

FUNDAMENTALS OF RHETORIC:

DEFINITION

DEVICES

FALLACIES

DEFINITION:

The art of analyzing all of the choices involving language that a writer, speaker, reader, or listener might make in a situation so that the text becomes meaningful, purposeful, and effective. It also involves the specific techniques used by writers or speakers to make meaningful, purposeful, effective texts.

BASIC RHETORICAL DEVICES:

Subject
Occasion
Audience
Purpose/Thesis/Theme/Main Idea
Speaker
Tone
Point of View
Style
Ethos/Pathos/Logos
Diction/Connotation/Denotation
Syntax
 Parallel Structure
 Periodic Sentence
 Asyndeton/Polysyndeton
Figurative Language:
 Hyperbole
 Understatement
 Symbol
 Simile/metaphor
 Personification
Imagery
Analogy
Oxymoron/Paradox
Pun
Rhetorical Question
Irony
 Situational
 Verbal
Satire/Parody
Anecdote
Juxtaposition/comparison
Structure/Organization
Anaphora/Repetition/Refrain

RHETORICAL FALLACIES (common problems in reasoning)

Ad Hominem
Argument From Authority
Appeal to Ignorance
Begging the Question
Hasty Generalization
Non Sequitur
False Dichotomy
Slippery Slope
Faulty Causality
Strong Man Argument
Sentimental Appeals
Red Herring
Scare Tactics
Bandwagon
Dogmatism
Equivocation
Faulty Analogy
Various other “propaganda” strategies

The study of rhetoric is essentially based on understanding the choices which writers make, recognizing the strategies writers employ, and evaluating the quality of a writer’s thinking. We will be concerned with, first and foremost, discerning what a writer’s message and purpose are—a chore which is oftentimes more complex than it might first seem. Furthermore, we will be concerned with discovering just HOW the writer established that message and purpose: what techniques and choices has the writer made that make a piece effective? In addition, we will be concerned with EVALUATING the quality of a writer’s message and purpose by carefully analyzing the support provided as well as the strength of the reasoning and rationale employed. Finally, the goal is to then for you to apply these skills and knowledge to your own writing so that it will be more effective, better reasoned, and in general more powerful. In the process, you will become a much more sophisticated and effective reader, writer, and thinker.