Activity– Writing an Excellent Anti-slavery Speech

1. Read the speech below and highlight the good ideas and techniques that the writer uses in different colors.
2. What could the writer do to improve the speech; what is it missing.
3. Now decide which passage of the speech you would like to work on to improve and spend 20 minutes making improvements to the speech. Demonstrate the improvements that you have made by writing in a different colour.



Honorable members,

My name is Thomas Clarkson, when I was a young man I entered an essay writing competition. I was, like many of you naïve of the destructiveness and evil perpetrated in the name of extending our ideas of civilization. Many of you in the House today are directly involved in this cruelty, a cruelty that some estimate has torn a greater part of 20 million Africans from their homelands in this barbaric ‘trade’. There are those amongst us; merchants, plantation owners, owners of ships that sail for the Guinea cost that argue from the most sincere and deluded follies that the trade benefits Africa. They state that Africa is a continent of ignorance of childlike development and that Europeans, through slavery, lift them from this childish state. Clearly these people know nothing of the great African kingdoms of Songhay and Ghana, nor Mali or Guinea.

Secondly our merchant friends present say that we can have no other trade with Africa except that which involves a human trade, a human cargo. I suggest that they study the writings of the great John Wesley; they will see the great quantity of goods that might profitably be traded with Africa.

Third and most tragically there is the abhorrence of the middle passage, there are those of us that employ ships captains in Bristol or Liverpool. I believe that you never did, nor never will ask of the sights, smells nor sounds, the torments wrent asunder as you would have it believed that the many losses of the passage are as though produce were spoiled or beer went bad. Think that these people are foods that can be thrown overboard for turning foul?

Fourthly, those that are lucky enough to survive the passage, plantation owners here would believe live in a demi-paradise. Like Adam or Eve brought to a new land and civilization. This sirs is a bull whip and this is branding iron and here is a lock jaw. Do you really believe that the lives of Africans are better as slaves or with their families in Africa?