



Rhetorical Devices in Writing

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Rhetorical devices are methods/techniques used in order to engage and persuade an audience. Rhetorical devices are particularly present in public speaking and written communication. The following are some of the commonly used rhetorical devices which can be found in literature/speeches.

Alliteration: The repetition of introductory consonant sounds that occur close together in sequence.

Ex: “His soul swooned slowly as he heard the snow falling faintly through the universe and faintly falling, like the descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead.” [James Joyce “The Dead”]

Allusion: An indication to an event, figure, or literary work.

Ex: Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand today, signed the Emancipation Proclamation. [MLK Jr “I Have A Dream”]

Analogy: Parallels two different things that possess related characteristics.

Ex: “What’s in a name? That which we call a rose

By any other word would smell as sweet.

So Romeo would, were he not Romeo called. . . [William Shakespeare “Rome and Juliet”]

Anaphora: Writing or speech which uses repetition of the first part of the sentence in order to create rhythm as well as create prominence to a certain idea.

Ex: **Now is the time** to make real the promises of democracy. **Now is the time** to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice. **Now is the time** to lift our nation from the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood. **Now is the time** to make justice a reality for all of God’s children. [MLK Jr “I Have A Dream”]

Antithesis: Two opposite ideas placed together in a sentence to achieve a contrasting effect.

Ex: “Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heav’n.” [John Milton “Paradise Lost”]

Connotation: refers to a meaning that is implied by a word apart from the thing which it describes explicitly.

Ex: “Shall I Compare Thee to *a Summer’s Day* . . .” [William Shakespeare Sonnet 18]

Ethos: In rhetoric, ethos represents credibility, or an ethical appeal, which involves persuasion by the character involved.

Ex: “My three decades of experience in public service, my tireless commitment to the people of this community, and my willingness to reach across the aisle and cooperate with the opposition, make me the ideal candidate for your mayor.”

Fallacy: A fallacy is an erroneous argument dependent upon an unsound or illogical contention.

Ex: “Well, Isaac Newton trusted in Alchemy, do you suppose you know more than Isaac Newton?”

Hyperbole: A figure of speech that involves an exaggeration of ideas for the sake of emphasis.

Ex: “I had to wait in the station for ten days – an eternity.” [Joseph Conrad “The Heart of Darkness”]

Irony: A figure of speech in which words are used in such a way that their intended meaning is different from the actual meaning of the words.

Ex: “Go ask his name: if he be married.

My grave is like to be my wedding bed.” [William Shakespeare Romeo & Juliet]

Logos: Logos is a literary device that can be defined as a statement, sentence, or argument used to convince or persuade the targeted audience by employing reason or logic.

Ex: “All men are mortal. Socrates is a man. Therefore, Socrates is mortal.” [Aristotle “The Art of Rhetoric”]

Metaphor: Metaphor is a figure of speech that makes an implicit, implied, or hidden comparison between two things that are unrelated, but which share some common characteristics

Ex: “Her mouth was a fountain of delight. And when he possessed her, they seemed to swoon together at the very borderland of life’s mystery.” [Kate Chopin “The Storm”]

Pathos: Pathos is a quality of an experience in life, or a work of art, that stirs up emotions of pity, sympathy, and sorrow. Pathos can be expressed through words, pictures, or even with gestures of the body.

Ex: “He had meant the best in the world, and been treated like a dog—like a very dog. She would be sorry someday—maybe when it was too late. Ah, if he could only die TEMPORARILY!” [Mark Twain “The Adventures of Tom Sawyer”]



Reference: <https://literarydevices.net/parallelism/>.

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