

RHETORICAL DEVICES: TROPES

Stylistic devices that alter meaning from the usual or expected

ALLEGORY

A form of extended metaphor in which objects, persons, and actions in a narrative are equated with meanings that lie outside the narrative itself. It attempts to evoke a dual interest, one in the events, characters, and setting presented, and the other in the ideas they are intended to convey or the significance they bear.

PARABLE

An illustrative story teaching a lesson.

ALLUSION

A reference to a well-known person, place, event, literary work, or work of art.

ANALOGY

A comparison of two things, alike in certain aspects; particularly a method used in exposition and description by which something unfamiliar is explained or described by comparing it to something more familiar.

METAPHOR

An analogy identifying one object with another and ascribing to the first object one or more qualities of the second.

PERSONIFICATION

A type of metaphor in which the attributes of a human being are given to a nonhuman object or concept.

SIMILE

An analogy in which the comparison is expressed by the use of some word or phrases, such as *like*, *as*, *than*, *similar to*, *resembles*, or *seems*.

SYNECDOCHE

A figure of speech in which a part of something is used to stand for the whole thing.

Jim was thrilled to be seen cruising around town in his new wheels.

EUPHEMISM

Substitution of less pungent words for harsh ones, with excellent ironic effect.

The schoolmaster corrected the slightest fault with his birch reminder.

HYPERBOLE

Deliberate exaggeration for emphasis.

“Four hostile newspapers are more to be feared than a thousand bayonets.”

OXYMORON

A contradiction; two contradictory terms or ideas used together.

Parting is such sweet sorrow.

PARADOX

A statement that appears to be contradictory but, in fact, has some truth.

He worked hard at being lazy.

PUN

A play on the meaning of words

UNDERSTATEMENT

Intentional understatement for humorous or satiric effect.

Jim is not the best student in the Western World.

RHETORICAL DEVICES: SCHEMES

Stylistic arrangement of words or phrases

ANAPHORA

The regular repetition of the same word or phrase at the beginning of successive phrases or clauses.
We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds.

ANASTROPHE

Word order is reversed or rearranged.
Out of the cradle endlessly rocking

ANTITHESIS

The juxtaposition of contrasting ideas.
“Our knowledge separates as well as unites; our orders disintegrate as well as bind; our art brings us together and sets us apart.”

CHIASMUS

A grammatical structure of the first clause or phrase is reversed in the second, sometimes repeating the same words.
“And so, my fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.”

CLIMAX

The writer arranges ideas in order of importance.
I spent the day cleaning the house, reading poetry, and putting my life in order.

PARENTHESIS

The insertion of words, phrases, or a sentence that is not syntactically related to the rest of the sentence. It is set off from the rest of the sentence in one of two ways. Either is acceptable.

By dashes: *He said that it was going to rain – I could hardly disagree – before the game was over.*

By parenthesis: *He said it was going to rain (I could hardly disagree) before the game was over.*

RHETORICAL DEVICES: SOUND

Stylistic use of sounds within a paragraph or sentence. It reinforces meaning.

ALLITERATION

The repetition of the same sound at the beginning of successive words.

We shall not flag or fail.

ASSONANCE

Involves the repetition of vowel sounds.

free and easy – slapdash

CONSONANCE

The repetition of final consonant sounds.

first and last – odds and ends – short and sweet

CACOPHONY

The opposite of euphony; a harsh, unpleasant combination of sounds.

EUPHONY

Pleasant sounds. Opposite of cacophony, the subjective impression of unpleasantness of sound.

RHETORICAL DEVICES: APPEALS

LOGOS (LOGICAL APPEAL)

Examples of logical appeals include the use of evidence, facts and figures, references to current events, and testimony. Effective logical appeals depend upon the ability of the writer to connect the multiple examples of support to each other in meaningful ways.

- Incorporate inductive or deductive reasoning
- Allude to history, great literature, or mythology
- Provide reputable testimony
- Provide evidence, facts
- Cite authorities
- Quote research or statistics
- Theorize cause and effect
- Argue that something meets a given definition

Example:

We gotta get these nets. They're coated with an insecticide and cost between \$4 and \$6. You need about \$10, all told, to get them shipped and installed. Some nets can cover a family of four. And they last four years. If we can cut the spread of disease, 10 bucks means a kid might get to live. Make it \$20 and more kids are saved.

Rick Reilly's "Nothing But Nets"

ETHOS (ETHICAL APPEAL)

Ethical appeals are attempts by the speaker/writer to make connections to the audience by appearing knowledgeable, reasonable, ethical, etc. A writer is able to make an effective argument only when readers have no reason to doubt the writer's character on a given topic. Writers who fail to acknowledge other points of view, exaggerate, or assume a tone of disrespect have difficulty making ethical appeals to readers.

- Make the audience believe the writer is trustworthy
- Demonstrate the writer carefully conducted research
- Demonstrate that the writer knows the audience and respects them
- Convince the audience that the writer is reliable and knowledgeable
- Use first person plural pronouns ("we" and "us") to establish a relationship with the audience

Example:

My Fellow Clergymen:

While confined here in Birmingham city jail, I came across your recent statement calling my present activities unwise and untimely,...since I feel that you are men of genuine good will and that your criticisms are sincerely set forth, I want to answer your statement in what I hope will be patient and reasonable terms.

Martin Luther King, Jr. -- "Letter from Birmingham Jail"

PATHOS (EMOTIONAL APPEAL)

Emotional appeals reach the reader by activating the reader's emotions. Often writers make emotional appeals by including sensory details, especially imagery. Calling upon the reader's pleasant memories, nostalgia, anger, or fear are frequent emotional appeals found in argumentative texts. The presence of "charged words" (references to religious doctrine or patriotic ideas) in an argumentative text represents an attempt at an emotional appeal by the writer.

- Include language that involves the senses and heightens emotional responses
- Reference bias or prejudice
- Include a personal anecdote
- Appeal to the audience's physical, psychological, or social needs
- Create figurative language
- Experiment with informal language

Example:

Put it this way: Let's say your little Justin's Kickin' Kangaroos have a big youth soccer tournament on Saturday. There are 15 kids on the soccer team, 10 teams in the tourney. And there are 20 of these tournaments going on all over town. Suddenly, every one of these kids gets chills and fever, then starts throwing up and then gets short of breath. And in 10 days, they're all dead of malaria.

Rick Reilly's "Nothing But Nets"