

English Language resources: Homework activities - Rhetoric

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Rhetoric

Rhetoric was an academic discipline from Ancient Greece. It is the use of language for the purpose of persuasion. As Francis Bacon said:

Rhetoric is the application of reason to imagination for the better moving of the will.

Rhetoric employs rhetorical devices to engage readers so that they respond to the logical or emotional content of the writing.

Many of these devices are still commonly recognised in literature today and the terminology used is still familiar e.g. metaphor, personification. Although the devices are still in use, often the precise terminology is no longer used e.g. hyperbaton, epanalepsis.

Rhetorical devices can be broadly divided into two types; tropes and schemes:

- ❖ **Trope** is a word or phrase not used with its literal meaning or in the way normally intended. Metaphors and similes fall into this category
- ❖ **Scheme** shows a change in word order or produces a particular pattern.

Activity

Following are definitions of schemes and tropes followed by examples from the Bible. Match up the definition with the example.

Definitions

1. Epanalepsis – Repetition of a word or phrase at regular intervals.
2. Isocolon - A succession of [clauses](#) or [sentences](#) of approximately equal length and corresponding structure.
3. Epistrophe - The [repetition](#) of a word or phrase at the end of successive [clauses](#).

4. Anaphora - The [repetition](#) of a word or phrase at the beginning of successive [clauses](#).
5. Antithesis - The [juxtaposition](#) of contrasting ideas in balanced [phrases](#) or [clauses](#).
6. Synecdoche - A part is used to represent the whole.
7. Polysyndeton - A sentence that employs many [conjunctions](#) e.g. 'and'.
8. Metaphor - A comparison between two different things but which share some similar characteristics.
9. Personification - An inanimate object or abstraction is given human qualities or abilities.
10. Chiasmus - The second half of an expression is balanced against the first with the parts reversed.

Examples

- a. 'But whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.'
- b. 'And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up.'
- c. 'Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.'
- d. 'But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.'
- e. 'And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.'
- f. 'A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant..'
- g. 'When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child.'
- h. 'And thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies.'
- i. 'A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up..'
- j. 'Charity suffereth long, and is kind.'

Answers

1-c, 2-a, 3-g, 4-f, 5-i, 6-h, 7-b, 8-e, 9-j, 10-d