

Rhetorical and Stylistic Devices

What is a Rhetorical Device?

A rhetorical device is a technique of using language that will increase the *persuasiveness* of a piece of writing. A writer or speaker will use these to a meaning with the goal of persuading the listener or reader towards considering a topic from a different perspective. A rhetorical device is to make the audience receptive through emotional changes and to provide a rational argument for the frame of view or course of action.

The Effectiveness of Rhetorical Devices

Rhetorical devices generally fall into three different categories:

- Those involving emphasis, association, clarification, and focus
- Those involving physical organization, transition, and disposition or arrangement
- Those involving decoration and variety

While some ideas have been given about the effect of these devices, you are not limited to what is written here. Also, there is often more than one effect created by a given device, which often devices on the situation in question.

Alliteration	The repetition in successive words of the same initial consonant sound or of any vowel sound -creates a strong, emotional response -the effect of successful alliteration is beauty of sound and emphasis <u>Example:</u> <i>The majestic, the magnificent Mississippi.</i>
Allusion	A reference to a generally familiar person, place or thing, whether real or legendary -drawn from history, geography, the Bible, mythology, and literature -creates familiarity for audience; audience connects to something larger than present <u>Example:</u> <i>To eat or not to eat.</i>
Analogy	A comparison of two things, often a dissimilar nature yet alike in certain aspects, in order to suggest that what is true of one applies to the other <u>Example:</u> <i>Writing a book of poetry is like dropping a rose petal down the Grand Canyon and waiting for the echo.</i>
Anaphora	The repetition of a word, or group of words, at the beginning of successive clauses, sentences or lines of poetry -emphasis is created, although care must be taken not to become affected or to sound rhetorical and bombastic <u>Example:</u> <i>To think on death it is a misery;/ To think on life it is a vanity;/ To think on the world verily it is;/ To think that here man hath no perfect bliss.</i>
Anecdote	A short, interesting or amusing story about a particular person or event told to make a point. Forms a more human connection (pathos) between audience and speaker.
Antimetabole	Repetition of words in reverse order <u>Example:</u> <i>Ask not what your country can do for you, but ask what you can do for your country.</i> <u>Example:</u> <i>Fail to plan, to fail.</i>

Antithesis	Establishes a clear, contrasting relationship between two ideas by joining them together or juxtaposing them, often in parallel structure. -Used more emphasis and to draw attention <u>Example:</u> <i>We shall support any friend, oppose any foe.</i> <u>Example:</u> <i>To err is human; to forgive, divine.</i> <u>Example:</u> <i>That's one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind.</i>
Assonance	The repetition of internal vowel sounds in closely following words. -The effect of successful assonance is beauty of sound and emphasis <u>Example:</u> <i>A deep, green stream</i>
Asyndeton	Omission of conjunctions between coordinate phrases, clauses, or words. It creates an emotional feeling of "building up" and that there is more to follow. <u>Example:</u> <i>He came, he saw, he conquered.</i> <u>Example:</u> <i>They spent the day wondering, searching, thinking, understanding.</i>
Closing by return	The practise of ending a long paragraph or one section of an essay by returning to an image, an idea, or a statement that occurs in the beginning
Colloquialism	Language which occurs more often in speech than in writing -Strengthens argument by using relatable language <u>Example:</u> <i>After having committed a succession of grisly murders, he was thrown into the slammer for life.</i>
Connotation	Not the thing or idea the word stands for (<u>denotation</u>), but the attitudes, feelings and emotions aroused by the word <u>Example:</u> <i>Village/hick town</i>
Euphemism	Replacing a harsh word with a more pleasant one -Disguises truth, often used by politicians and in censorship endeavours -Used to downplay a potentially bleak situation <u>Example:</u> <i>Kick the bucket.</i> <u>Example:</u> <i>He was vertically challenged.</i>
Figurative Language	Describes language that moves, for meaning or effect, beyond standard or literal meaning -common figures of speech include simile, metaphor, personification, pun, hyperbole, understatement, oxymoron
Flow	The continuity, or coherence, among the sentences of a paragraph
Framing Words	Serve to separate and to introduce the several divisions of a subject or thought <u>Examples:</u> <i>first, moreover, therefore, etc.</i>
Hortative sentence	Sentence that exhorts, advises, calls to action <u>Example:</u> <i>Your talents are wasted. You should look for a more rewarding job!</i>
Hyperbole	Deliberate exaggeration <u>Example:</u> <i>till all the seas run dry.</i>
Imagery	A picture made with words although images may also appeal to touch, hearing, and taste -in a much broader sense, imagery refers to an author's use of figures of speech of any kind
Imperative Sentence	Sentence used to command, enjoin, implore, or entreat <u>Example:</u> <i>My fellow citizens of the world: ask not what America will do for you, but what together we can do for the freedom of man.</i>

Irony	Saying the opposite of what is meant <u>Example:</u> <i>dying of thirst in the middle of the ocean.</i>
Juxtaposition	Placement of two things closely together to emphasize comparisons or contrasts -The difference between them highlights their difference <u>Example:</u> <i>love-sick Romeo and fiery Tybalt</i>
Metaphor	An implied comparison between two things seemingly quite different -metaphors make the abstract, concrete; the unfamiliar, familiar <u>Example:</u> <i>Love is a rose.</i> <u>Example:</u> <i>Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life."</i>
Metonymy	Using a single feature to present the whole (often not distinguished from synecdoche) <u>Example:</u> <i>The suits on Wall Street walked off with most of our savings.</i> <u>Example:</u> <i>The orders came directly from the White House.</i>
Oxymoron	Paradoxical juxtaposition of words that seem to contradict one another <u>Example:</u> <i>This peaceful revolution.</i> <u>Example:</u> <i>Senator Rosebud calls this a useless plan; if so, it is the most helpful useless plan we have ever enacted.</i>
Parallelism	Parallel sentence structures use the same part of speech or grammatical structure to convey equal or relate ideas. -Several parts of a sentence or several sentences are expressed similarly to show that the ideas in the parts or sentences are equal in importance. -Parallelism adds balance, rhythm and clarity to the sentence <u>Example:</u> <i>He is not only our leader but also our cook.</i> <u>Example:</u> <i>I was more interested in what the exhibit showed than in what Martha said.</i> <u>Example:</u> <i>Time of day, amount of light, and how far you are from the subject are all factors in taking photographs.</i>
Periodic sentence	Sentence whose main clause is withheld until the end <u>Example:</u> <i>To that world assembly of sovereign states, the United Nations, our last and best hope in an age where the instruments of war have far outpaced the instruments of peace, we renew our pledge of support.</i>
Personification	A figure of speech whereby ideas, animals, or things are given human attributes <u>Example:</u> <i>The stars danced playfully in the moonlit sky.</i> <u>Example:</u> <i>My computer throws a fit every time I try to use it.</i>
Polysyndeton	Is the use of a conjunction between each word, phrase, or clause, and is thus structurally the opposite of asyndeton. - Used to show an attempt to encompass something complex <u>Example:</u> <i>They read and studied and wrote and drilled. I laughed and played and talked and flunked.</i>
Rhetorical Question	A question asked for dramatic effect -serves an organizing purpose, setting up the point the writer wishes to develop -is also used for effect, emphasis, or provocation, or for drawing a conclusionary statement from the facts at hand <u>Example:</u> <i>Will you join in that historic effort?</i> <u>Example:</u> <i>Is justice then to be considered merely a word?</i>
Satire	An ironic, sarcastic, or witty composition that claims to argue for something, but actually argues against it

Simile Is a comparison between two different things that resemble each other in at least one way. In formal prose the simile is a device both of art and explanation, comparing an unfamiliar thing to some familiar thing (an object, event, process, etc.) known to the reader. It generally uses “like” or “as”.

Example: *My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun*

Symbol A person, place or thing that exists both in its own right as something real and tangible and also as something greater than itself- an attitude, a belief, a quality, a value

Synecdoche A form of metaphor which in mention a part signifies the whole, or the whole symbolizes the part (often not distinguished from metonymy)

Example: *General Motors announced cutbacks.*

Example: *Farmer Jones has two hundred head of cattle and three hired hands.*

Example: *Give us this day our daily bread.*

Understatement To play down or soften something that is startling, horrifying, shocking, painful, or otherwise deserving of more emotion and attention than the writer gives it

Tone The speaker's attitude toward the subject or audience

-In some essays, the tone may be so personal that readers come to feel they know the author intimately

Examples:

- Satiric
- Whimsical
- Dramatic
- Learned
- Informative
- Sombre
- Urgent
- Confident
- Objective
- Diffident
- Ironic
- Didactic
- Petty
- Factual
- Restrained
- Disdainful
- Pedantic
- Indignant
- Bantering
- Flippant
- Condescending
- Sympathetic
- Inflammatory
- Candid
- Patronizing
- Mock-serious
- Benevolent
- Burlesque
- Fanciful
- Detached
- Cynical
- Scornful
- Effusive
- Colloquial
- Compassionate
- Impartial
- Pretentious
- Vibrant
- Sentimental
- Moralistic
- Taunting
- Angry
- Turgid
- Insolent

Zeugma Includes several similar rhetorical devices, all involving a grammatically correct linkage (or yoking together) of two or more parts of speech by another part of speech. The main benefit of the linking is that it shows relationships between ideas and actions more clearly.

Example: *Fred excelled at sports; Harvey at eating; Tom with girls.*

Example: *Alexander conquered the world; I, Minneapolis.*