



 Prestwick House

Free Lesson Plan

RHETORICAL DEVICES

Rhetorical Devices in Political Speeches

Common Core: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI9-10.4,6,9 | TEKS: 110.31.(b).(2).(C), (10).(B), (13).(B), (15).(C)

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Objectives:

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Identify six rhetorical devices as they are used;
- Analyze the effects that these devices have on written passages;
- Use rhetorical devices in their own writing.

Time:

45 Minutes or 1 Class Period

Materials:

Handout: Rhetorical Devices in Political Speeches

Procedure:

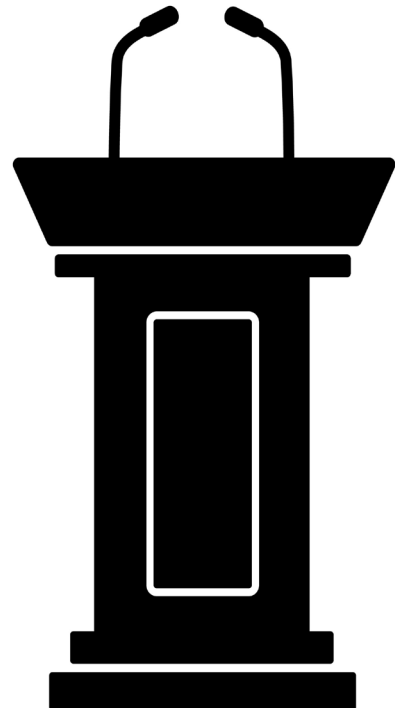
1- Introduce students to the concept of rhetorical devices.

Rhetoric is the art of writing or speaking to persuade, inform, or express the personal thoughts of the writer most effectively.

Rhetorical devices are the tools that writers use to most effectively make their point. There are dozens of different rhetorical devices that are used by the skilled rhetorician for stylistic purposes or to add emphasis, highlight transitions, or otherwise present their argument as strongly as possible.

The most talented users of rhetorical devices often find success as politicians or speechwriters. Today, we're going to look at six rhetorical devices and see how their use adds to the effectiveness of a speech or written piece.

2 - Pass out a copy of Handout: Rhetorical Devices in Political Speeches to each student.





3 - Introduce each quote by defining the Rhetorical Device used in that quote.

After introducing the concept, ask your students to come up with a few more examples to prove they're familiar with the concept.

Then, have your students read the quote and identify how the device is used in the quote. Discuss the effect that the device has on the meaning or effectiveness of the quote. Try re-writing the quote as a group not using the device. Ask your students if it is more or less persuasive to use the device.

Simile – A simile is a device in which the writer compares two things that are unrelated, but through the simile, a relationship is made. Since similes conjure up strongly suggestive imagery, they lend new details to the main comparison and, in almost all cases, use the words “like” or “as” to draw those connections.

Examples: You sing like a bird. Like a mad dog, the man was looking for a fight.

Metaphor – A metaphor is similar to a simile in that they're both used to draw connections between dissimilar objects. In a metaphor, instead of saying that one thing is “like” another thing as you would with a simile, you treat one object as if it actually were another. A metaphor can be used poetically, but it can also create new ideas by focusing on emotional or psychological truths, rather than just the literal truths in a scenario

Examples: John, a bear on the football field, never acted fierce otherwise. A teacher must plant the seeds of knowledge in his or her pupils.

Antithesis makes use of a contrast in language to bring out a contrast in ideas. Antithesis has a natural beauty to the human ear because we love to organize and categorize our thoughts and ideas. It can be built to point out fine distinctions in an issue by presenting them together, or it can be used to emphasize how different the two concepts are.

Examples: “To err is human, to forgive, divine.” The poverty of the family alongside the wealth of the landlord helped the judge rule properly.

Anaphora is the deliberate repetition of a phrase at the beginning of multiple clauses or sentences to lend emphasis to a single idea. It is most commonly used to create a sense of climax, building from least important to most important and guiding an audience to a final strong conclusion.

Examples: “To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven. A time to be born, a time to die, a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up...” “Give me liberty, or give me death.”

Rhetorical Questions are questions asked by a speaker or writer that are not answered directly in the text, but which have an implied answer. It's an opportunity for the audience to fill in things that they already know, and for the reader to agree with the conclusion the writer expects.

Examples: Should we just stand by and watch as children suffer? Do you want to be a millionaire in only one year?

Alliteration

Alliteration is the repetition of a sound at the beginning of words to draw attention to a phrase and mark it as important.

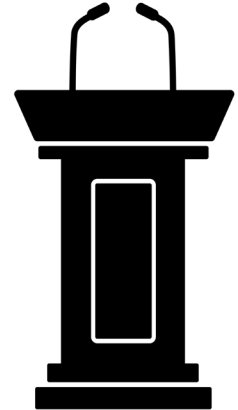
Examples: “From forth the fatal loins of these two foes...” My car was completely crushed.

4 - With the time remaining in class, see if your class can identify other instances when Rhetorical devices are used beyond political speech.

Students may identify literary sources such as novels and poems, but they could also find these devices in songs, nursery rhymes, book or article titles, newspaper headlines, advertising, and even common phrases they use every day.

**Handout**

Rhetorical Devices in Political Speeches



Simile

“No, no, we are not satisfied, and we will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream.”

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. “I Have a Dream” (1963)

Metaphor

“Behind me stands a wall that encircles the free sectors of this city, part of a vast system of barriers that divides the entire continent of Europe. From the Baltic, south, those barriers cut across Germany in a gash of barbed wire, contrite, dog runs, and guard towers... Every man is a Berliner, forced to look upon a scar.”

RONALD REAGAN “Tear Down this Wall” (1978)

Antithesis

“If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich.”

JOHN F. KENNEDY “Inaugural Address” (1961)

Anaphora

“We shall not flag or fail. We shall go on to the end, we shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our Island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender...”

WINSTON CHURCHILL “We Shall Fight on the Beaches” (1940)

Rhetorical Question

“What have I, or those I represent, to do with your national independence? Are the great principles of political freedom and of natural justice, embodied in that Declaration of Independence, extended to us? And am I, therefore, called upon to bring our humble offering to the national altar, and to confess the benefits and express devout gratitude for the blessings resulting from your independence to us?”

FREDERICK DOUGLASS, “What to the slave is the 4th of July” (1852)

Alliteration

“Let us resist the temptation to fall back on the same partisanship and pettiness and immaturity that has poisoned our politics for so long.”

BARACK OBAMA “Victory Speech” (2008)



Homework:

Ask your students to write sentences using each of the six devices introduced in the lesson and write a brief explanation of how the specific use might affect the audience’s reaction to his or her message.

Standards:

Common Core:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI9-10.4

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI9-10.6

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI9-10.9

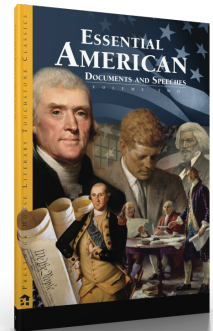
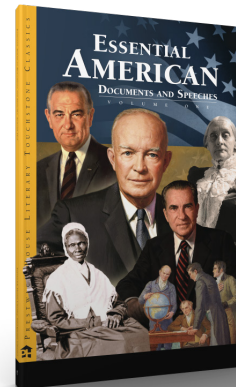
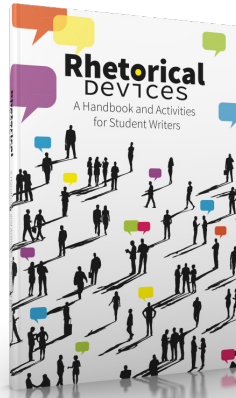
TEKS:

110.31.(b).(2).(C)

110.31.(b).(10).(B)

110.31.(b).(13).(B)

110.31.(b).(15).(C)



Sources:

Grudzina, Douglas (Ed.) *Rhetorical Devices: A Handbook and Activities for Student Writers*, Clayton, DE: Prestwick House 2007.

Moliken, Paul (Ed.) *Essential American Documents and Speeches: Literary Touchstone Classic – Vol. 1*, Clayton, DE: Prestwick House 2013.

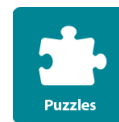
Moliken, Paul (Ed.) *Essential American Documents and Speeches: Literary Touchstone Classic – Vol. 2*, Clayton, DE: Prestwick House 2013.



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