

Critical Voter Lesson Plan – Rhetorical Devices and Arrangement

Political and other forms of persuasive communication can be “dressed up” using rhetorical devices designed to make communication more lively, engaging and effective. Some of these devices (such as *alliteration* and *metaphor*) are the same ones used to liven up poetry, prose or song lyrics, while others (like *anaphora*) tend to get used primarily in oral presentations in order to make spoken communication more lively and persuasive.

In addition to these linguistic devices, there are also strategic devices that can be used to move a discussion one way or another. These strategic devices include techniques for anticipating objections or criticisms in advance, highlighting the weakness of your opponent or his or her arguments without seeming to directly attack them, or using other means to draw attention to certain points on which you want people to focus.

Sophisticated rhetorical techniques tend to get used at the highest level during important formal presentations such as a candidate’s convention acceptance speech, or during a presidential Inaugural or State of the Union address. Such formal presentations also tend to pay careful attention to how a speech is arranged, following rules for organizing arguments that go back to the days of Cicero, Rome’s greatest orator.

Terminology

Important vocabulary terms used in this lesson include:

- Rhetorical devices
- Figures of speech
- Schemes
- Tropes
- Literary linguistic devices (including *alliteration*, *metaphor* and *simile*)
- Spoken linguistic devices (including *anaphora* and *chiasmus*)
- Strategic devices (including *procatlepsis*)
- Cliché
- Aphorism
- Canons of Rhetoric (including Invention, Arrangement, Memory, Style and Delivery)
- Components of an argument (including Introduction, Statement of Facts, Division, Logical Proof, Refutation and Conclusion/Peroration)

Goals

The goal if this lesson is to give students an understanding of:

- Rhetorical devices used to enliven a presentation or control an argument
- How to identify different types of rhetorical devices when used in a persuasive presentation (like a political speech)
- How to understand the purpose behind the use of different rhetorical devices

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- How to tell when rhetorical devices are used to strengthen a strong argument vs. obscure a weak one
- How persuasive communication is organized using the components of Arrangement (including Introduction, Statement of Facts, Division, Logical Proof, Refutation and Peroration)

Primary Resources

The following resources are available at the www.criticalvoter.com web site to support this lesson:

- **Critical Voter:** Chapter 8 (Rhetorical Devices) and 9 (Organizing Arguments)
- **Check for Understanding** – A short quiz designed to determine if someone has understood material in the reading.
- **Blog Entries** – To find additional examples and information on the Critical Voter blog (if available), select “Rhetorical Devices” or “Arrangements” in the blog’s **Category** list.

Additional Resources

List of Rhetorical Devices: <http://www.virtualsalt.com/rhetoric.htm>

Suggested Activities

Activity	Notes on this activity
Have students read the assigned book chapters and answer the Check for Understanding questions to ensure they have understood the concepts covered in this lesson.	The Check for Understanding quiz is made up of questions which were designed to be easily answerable by anyone who has read the book chapters in their entirety.
Provide students with a political speech (such as the stump speech of one of the Presidential candidates) as well as one or more colored markers. Ask them to highlight every rhetorical device they can find in the text.	You can ask students to just identify the figures of speech discussed in their reading, or provide them access to a more comprehensive list of rhetorical devices, like the one that appears under “Additional Resources” above. This exercise can be presented as a contest, giving the same speech to groups of students to see which group can accurately identify the most rhetorical devices in a single speech.
Using the same persuasive speech or article used in the exercise above, identify the most prominent strategic devices and discuss whether those devices are used to strengthen an already strong	For this exercise, you may need to start by determining if the overall argument is strong or weak using the tools discussed in previous lessons (including whether the argument is based on a

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argument or obscure a weak one.	strong foundation of logic; strikes the right balance of logos, pathos and ethos; and uses the right verb tense for the type of argument being made - forensic, demonstrative or deliberative).
Either using the same persuasive speech or article used in the previous two exercises, or an argument constructed by the students themselves, have students “boil down” the original argument into an “elevator pitch” – the essence of their argument described in the fewest words possible.	Talk about the importance of being able to spell out your argument briefly and accurately before it can be expanded to a longer presentation. Talk about ways to use the “elevator speech” as a foundation which can then be built upon using the rhetorical devices discussed in this lesson.
Work together to break down a major political speech (such as a Presidential State-of-the-Union address) into its Arrangement components, including the Introduction, Statement of Facts, Division, Logical Proof, Refutation and Conclusion/Peroration.	<p>Use this exercise to demonstrate that these components, while not always in rigorous order, are generally all found within professionally delivered persuasive communication, especially important political speeches.</p> <p>While reviewing this speech, determine which component makes use of which mode of persuasion (including <i>ethos</i> – usually used in the Introduction, <i>pathos</i> – usually used in the Conclusion/Peroration, and <i>logos</i> – usually used in the middle components of a speech).</p>