed. **RI 8** Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text. **L 1a** Use parallel structure. **L 4c** Consult reference materials to determine a word's meaning and etymology.

Teenagers are a hot market—companies are always trying to convince them to buy something. You're familiar with commercials and ads that try to sell you a product. But are you aware that a great deal of energy and money is spent trying to sell you on people and ideas? People in almost every business work hard at crafting their pitch.

**DISCUSS** With a partner, brainstorm a list of times when you realized someone was trying to sell you an idea, an image, or a person's expertise. What techniques were used? Which ones worked?

<i>Idea</i>	<i>Pitch Used</i>
<i>Say "no" to drugs.</i>	<i>Commercial about saving a friend who's drowning; features the slogan "Friends, the anti-drug."</i>



### ● TEXT ANALYSIS: PERSUASIVE TECHNIQUES

Writers and speakers typically use more than just arguments to persuade. To develop their ideas or claims, they use rhetorical devices and **persuasive techniques**—that is, messages and descriptions that appeal to people’s emotions, values, and desires to belong to a particular group or be like a particular person.

In “Testimony Before the Senate,” Michael J. Fox often uses the persuasive techniques that are classified as emotional appeals. **Emotional appeals** are descriptions designed to win support by appealing to people’s feelings of compassion or, sometimes, fear. Here Fox appeals to our sense of pity:

*There are doctors, teachers, policemen, nurses, and parents who are no longer able to work, to provide for their families, and live out their dreams.*

As you read, look for other examples of emotional appeals.

### ● READING STRATEGY: SUMMARIZE

A **summary** is a brief retelling of the main ideas of a written or spoken text. When you summarize, use your own words to restate the main ideas without including your own opinions. As you read Fox’s speech, prepare to summarize it by jotting down main ideas and important details on a chart like the one shown. Your summary will help you evaluate the text’s arguments.

<i>Paragraph/Section 1</i>	
Main Idea:	
Important Details:	
↓	
<i>Paragraph/Section 2</i>	
Main Idea:	
Important Details:	
↓	

### ▲ VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

The following boldfaced words are key to understanding Michael J. Fox’s persuasive plea. Restate each phrase, using a different word or words for the boldfaced term.

1. rejecting the **status quo**
2. a **meager** salary, which doesn’t allow for luxuries
3. a **neurological** disorder causing tremors
4. **eradicate** poverty and other social problems

## Michael J. Fox

born 1961

### Actor and Crusader

A successful actor in both film and television—he received four Emmy Awards—Michael J. Fox was diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease at the age of 30. In order to spend more time with his family and to promote Parkinson’s research, he retired from acting in 2000. He went on to establish the Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson’s Research.

### BACKGROUND TO THE SPEECH

#### Parkinson’s Disease

Parkinson’s disease results from a loss of brain cells that produce dopamine, a chemical that transmits brain signals. The disease’s many symptoms include tremors, slowness of movement, and problems with balance. Over time, walking and other ordinary activities become more and more difficult. The cause of Parkinson’s is still unknown, and as yet no cure has been found. Unfortunately, the medications used to treat the disease often have serious side effects.



Complete the activities in your **Reader/Writer Notebook**.

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# PARKINSON'S DISEASE RESEARCH AND TREATMENT

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## HEARING BEFORE A SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS UNITED STATES SENATE ONE HUNDRED SIXTH CONGRESS FIRST SESSION SPECIAL HEARING

Printed for the use of the Committee on Appropriations

**Senator SPECTER.** We have with us today Mr. Michael J. Fox, a successful actor for many years. First, as Alex P. Keaton, on the television series “Family Ties.” You always work with a middle initial, do you not, Mr. Fox? Later in many movies, including “Back to the Future,” and, most recently, on television again in the highly acclaimed “Spin City.” Michael was diagnosed with Parkinson’s in 1991, at the age of 30.

He has become very, very active in Parkinson’s advocacy. One of the facts of life is that when someone like Michael J. Fox steps forward, it very heavily personalizes the problem, focuses a lot of public attention on it, and has the public understanding of the need for doing whatever we can as a country to conquer this disease and many, many others. So we thank you for being here, Michael J. Fox, and look forward to your testimony.

Again, we will put the lights on, for 5 minutes, on testimony.

**Mr. FOX.** Mr. Chairman, Senator Harkin, and members of the Subcommittee—thank you for inviting me to testify today about the need for a greater federal investment in Parkinson’s research. I would like to thank you, in particular, for your tremendous leadership in the fight to double funding for the National Institutes of Health.<sup>1</sup>

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1. **National Institutes of Health:** a government organization that conducts and supports research designed to improve the health of the nation.

### A PERSUASIVE TECHNIQUES

What persuasive technique mentioned on page 656 in the Text Analysis Workshop is Fox using in lines 14–18?



Michael J. Fox testifies before the U.S. Senate.

Some, or perhaps most of you are familiar with me from 20 years of  
20 work in film and television. What I wish to speak to you about today has  
little or nothing to do with celebrity—save for this brief reference.

When I first spoke publicly about my 8 years of experience as a person  
with Parkinson's, many were surprised, in part because of my age (although  
30 percent of all Parkinson's patients are under 50, and 20 percent are  
under 40, and that number is growing). I had hidden my symptoms and  
struggles very well, through increasing amounts of medication, through  
surgery, and by employing the hundreds of little tricks and techniques a  
person with Parkinson's learns to mask his or her condition for as long  
as possible.

30 While the changes in my life were profound and progressive, I kept  
them to myself for a number of reasons: fear, denial for sure, but I also  
felt that it was important for me to just quietly "soldier on." **B**

When I did share my story, the response was overwhelming, humbling,  
and deeply inspiring. I heard from thousands of Americans affected by  
Parkinson's, writing and calling to offer encouragement and to tell me  
of their experience. They spoke of pain, frustration, fear and hope.  
Always hope.

### ◀ Analyze Visuals

Think about your reaction to seeing a famous actor linked with a cause or product. Are you more willing to read this speech and consider its message because the author is a celebrity? Explain your answer.

### **B** SUMMARIZE

Reread lines 22–32, and record the passage's important details in your chart. Then restate the main idea of the passage in your own words.

What I understood very clearly is that the time for quietly “soldiering on” is through. The war against Parkinson’s is a winnable war, and I am  
40 resolved to play a role in that victory.

What celebrity has given me is the opportunity to raise the visibility of Parkinson’s disease and focus more attention on the desperate need for more research dollars. While I am able, for the time being, to continue to do what I love best, others are not so fortunate. There are doctors, teachers, policemen, nurses, and parents who are no longer able to work, to provide for their families, and live out their dreams. **C**

**C PERSUASIVE TECHNIQUES**

In addition to appealing to the senators’ pity, what does Fox appeal to by referring to the specific categories of “doctors, teachers, policemen, nurses, and parents”?

COMMON CORE L 1a

**D PERSUASIVE TECHNIQUES**

Persuasive speakers strengthen the impact of their emotional appeals through the use of rhetorical devices and structures. In lines 51–55, Fox uses repetition and **parallelism** to emphasize the challenges that people with Parkinson’s face. He repeats the word *too* in three straight sentences, the first two of which are parallel in grammatical structure. Elsewhere, Fox repeats the word *Parkinson’s* over and over instead of using *it* or *the disease*. Why do you think he does this?

**status quo** (stāt’əs kwō)  
n. the existing state of affairs



Fox starred in the sitcom *Spin City* from 1996 to 2000, when he retired from acting.

The one million Americans living with Parkinson’s want to beat this disease. So do millions more Americans who have family members suffering from Parkinson’s. But it won’t happen until Congress adequately funds  
50 Parkinson’s research.

For many people with Parkinson’s, managing their disease is a full-time job. It is a constant balancing act. Too little medicine causes tremors and stiffness. Too much medicine produces uncontrollable movement and slurring. And far too often, Parkinson’s patients wait and wait for the medicines to “kick-in.” New investigational therapies have helped some people like me control my symptoms, but in the end, we all face the same reality: the medicines stop working. **D**

For people living with Parkinson’s, the **status quo** isn’t good enough. As I began to understand what research might promise for the future,  
60 I became hopeful I would not face the terrible suffering so many with Parkinson’s endure. But I was shocked and frustrated to learn that the

amount of funding for Parkinson's research is so **meager**. Compared with the amount of federal funding going to other diseases, research funding for Parkinson's lags far behind.

In a country with a \$15 billion investment in medical research we can and we must do better.

At present, Parkinson's is inadequately funded, no matter how one cares to spin it. Meager funding means a continued lack of effective treatments, slow progress in understanding the cause of the disease, and little chance  
70 that a cure will come in time. I applaud the steps we are taking to fulfill the promise of the Udall Parkinson's Research Act, but we must be clear—we aren't there yet.

If, however, an adequate investment is made, there is much to be hopeful for. We have a tremendous opportunity to close the gap for Parkinson's. We are learning more and more about this disease. The scientific community  
80 believes that with a significant investment in Parkinson's research, new discoveries and improved treatments strategies are close-at-hand. Many have called Parkinson's the most curable **neurological** disorder and the one expected to produce a breakthrough first. Scientists tell me that a cure is possible, some say even by the end  
90 of the next decade—if the research dollars match the research opportunity. **E**

Mr. Chairman, you and the members of the Subcommittee have done so much to increase the investment in medical research in this country. I thank you for your vision. Most people don't know just how important this research is until they or someone in their family faces a serious illness. I know I didn't.

The Parkinson's community strongly supports your efforts to double medical research funding. At the same time, I implore you to do more for people with Parkinson's. Take up Parkinson's as if your life depended on it.  
100 Increase funding for Parkinson's research by \$75 million over current levels for the coming fiscal year.<sup>2</sup> Make this a down payment for a fully funded



Fox is greeted by Senators Paul Wellstone and Arlen Specter.

**meager** (mē'gər) *adj.*  
lacking in quantity  
or quality

**neurological**  
(nōōr'ə-lōj'ī-kəl) *adj.*  
having to do with the  
nervous system

**E SUMMARIZE**

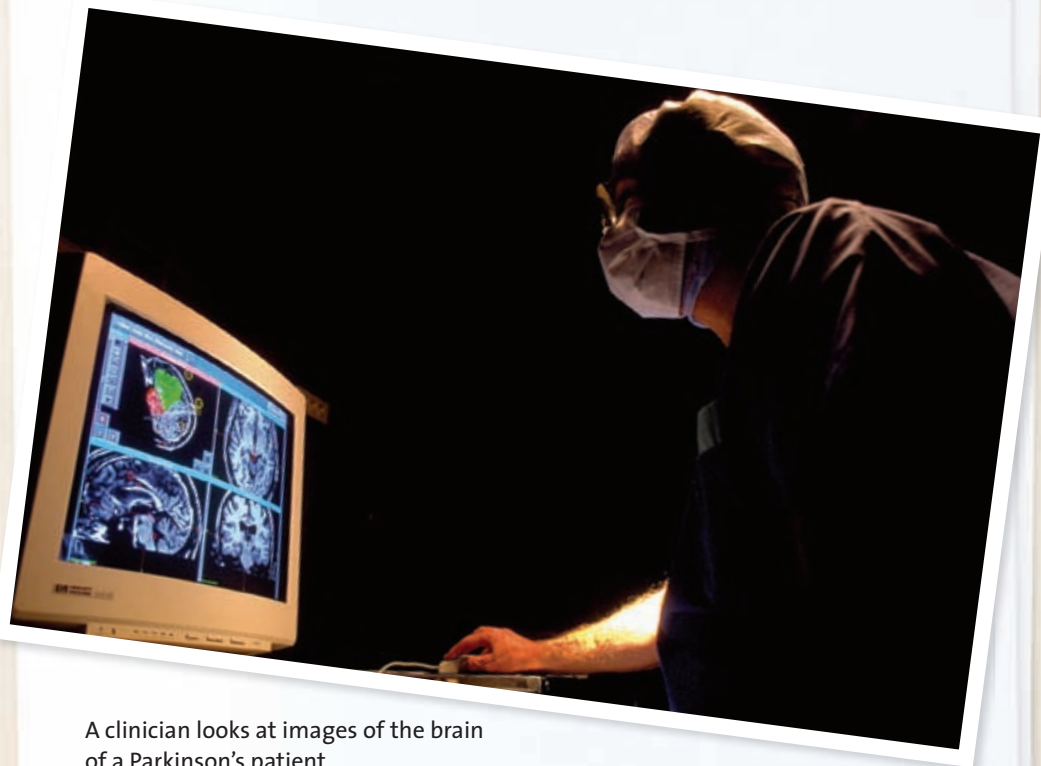
According to Fox, why should we be hopeful about Parkinson's? Cite specific details.

**COMMON CORE** L 4c

**Language Coach**

**Cognates** Words from different languages with similar meaning and spellings are called **cognates**. The Latin root *-plor-* ("cry out") appears in many Spanish-English cognates, such as *deplore/deplorar*. What cognate of the Spanish *imploro* appears in line 98? What other cognates contain this root? Use a dictionary to check your answers.

2. **fiscal year:** a 12-month period—which may or may not coincide with the calendar year—during which a company or organization keeps accounting records.



A clinician looks at images of the brain of a Parkinson's patient.

**F** **GRAMMAR AND STYLE**

Reread lines 97–103. Fox uses **imperative sentences** to urge Congress to increase research funding.

**eradicate** (ĭ-răd'ĭ-kăt')  
v. to do away with completely

Parkinson's research agenda that will make Parkinson's nothing more than a footnote in medical textbooks. **F**

I would like to close on a personal note. Today you will hear from, or have already heard from, more than a few experts, in the fields of science, book-keeping and other areas. I am an expert in only one—what it is like to be a young man, husband, and father with Parkinson's disease. With the help of daily medication and selective exertion, I can still perform my job, in my case in a very public arena. I can still help out with the daily  
 110 tasks and rituals involved in home life. But I don't kid myself . . . that will change. Physical and mental exhaustion will become more and more of a factor, as will increased rigidity, tremor and dyskinesia.<sup>3</sup> I can expect in my 40s to face challenges most wouldn't expect until their 70s and 80s—if ever. But with your help, if we all do everything we can to **eradicate** this disease, in my 50s I'll be dancing at my children's weddings. And mine will be just one of millions of happy stories.

Thank you again for your time and attention.

**Senator SPECTER.** Thank you very much, Mr. Fox, for those very profound and moving words.

3. **dyskinesia** (dĭs'kə-nē'zhə): inability to control bodily movements.

## Comprehension

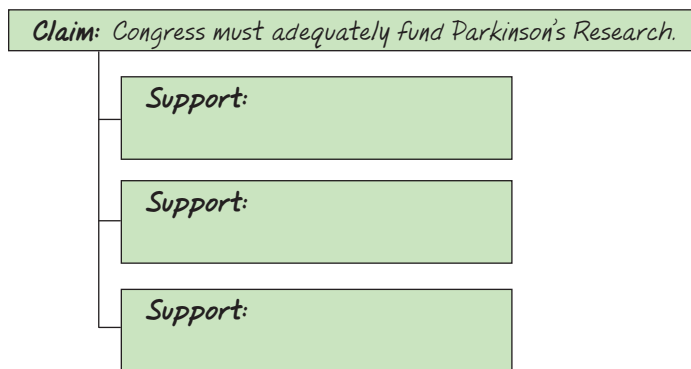
- 1. Recall** How did other people with Parkinson’s disease respond to Fox when he made his condition known?
- 2. Recall** What did Fox resolve to do after he shared his situation with the public?
- 3. Clarify** Why is managing the disease a full-time job for people with Parkinson’s?

**COMMON CORE**

**RI 2** Analyze the development of a central idea in a text; provide an objective summary of the text.  
**RI 5** Analyze in detail how an author’s ideas or claims are developed. **RI 8** Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text.

## Text Analysis

- 4. Summarize** Review the notes you took as you read. Then summarize what you learned about Parkinson’s disease from reading Fox’s testimony.
- 5. Draw Conclusions** How does Fox’s personal experience with Parkinson’s help him make his pitch to his audience? Explain your answer.
- 6. Analyze the Argument** Fox’s **claim** is that Congress should increase federal spending for Parkinson’s research. What reasons and evidence does he provide as **support** for his claim? Write them on a graphic organizer like the one shown.



- 7. Analyze the Counterargument** What potential objection is Fox countering in lines 90–101?
- 8. Evaluate Persuasive Techniques** Reread lines 102–114. Fox concludes his testimony by describing two contrasting visions of his future. What emotion does each vision create? What is the effect of concluding his speech with this **emotional appeal**?
- 9. Synthesize** Does it strengthen or weaken a cause to have a celebrity associated with it? Would a plea from an ordinary person carry as much weight as one from a celebrity? Consider Michael J. Fox’s association with Parkinson’s research and think of other celebrities who support particular causes.

### How do you **SELL AN IDEA**?

What makes some ideas easier—or harder—to sell than others?



# Vocabulary in Context

## ▲ VOCABULARY PRACTICE

Write the word from the Word List that best completes each sentence.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ diseases can damage the brain.
2. The goal of medical research is to \_\_\_\_\_ these diseases.
3. A \_\_\_\_\_ increase in funding might slow progress toward finding a cure.
4. Clearly, it is important to progress instead of maintaining the \_\_\_\_\_.

### WORD LIST

eradicate  
meager  
neurological  
status quo

## ACADEMIC VOCABULARY IN WRITING

• coherent • differentiate • evident • relevant • technique

With a partner, discuss how Michael J. Fox **differentiates** his experience with Parkinson's from that of non-celebrities. How does he differentiate his knowledge from that of scientists and financial experts? Use at least one Academic Vocabulary word in your discussion.

## VOCABULARY STRATEGY: FOREIGN WORDS

A dictionary is an important tool for understanding terms that come directly from another language. The meaning of some foreign terms may have changed slightly since they were brought into English. *Status quo*, for example, is Latin for “the state in which” but means “the existing state of affairs” in English. A dictionary will have the definitions of many foreign terms commonly used in English, and some will include the term's etymology, or history.

**PRACTICE** Create a four-column chart with these headings: “Foreign Term,” “Original Language,” “Original Meaning,” and “Meaning in English.” Then, using a dictionary, fill in the chart for each term.

- |                 |                  |
|-----------------|------------------|
| 1. à la carte   | 5. faux pas      |
| 2. al dente     | 6. ad hoc        |
| 3. quid pro quo | 7. caveat emptor |
| 4. piñata       | 8. alfresco      |

### COMMON CORE

L.4c Consult reference materials to determine a word's precise meaning and etymology.

Interactive Vocabulary **THINK** central

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## Language

### ◆ GRAMMAR AND STYLE: Set The Tone

Review the **Grammar and Style** note on page 676. Fox uses **imperative sentences**—sentences that express a command or request—in his testimony. By using imperative sentences, rather than other sentence types, Fox creates a sense of directness and urgency. (The subject of imperative sentences is usually *you*, often understood rather than stated.)

Here is an example of one student’s use of imperative sentences:

*Take up the cause with me. Give full support to the Parkinson’s community by increasing research funding.*

Now study the model. Notice how the revisions in blue make the tone stronger and more urgent. Revise your response to the prompt below by employing similar techniques.

#### STUDENT MODEL

~~You can~~ make a difference in the war against Parkinson’s disease. ~~Your donation will go to research for a cure.~~ *Send in*

### READING-WRITING CONNECTION



Broaden your understanding of “Testimony Before the Senate” by responding to this prompt. Then use the **revising tip** to improve your writing.

#### WRITING PROMPT

##### Extended Constructed Response: Write a Memo

Imagine you are a senator who has just heard Fox’s testimony. How would you respond? Write a **three-to-five-paragraph memo** to a fellow senator, describing your reaction and identifying the most convincing parts of Fox’s testimony.

#### REVISING TIP

Review your memo. Did you use imperative sentences to give your writing a sense of directness and urgency?

### COMMON CORE

**L 3** Apply knowledge of language to make effective choices for meaning or style.  
**W 9a (RI 8)** Draw evidence from informational texts to support an evaluation of the specific claims in a text.

Interactive Revision **THINK** central

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