

Rhetoric

“Organizing material for the presentation of truth”

Rhetoric has many definitions. The site listed below “The Forest of Rhetoric” details the numerous concepts connected to this one term.

Rhetoric can refer to exaggerated or inflated talk, much like that which we hear in political speeches. That is because rhetoric refers to the art of persuasion through carefully crafted words. Rhetoric can be used as a negative term because it suggests that the speaker (or writer) is using words falsely, or inflating their words in order to sound important or to distract from the issue, instead of using "plain talk" to convey something.

On the other hand, crafted words don't have to be false words. You can say something you really do mean in an artful way. In literature specifically, that can be a good thing!

In literature, rhetoric is what convinces you to feel or think a certain way about a topic. It is the art of conveying a point in a convincing, eloquent, and effective way. Rhetoric is what makes some writing beautiful and other writing bland. Some examples of rhetorical devices are the use of metaphors, alliteration, symbolism, oxymoron etc.

The study of rhetoric goes back to ancient Greece, when the ancients realized that presentation is as important as facts, or perhaps even more important.

A Great Site:

“The Forest of Rhetoric”
<http://rhetoric.byu.edu/>

Rhetorical Devices:

Oxymoron A figure of speech that combines two apparently contradictory elements, as in "jumbo shrimp" or "deafening silence."

Allusion —A figure of speech which makes brief, even casual reference to a historical or literary figure, event, or object to create a resonance in the reader or to apply a symbolic meaning to the character or object of which the allusion consists.

Irony A situation or statement characterized by significant difference between what is expected or understood and what actually happens or is meant. Irony is frequently humorous, and can be sarcastic when using words to imply the opposite of what they normally mean. Dramatic Irony, Verbal Irony, Situational Irony.

Euphemism Substitution of a milder or less direct expression for one that is harsh or blunt. For example, using "passed away" for "dead."

Symbolism: using a concrete object to represent something abstract

Archetype: a symbol that can transcend cultures; part of our universal sub-conscious (more notes on this in the myth unit)

Simile: comparison using like or as

Metaphor: comparison not using like or as

Imagery: using adjectives, adverbs, similes and metaphors to create a picture in the reader's mind. We will cover many different types of imagery (blood imagery, garment imagery, imagery of illness, animal imagery and light and dark imagery in *Macbeth*)

Personification: giving human or living qualities to a non-living thing

Rhyming Couplet: Two lines of poetry that rhyme. Shakespeare uses this to grab the reader's attention and to bring focus to important aspects of the play.

Alliteration: the repetition of the beginning sounds in a line or lines of poetry

Paradox: a statement that seems self-contradictory or absurd, but has an element of truth in it.

Amplification - repeats a word or expression for emphasis - Love, real love, takes time.

Simile - compares two things using like or as - He is flaky as a snowstorm.

Anaphora - repeats a word or phrase in successive phrases - "If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh?" (Merchant of Venice, Shakespeare)

Antithesis - makes a connection between two things - "That's one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind." (Neil Armstrong) an opposition or contrast of ideas is expressed by parallelism of words that are the opposites of, or strongly contrasted with, each other, such as "hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all sins" "his sermons were full of startling antitheses"

Antimetabole - repeats words or phrases in reverse order - “ask not what your country can do for you — ask what you can do for your country.” (J F Kennedy)