

# Rhetorical Devices Sheet

## Defining Terms

**Rhetoric:** the art of using language to communicate effectively. Often rhetoric we think of rhetoric as the means by which an author/speaker persuades a reader/audience to a particular action or point of view. In doing so an author or speaker will frequently make use of the following three classic Appeals:

**Ethos**—Character and credibility of the speaker or writer

**Pathos**—Emotions of the audience

**Logos**—Use of reasoning

**Inductive** (emphasis on statistics, data, examples, etc.)

**Deductive** (logic)

### Terms of argument

**Claim**—the conclusion of an argument; what the arguer is trying to prove

Claim of fact: a claim that asserts something exists, has existed or will exist based on data

that the audience will accept as objectively verifiable.

Claim of value: a claim that some things are more or less desirable than others

Claim of policy: a claim asserting that specific courses of action should be instituted as solutions to problems.

**Support**—any material that serves to prove an issue or claim; in addition to evidence, it includes appeals to the needs and values of the audience.

**Warrant**—a general principal or assumption that establishes a connection between the support and the claim.

### Diction: Word Choice

- Does a particular part of speech dominate the passage?
- What kind of vocabulary does the author use: formal, everyday, slang?
- Do certain words have particularly strong positive or negative connotations?
- Does the language include any similar words or sets of oppositions: light/dark, good/evil, human/animal etc?

### Syntax / Phrasing: Sentence Fluency, Conventions

- How are words organized into sentences and/or phrases: long vs. short, simple vs. complex?
- How does the author use punctuation?
- Does the author intentionally break the rules of Standard English to create a particular effect?

### Imagery/Detail

- How does the author convey meaning through the use of concrete details?
- How does the author portray sense experience: sight, sound, smell, touch, movement?
- Is there a dominant pattern of imagery?

### Tone: Author's/Narrator's Attitude

- What is the overall effect created by the previous elements? (inspiring, enraging,
- What is the emotional coloring of the passage-joyful, angry, ironic etc?
- What is the writer/speaker's attitude toward the subject, audience, and him/herself?

## Frequently Used Rhetorical Devices

- **Allusion** - a reference to something previous in history or literature
- **Analogy** - A (an apple) is to B (a potato) the way C (a bird) is to D (a worm)
- **Anaphora** - use of the same word or phrase at the beginning of successive sentences, lines of verse, paragraphs or stanzas
- **Apostrophe** - directly addressing an absent or imaginary person or an abstract concept as if it were present and could reply
- **Hyperbole** - conscious exaggeration used to heighten effect, often humorous
- **Irony**
  - **Verbal** - implies the opposite of what is literally stated (ex. sarcasm)
  - **Situational** - presents an incongruity between appearance and reality, expectation and fulfillment, or between the actual situation and what would seem appropriate
  - **Dramatic** - reveals a discrepancy between what a character says or thinks and what the reader knows to be true
- **Juxtaposition** - placing two ideas, words, images, etc. side by side, to compare and/or contrast
- **Litotes**- A deliberate understatement for emphasis. Example: saying “They seem to like each other” when really what is meant is “They never let each other out of their sights.”
- **Metaphor** - an implied comparison between two essentially dissimilar words
- **Metonymy**- Substitution of an associated word for what is meant. Example: Saying “top brass” for military officers.
- **Paradox** - a statement or situation containing apparently contradictory elements
  - **Oxymoron** – a condensed paradox at the level of a phrase (ex. peaceful warriors)
- **Parallel Structure** - grammatical framing of words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs to give structural similarity; acts as an organizing force to attract the reader’s attention or add emphasis
  - **Parallel** - AB AB
  - **Chiasmus** - AB BA
- **Personification** - the attribution of human qualities to animals, objects, or abstract concepts
- **Prolepsis** - in which a future act or development is represented as if already accomplished or existing foreshadowing
- **Rhetorical Question** - a question asked for persuasive effect without expecting a response
- **Simile** - two essentially dissimilar words compared using “like” or “as”
- **Sound Experience**: The response by the reader’s auditory imagination to the sounds symbolized by the text; the vocal/ auditory effects of a speech or written discourse.
  - Alliteration – repetition of words that start with the same consonant sound
  - Assonance – repetition of vowel sounds in the accented syllable of successive words
  - Consonance - repetition of consonant sounds in the accented syllables of successive words
  - Rhyme- intentional repetition of similar sounds in two or more words within a passage
- **Symbol** - a word or phrase which represents something beyond the literal meaning
- **Synecdoche**- A rhetorical figure in which a part stands for the whole or, less often vice versa. Example: “The great minds of the decade were seated around the conference table.”
- **Under-/Overstatement** - saying considerably less or more than a condition warrants, usually for ironic contrast
- **Weasel Words**- The language of whitewash and evasion, used to deliberately conceal unpleasant facts.