

Rhetorical Devices

Adapted from the Web Site
of
James Tomlinson

What is Rhetoric?

- *Rhetoric* (n) - the art of speaking or writing effectively. According to Aristotle, rhetoric is "the ability, in each particular case, to see the available means of persuasion." He described three main forms of rhetoric: Ethos, Logos, and Pathos.
- Aristotle stated that an arguer must state a claim (or a proposition) and prove it. The Greek words used to refer to the proofs are logos (logic), ethos (credibility), and pathos (emotion).

Logos-Ethos-Pathos

- **Logos:** includes facts, reasons and opinions that are based on reality.
 - Logical proof appeals to people's reason, understanding, and common sense.
 - Two main types of logos (logical proofs) are deduction and induction.
- **Ethos:** materials provided in an argument that help the audience gain a favorable impression of the arguer, the group the arguer represents, or the authorities and experts the arguer cites or quotes help to create ethos, the credibility of the author.

Logos-Ethos-Pathos

- **Pathos:** Some say that there should be no appeals to emotion or attempts to arouse the emotions of the audience in an argument. The idea is that an argument should appeal only to reason.
- Emotional proofs (pathos) are appropriate in argument when the subject itself is emotional and when it creates strong feelings.
 - Especially helpful in debate and persuasive writing.

Types of Rhetorical Devices

Most Commonly Used in
Essay Writing and Debate

Alliteration

- Repetition of the initial consonant sounds beginning several words in sequence.
- "...we shall not falter, we shall not fail."
(President **G.W. Bush** Address to Congress following 9/11)
- "Let us go forth to lead the land we love."
(President **J. F. Kennedy**, Inaugural 1961)
- "Veni, vidi, vici."
(Julius Caesar - "I came, I saw, I conquered")

Assonance

- Repetition of the same vowel sounds in words close to each other.
 - "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done."
(The Lord's Prayer)
 - "Its quick soft silver bell beating, beating..."
(Karl Shapiro, "Auto Wreck")

Anadiplosis

- ("Doubling back") The rhetorical repetition of one or several words; specifically, repetition of a word that ends one clause at the beginning of the next.
 - "Men in great place are thrice servants: servants of the sovereign or state; servants of fame; and servants of business."
(Francis Bacon)

Anaphora

- The repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of successive phrases, clauses or lines.
 - "We shall not flag or fail. We shall go on to the end. We shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills. We shall never surrender."
(British Prime Minister Winston Churchill during WWII)

Antistrophe

- Repetition of the same word or phrase at the end of successive clauses.
 - "In 1931, ten years ago, Japan invaded Manchukuo -- without warning. In 1935, Italy invaded Ethiopia -- without warning. In 1938, Hitler occupied Austria -- without warning. In 1939, Hitler invaded Czechoslovakia -- without warning. Later in 1939, Hitler invaded Poland -- without warning. And now Japan has attacked Malaya and Thailand -- and the United States -- without warning."
(President Franklin D. Roosevelt)

Antithesis

- Opposition, or contrast of ideas or words in a balanced or parallel construction.
 - "Extremism in defense of liberty is no vice, moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue."
(Barry Goldwater - Republican Candidate for President 1964)
 - "Not that I loved Caesar less, but that I loved Rome more".
(Brutus in: "Julius Caesar" by William Shakespeare)

Aporia

- Expression of doubt (often feigned) by which a speaker appears uncertain as to what he should think, say, or do.
 - "Then the steward said within himself, 'What shall I do?'"
(Bible: Luke 16)

Apostrophe

- A turn from the general audience to address a specific group or person or personified abstraction absent or present.
- "For Brutus, as you know, was Caesar's angel. Judge, O you gods, how dearly Caesar loved him". (Mark Antony in *Julius Caesar* - **William Shakespeare**)

Asyndeton

- Lack of conjunctions between coordinate phrases, clauses, or words.
- "We shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardships, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty." (**J. F. Kennedy**, Inaugural)
- "But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground." (**President Abraham Lincoln**, Gettysburg Address)

Cacophony

- Harsh joining of sounds
- "We want no parlay with you and your grisly gang who work your wicked will." (**British Prime Minister Winston Churchill** - referring to Hitler.)
- "A toad the power mower caught,
Chewed and clipped of a leg, with a hobbling hop has got"
(*"The Death of a Toad"* by Richard Wilbur)

Climax

- Arrangement of words, phrases, or clauses in an order of ascending power. Often the last emphatic word in one phrase or clause is repeated as the first emphatic word of the next.
- "One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield."
(**Tennyson**, "Ulysses")

Euphemism

- substitution of an agreeable or at least non-offensive expression for one whose plainer meaning might be harsh or unpleasant.

Examples: Euphemisms for "stupid"

A few fries short of a Happy Meal.

A few beers short of a six-pack.

One Fruit Loop shy of a full bowl.

All foam, no beer.

The cheese slid off his cracker.

Hyperbole

- Exaggeration for emphasis or for rhetorical effect.
- "If you call me that name again, I'm going to explode!"
- "I nearly died laughing."

(Verbal) Irony

- Expression of something which is contrary to the intended meaning; the words say one thing but mean another.
- “Yet Brutus says he was ambitious;
And Brutus is an honourable man.”
(**Shakespeare's** Mark Antony in *Julius Caesar*)

Metaphor

- Implied comparison achieved through a figurative use of words; the word is used not in its literal sense, but in one analogous to it.
- *Life's but a walking shadow; a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage."
(**Shakespeare**, *Macbeth*)
- “From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the continent.”
(**W. Churchill**)

Oxymoron/Paradox

- Apparent paradox achieved by the juxtaposition of words which seem to contradict one another.
- An assertion seemingly opposed to common sense, but that may yet have some truth in it.
- “What a pity that youth must be wasted on the young.”
(**George Bernard Shaw**)
- “I must be cruel only to be kind.”
(**Shakespeare**, *Hamlet*)
- “Hurts so good...”
(**John Cougar Melancamp**)
- “Jumbo Shrimp”

Personification

- Attribution of personality to an impersonal thing.
- “England expects every man to do his duty.”
(**Lord Nelson**)
- The rose was as soft as a baby's skin
- “Rise up and defend the Motherland”
(Line from “Enemy at the Gates”)

Simile

- An explicit comparison between two things using 'like' or 'as'.
- “My love is as a fever, longing still
For that which longer nurseth the disease”
(**Shakespeare**, Sonnet CXLVII)
- “Reason is to faith as the eye to the telescope”
(**D. Hume**)
- “Let us go then, you and I,
While the evening is spread out against the sky,
Like a patient etherized upon a table”
(**T.S. Eliot**, “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”)

Work Cited

Tomlinson, James. *Rhetorical Devices*.
http://facstaff.bloomu.edu/jtomlins/rhetorical_devices.htm#top.
6/29/2006