



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Rhetorical Devices

A Guide to Using the Student Resource

ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

When students read, listen to, or view a speech, an essay, an advertisement, or other argumentative texts, they must be attentive to the devices of language and structure used by writers and speakers to achieve their purposes. Free response questions on college readiness exams often ask students to analyze the rhetorical strategies used to develop an argument, to achieve a purpose, to convey a message, to develop a perspective, etc. For many students, the concepts of rhetoric and rhetorical analysis are new and somewhat intimidating. This resource is intended to demystify these concepts by providing definitions and examples of some of the most commonly used rhetorical strategies. You may wish to provide copies of this resource for students to keep as a reference tool in their notebooks.

This resource is included in Module 6: *Crafting an Effective Argument*.

TEACHING SUGGESTIONS

Many of the devices listed in this resource are used in literary analysis and will probably be familiar even to younger students: connotative diction, details, imagery, metaphor, personification, simile. All of these are literary devices commonly used to create tone, to develop characterization, or to advance a theme or a purpose. But they can also be used to create an emotional appeal, to develop an argument, or to advance a call to action. It will be helpful to model the annotation of both literary and nonfiction texts to be sure that students understand how the same device or strategy can be used in multiple genres.

For beginning students, advertisements provide easy access to devices such as **allusion**, **hyperbole**, **jargon**, and **rhetorical questions**. The NMSI lesson “Analyzing Appeals in Advertisements” is included in Module 6: *Crafting an Effective Argument* and is on the NMSI website.

Some of the devices in the resource may be less familiar to students who have not previously been asked to analyze an argumentative text, and teachers may want to scaffold the introduction of these devices. For example, you might begin by introducing **repetition** before tackling **parallelism** and **anaphora**. You may also determine within your vertical team that some devices—such as **antithesis** or **juxtaposition**—might be reserved for students in Grade 9 or 10.

To ensure understanding of these devices, you might ask students to find and bring to class additional examples of specific devices in their reading or in advertisements. As they share their examples with the class, they can explain how and why the device is used in the text or in the advertisement.

Rhetorical Devices

Student Resource

When we analyze a speech, an essay, an advertisement, or any kind of argumentative text, we look for devices the author uses to achieve a purpose. The rhetorical devices a speaker or writer uses help create the tone and/or the mood of the text and also create logical, emotional, and ethical appeals. Many of these devices are the same ones we look for in literary texts, but some are more often used in an argument or other nonfiction text. Use this resource as a guide to help you perform a rhetorical analysis. The **bold portions** in the examples below illustrate the device described.

Rhetorical Devices	Examples
Alliteration: the repetition of beginning consonant sounds in several consecutive or neighboring words	<p>“I speak tonight for the dignity of man and the destiny of democracy.”</p> <p>—President Lyndon B. Johnson “The American Promise”</p>
Allusion: a reference to a mythological, literary, or historical person, place or thing	<p>“So it was at Lexington and Concord. So it was a century ago at Appomattox. So it was last week in Selma, Alabama.”</p> <p>—President Lyndon B. Johnson “The American Promise”</p>
Analogy: a comparison between two things intended to show how they are alike	<p>“President Roosevelt showed us that a man who could barely lift himself out of a wheelchair could still lift a nation out of despair.”</p> <p>—Christopher Reeve Speech on Americans with Disabilities Act</p>
Anaphora: the repetition of the same word or group of words at the beginning of successive clauses; it helps to establish a strong rhythm and produces a powerful emotional effect	<p>“And what sort of soldiers are those you are to lead? Are they reliable? Are they brave? Are they capable of victory?”</p> <p>—General Douglas MacArthur “Duty, Honor, Country”</p>
Anecdote: a short account of a particular incident or event, especially of an interesting or amusing nature	<p>“During my rehabilitation, I met a young man named Gregory Patterson. When he was innocently driving through Newark, N.J., a stray bullet from a gang shooting went through his car window—right into his neck—and severed his spinal cord. Five years ago, he might have died. Today, because of research, he’s alive.”</p> <p>—Christopher Reeve Speech on Americans with Disabilities Act</p>
Antithesis: a device in which two opposite ideas are put together in a sentence to achieve a contrasting effect	<p>“They are your rallying points: to build courage when courage seems to fail; to regain faith when there seems to be little cause for faith; to create hope when hope becomes forlorn.”</p> <p>—General Douglas MacArthur “Duty, Honor, Country”</p>

<p>Assonance: the repetition of vowel sounds in a series of words</p>	<p>“I do not know the dignity of their birth, but I do know the glory of their death.” —General Douglas MacArthur “Duty, Honor, Country”</p>
<p>Asyndeton: the deliberate omission of conjunctions in a series of related words, phrases, or clauses</p>	<p>“We’ve seen the unfurling of flags, the lighting of candles, the giving of blood, the saying of prayers—in English, Hebrew, and Arabic.” —President George W. Bush Address to Congress</p>
<p>Connotative Diction: words chosen deliberately for the feelings and attitudes associated with them</p>	<p>“Yours is the profession of arms, the will to win, the sure knowledge that in war there is no substitute for victory: that if you lose, the nation will be destroyed; that the very obsession of your public service must be: Duty, Honor, Country.” —General Douglas MacArthur “Duty, Honor, Country”</p>
<p>Details: facts, revealed by the author or speaker, that support the tone or purpose of a text</p>	<p>“Every device of which human ingenuity is capable has been used to deny this right. The Negro citizen may go to register only to be told that the day is wrong, or the hour is late, or the official in charge is absent. And if he persists, and if he manages to present himself to the registrar, he may be disqualified because he did not spell out his middle name or because he abbreviated a word on the application.” —President Lyndon B. Johnson “The American Promise”</p>
<p>Euphemism: the use of a word or phrase that is less expressive or direct but considered less distasteful or offensive than another</p>	<p>“Some of you have come fresh from narrow jail cells. Some of you have come from areas where your quest for freedom left you battered by the storms of persecution and staggered by the winds of police brutality. You have been the veterans of creative suffering.” —Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. “I Have a Dream”</p>
<p>Hyperbole: a deliberate, extravagant, and often outrageous exaggeration used for either serious or comic effect</p>	<p>“I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.” —Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. “I Have a Dream”</p>
<p>Imagery: words or phrases that appeal to the senses, used to describe persons, objections, actions, feelings, and ideas</p>	<p>“As I listened to those songs, in memory’s eye I could see those staggering columns of the First World War, bending under soggy packs, on many a weary march from dripping dusk to drizzling dawn, slogging ankle-deep through the mire of shell-shocked roads, to form grimly for the attack, blue-lipped, covered with sludge and mud, chilled by the wind and rain, driving home to their objective, and for many, to the judgment seat of God.” —General Douglas MacArthur “Duty, Honor, Country”</p>

<p>Irony: the use of words to convey a meaning that is the opposite of its literal meaning</p>	<p>“He may be asked to recite the entire Constitution, or explain the most complex provisions of State law. And even a college degree cannot be used to prove that he can read and write.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">—President Lyndon B. Johnson “The American Promise”</p>
<p>Jargon: the language, especially the vocabulary, peculiar to a particular trade, profession, or group</p>	<p>“In a sense we’ve come to our nation’s capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men—yes, black men as well as white men—would be guaranteed the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check, a check that has come back marked ‘insufficient funds.’”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">—Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. “I Have a Dream”</p>
<p>Juxtaposition: a device in which normally unassociated ideas, words, or phrases are placed next to one another, often creating an effect of surprise and wit</p>	<p>“There, long-suffering men and women peacefully protested the denial of their rights as Americans. Many were brutally assaulted.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">—President Lyndon B. Johnson “The American Promise”</p>
<p>Metaphor: a comparison of two unlike things using <i>like</i> or <i>as</i></p>	<p>“And, if a beachhead of cooperation may push back the jungle of suspicion, let both sides join in creating a new endeavor”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">—President John F. Kennedy Inaugural Address</p>
<p>Oxymoron: a form of paradox that combines a pair of opposite terms into a single unusual expression</p>	<p>“He was now sufficiently composed to order a funeral of modest magnificence, suitable at once to the rank of a Nouradin’s profession, and the reputation of his wealth.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">—Samuel Johnson “The history of Almamoulin the son of Nouradin,” <i>The Rambler</i></p>
<p>Paradox: a statement containing contradictory elements that may appear illogical, impossible, or absurd but which actually have a coherent meaning that reveals a hidden truth</p>	<p>“We dare not tempt them with weakness. For only when our arms are sufficient beyond doubt can we be certain beyond doubt that they will never be employed.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">—President John F. Kennedy Inaugural Address</p>

<p>Parallelism: a grammatical or structural arrangement of words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs so that elements of equal importance are equally developed and similarly phrased</p>	<p>“Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, to assure the survival and the success of liberty.” —President John F. Kennedy Inaugural Address</p>
<p>Personification: a kind of metaphor that gives inanimate objects or abstract ideas human characteristics</p>	<p>“And let every other power know that this hemisphere intends to remain the master of its own house.” —President John F. Kennedy Inaugural Address</p>
<p>Polysyndeton: the deliberate use of many conjunctions for special emphasis—to highlight quantity or mass of detail or to create a flowing, continuous sentence pattern; it slows the pace of the sentence</p>	<p>“Rarely are we met with a challenge, not to our growth or abundance, our welfare, or our security, but rather to the values and the purposes and the meaning of our beloved Nation.” —President Lyndon B. Johnson “The American Promise”</p>
<p>Repetition: a device in which words, sounds, and ideas are used more than once to enhance rhythm and to create emphasis</p>	<p>“There is no Negro problem. There is no Southern problem. There is no Northern problem. There is only an American problem. And we are met here tonight as Americans—not as Democrats or Republicans—we are met here as Americans to solve that problem.” —President Lyndon B. Johnson “The American Promise”</p>
<p>Rhetorical Fragment: a sentence fragment used deliberately for a persuasive purpose or to create a desired effect</p>	<p>“Another new study to be presented by U.S. Navy researchers later this week warns it could happen in as little as 7 years. Seven years from now.” —Vice President Al Gore Nobel Peace Prize Acceptance Speech</p>
<p>Rhetorical Question: a question asked solely to produce an effect or to make an assertion and not to elicit a reply</p>	<p>“And what sort of soldiers are those you are to lead? Are they reliable? Are they brave? Are they capable of victory?” —General Douglas MacArthur “Duty, Honor, Country”</p>

<p>Rhetorical Shift: a turn, a change, or a movement in a text resulting from an epiphany, realization, or insight gained by the speaker or writer</p>	<p>“You now face a new world—a world of change. The thrust into outer space of the satellite, spheres, and missiles mark the beginning of another epoch in the long story of mankind.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">—General Douglas MacArthur “Duty, Honor, Country”</p>
<p>Simile: a stated comparison of two different things or ideas through the use of the words <i>like</i> or <i>as</i></p>	<p>“We cannot be satisfied as long as a Negro in Mississippi cannot vote and a Negro in New York believes he has nothing for which to vote. No, no, we are not satisfied, and we will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">—Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. “I Have a Dream”</p>
<p>Statistics: numerical facts or data used as evidence</p>	<p>“Right now, for example, about a quarter-million Americans have a spinal cord injury. Our government spends about \$8.7 billion a year just maintaining these members of our family. But we spend only \$40 million a year on research that would actually improve the quality of their lives, get them off public assistance, or even cure them.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">—Christopher Reeve Speech on Americans with Disabilities Act</p>
<p>Testimonial: a statement in support of a particular truth, fact, or claim</p>	<p>“I have beside me up here millions of people who are living and standing straight and erect, and knowing something about dignity without being cold and aloof, knowing something about being contained with being unapproachable—people who have learned something from Coretta Scott King.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">—Dr. Maya Angelou Funeral Oration for Coretta Scott King</p>
<p>Understatement: a kind of irony that deliberately represents something as being much less than it really is</p>	<p>“I am not unmindful that some of you have come here out of great trials and tribulations. Some of you have come fresh from narrow jail cells. Some of you have come from areas where your quest for freedom left you battered by the storms of persecution and staggered by the winds of police brutality.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">—Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. “I Have a Dream”</p>

