The expectations set for Mueller were unreasonably high; he has never been a dynamic speaker, and at the age of 74, he is far from a physically animated performer. Moreover, it would be hard for any circumspect person to remember
the details of a 400-page nuanced report prepared by a large staff, let alone bring it to life.

Nevertheless, as someone who has spent his career studying political communication, I believe the rhetorical difference between viewing the entire Mueller hearing versus watching the short highlights assembled later in the day was profound. The former was tedious — certainly not compelling. The latter was surprisingly revealing and extremely potent. What now is clear is that, if they wish the public to pay attention to Mueller’s report, the Democrats should put together a short compilation of his most pointed and forceful statements on Wednesday.

It has become increasingly clear that most Americans do not get their news from the print media, and in the Trump era the facts do not speak for themselves. What transpired Wednesday reminds us about the rhetorical challenge: How most persuasively can a message be framed visually?

*Richard Cherwitz, Austin, Texas*

*The writer is a professor of rhetoric at the University of Texas.*