Impact of Rhetorical Devices

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How Do Rhetorical Devices Impact a Text?

• Rhetorical devices help writers develop an argument.

• Rhetorical devices signal important ideas.

• Rhetorical devices help the audience remember important ideas.
Common Rhetorical Devices

• Eight common rhetorical devices include:
  – Anaphora
  – Asyndeton
  – Chiasmus
  – Direct Address
  – Hyperbaton
  – Parallelism
  – Polysyndeton
  – Rhetorical Questions
Anaphora

• The following passage from Ecclesiastes contains an excellent anaphora example:

“3:1 To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: 3:2 A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; 3:3 A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up…”

• Anaphora uses repetition at the beginning of successive clauses, phrases or sentences.

• This repetition alerts the reader to an important idea.

• Repeating the important idea helps the reader remember it.

*The King James Bible*. Project Gutenberg. Web. 2 February 2012.
Asyndeton

- Julius Caesar created one of the most famous asyndeton examples:
  - “I came, I saw, I conquered.”

- Asyndeton omits conjunctions to create a more forceful sentence.

- Caesar’s statement conveys his strength and confidence.
  - I came and I saw and then I conquered, exists as a weaker statement.
Chiasmus

- President Kennedy spoke a very famous line using chiasmus:
  
  “Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country.”

- Chiasmus juxtaposes ideas within a sentence.

- Changing the order of the words makes this sentence stand out, and the audience listens more closely.
Direct Address

• Direct address occurs when a speaker includes the audience:
  – **We** can change the world and create a better tomorrow. By voting for me, **you** will make a difference.

• Including the audience often gains their attention.

• When the audience feels as though the speaker speaks directly to them, they are more likely to listen closely.
Hyperbaton

• Hyperbaton occurs when an author inverts the normal word order to emphasize an idea:
  
  – Blind is love.
  
  – Chocolate do I crave.

• Inverting the word order sounds strange to the ear; therefore, the listener stops to review the sentence.

• This gains the listener’s attention and he or she begins thinking about the important idea the author conveys with hyperbaton.
Parallelism

- Parallelism may occur within a sentence or in successive sentences.
  
  - If elected as your next President, I will **lower taxes**, **create jobs** and **increase personal freedoms**.

  - I hope **to** positively impact each American’s life. **I hope to** leave a lasting legacy for future generations. **I hope to** revive America’s thriving and innovative economy.

- Parallelism alerts the audience to important ideas through repetition.

- The author repeats a sentence structure, creating familiarity within the text.

- This repetition strengthens the idea as the listener anticipates what will come next.
Polysyndeton

• Polysyndeton occurs when a writer includes more conjunctions than are grammatically necessary:

  – If elected, I will listen to the people and act on their concerns and convince my colleagues we are right.

• By including more conjunctions than are necessary, the speaker slows the sentence down.

• This encourages the listener to focus on each presented aspect.
Rhetorical Questions

- Rhetorical questions are questions the audience already knows the answer to:
  - Do you want higher taxes?
  - Should all Americans have access to quality healthcare?

- Rhetorical questions help a speaker activate listeners’ prior knowledge.

- Posing a question the audience knows the answer to engages them in conversation.

- This assists the speaker in creating a positive rapport with the audience.
Impact of Rhetorical Devices Review

• Rhetorical devices help a writer to strengthen an argument.

• Rhetorical devices help a reader to remember important ideas.

• Rhetorical devices often indicate important ideas through repetition or grammatical manipulation.