

Rhetorical Techniques

**Persuasion Through
Rhetoric: Common Devices
and Techniques**

Definitions of Rhetoric

- ***Plato:*** Rhetoric is "the art of winning the soul by discourse."
- ***Aristotle:*** Rhetoric is "the faculty of discovering in any particular case all of the available means of persuasion."

Definitions of Rhetoric

- **Francis Bacon:** Rhetoric is the application of reason to imagination "for the better moving of the will."
- **George Campbell:** [Rhetoric] is that art or talent by which discourse is adapted to its end. The four ends of discourse are to enlighten the understanding, please the imagination, move the passion, and influence the will.

A Short Introduction to Rhetoric

- ▶ Rhetoric is the Art of Persuasive Language
- ▶ Writers and speakers use Rhetoric to convince readers and listeners to do something or to think something.
- ▶ *Think of every time you want to get your way. You are using rhetoric without knowing it!*

Various Meanings of "rhetoric":

- ▶ The meaning of the word "rhetoric" seems to differ depending on how the word is used and who's using it.
- ▶ You've probably heard politicians some time or another dismiss the positions of their opponents as "mere rhetoric."
- ▶ You're probably also familiar with the idea of a rhetorical question—a question that is meant to make a point and not meant to be answered.

For our purposes -- "Rhetoric" is simply the ways in which we try to persuade a given audience, for a given purpose.

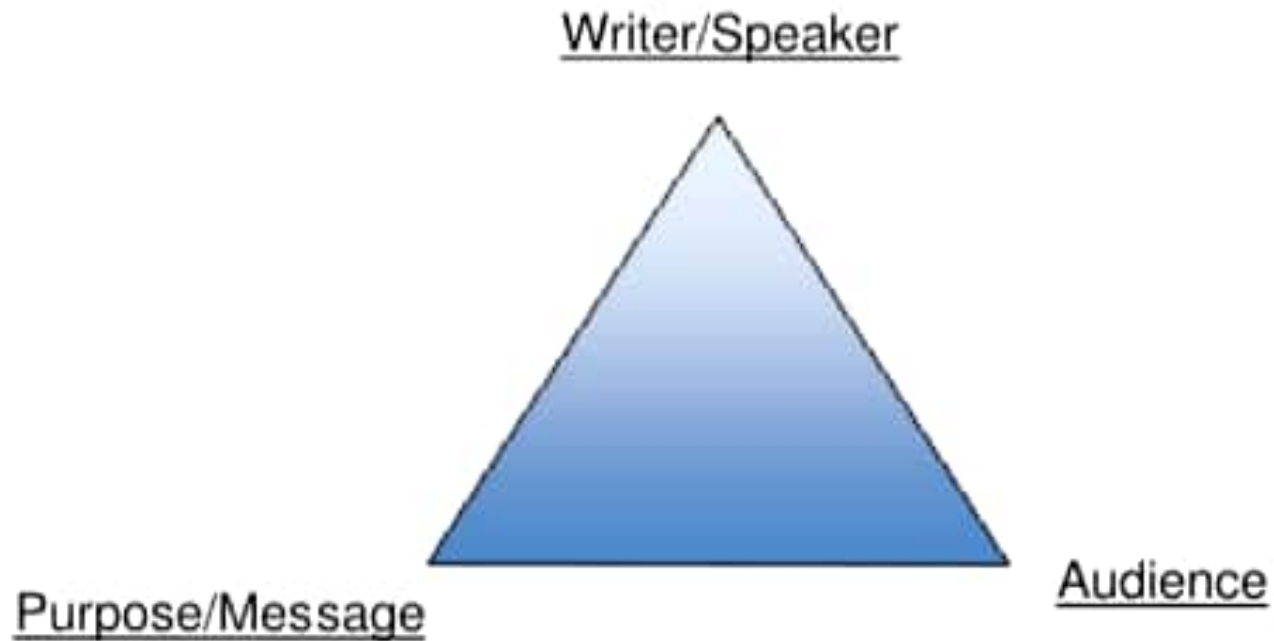
- ▶ Here are some classic (and some would say less-than-reputable) examples of rhetoric:
 - When a politician tries to get you to vote for him, he is using rhetoric.
 - When a lawyer tries to move a jury, she is using rhetoric.
 - When a government produces propaganda, it is using rhetoric.
 - When an advertisement tries to get you to buy something, it is using rhetoric.
 - When the president gives a speech, he is using rhetoric.

- ▶ Rhetoric throughout most of history referred to the arts of speechmaking and oratory.
- ▶ In this class, we will use it to refer to persuasion that occurs through any medium, not just text or speech.
- ▶ Eventually, you start to see all communication as rhetorical—that is, as a set of deliberate, strategic decisions that someone made to achieve a certain purpose with a certain audience.

The Rhetorical Triangle

- ▶ A way of thinking about what's involved in any communication/persuasion scenario.
- ▶ The 3 elements of The Rhetorical Triangle are:
 - a speaker or writer (who performs the rhetoric),
 - an audience (the people addressed), and
 - a purpose (the message communicated with the audience)

The Rhetorical Triangle



Elements of Rhetoric

1. Context—occasion or time it is written or spoken
2. Purpose— goal the writer/speaker wishes to achieve
3. Thesis (claim, assertion)— main idea; clear, focused statement



- Ethos – how well does the writer present himself
- Pathos – how well does the writer affect the reader's emotions
- Logos – how well does the writer use “text”

Ethos:

- “Ethos” refers to the writer’s “ethical appeal,” that is, how well the writer presents herself.
- Does she seem knowledgeable, reasonable and trustworthy?
- Does she treat her opponents, people who might disagree, with fairness and respect, or does she take cheap shots?
- Does she try to establish common ground with the reader?

Pathos:

- “Pathos” refers to the argument’s “emotional appeals,” that is, how well the writer taps into the reader’s emotions.
- Many times, this appeal is how a writer will make an argument “matter” to the reader.
- Advertisements
- Could appeal to emotions such as sadness, pride, fear, anger, patriotism, etc.

Logos:

- “Logos” corresponds with the argument’s “logical appeals,” that is, how well the reader uses the “text” of his own argument and evidence.
- Logos arguments will contain facts, data, statistics, expert testimony, etc.
- Writing that relies solely on logos can become boring to a reader.

Appeal to Ethos

- ▶ refers to the character or authority of the speaker/writer. As an audience, our perception of the speaker/writer's *ethos* is what leads us to trust them.
- ▶ It involves the trustworthiness and credibility of the speaker/writer
- ▶ Is the speaker/writer dependable? Is he knowledgeable? Can we trust him?

Examples of Appeals to Ethos:

- ▶ In many cases *ethos* is pretty transparent: if Rachel Ray wanted to tell us how to make Chicken Marsala, we would probably just implicitly assume that she knew what she was talking about. After all, she has built her *ethos* in the sense of authority by demonstrating her cooking abilities every day on nationwide television, in her cookbooks, and through other media. She has also built her *ethos* in the sense of her character by appearing to be a friendly, savvy, and admirable person.

However, if a random person on the street wanted to tell us how to make Chicken Marsala, we would probably first want to know what gave him the authority to do so: did he cook a lot? Does he make chicken marsala often? Why was he qualified to show us? In addition, such a person would probably lack the character component of *ethos*—being a stranger we would have no connection to him and we would have no sense of who he was as a person. In fact, we'd probably be creeped out by his unsolicited cooking lesson. Ultimately, we would have no reason to trust him.

Appeal to Pathos

- ▶ An Emotional Appeal
- ▶ Appeal to human emotions (such as desire, passion, or patriotism) within the audience/reader
- ▶ Includes considerations of the values and beliefs in the audience that will ultimately move them to action.

Examples of Appeals to Pathos:

- ▶ Home security companies appeal to our fears of violent crime, carbon monoxide, fire, etc. in order to convince us to buy their home monitoring systems.
- ▶ Personal hygiene products appeal to our fears of social rejection and to our desire to fit in with others.
- ▶ Charities appeal to our emotions by showing us images of people that we will empathize with.
- ▶ Casinos appeal to our sense of greed when they try to get us to gamble.
- ▶ And of course, countless advertisements use sex to convince us to buy their products (this is technically *eros*, but we'll file it under *pathos* for the sake of simplicity).

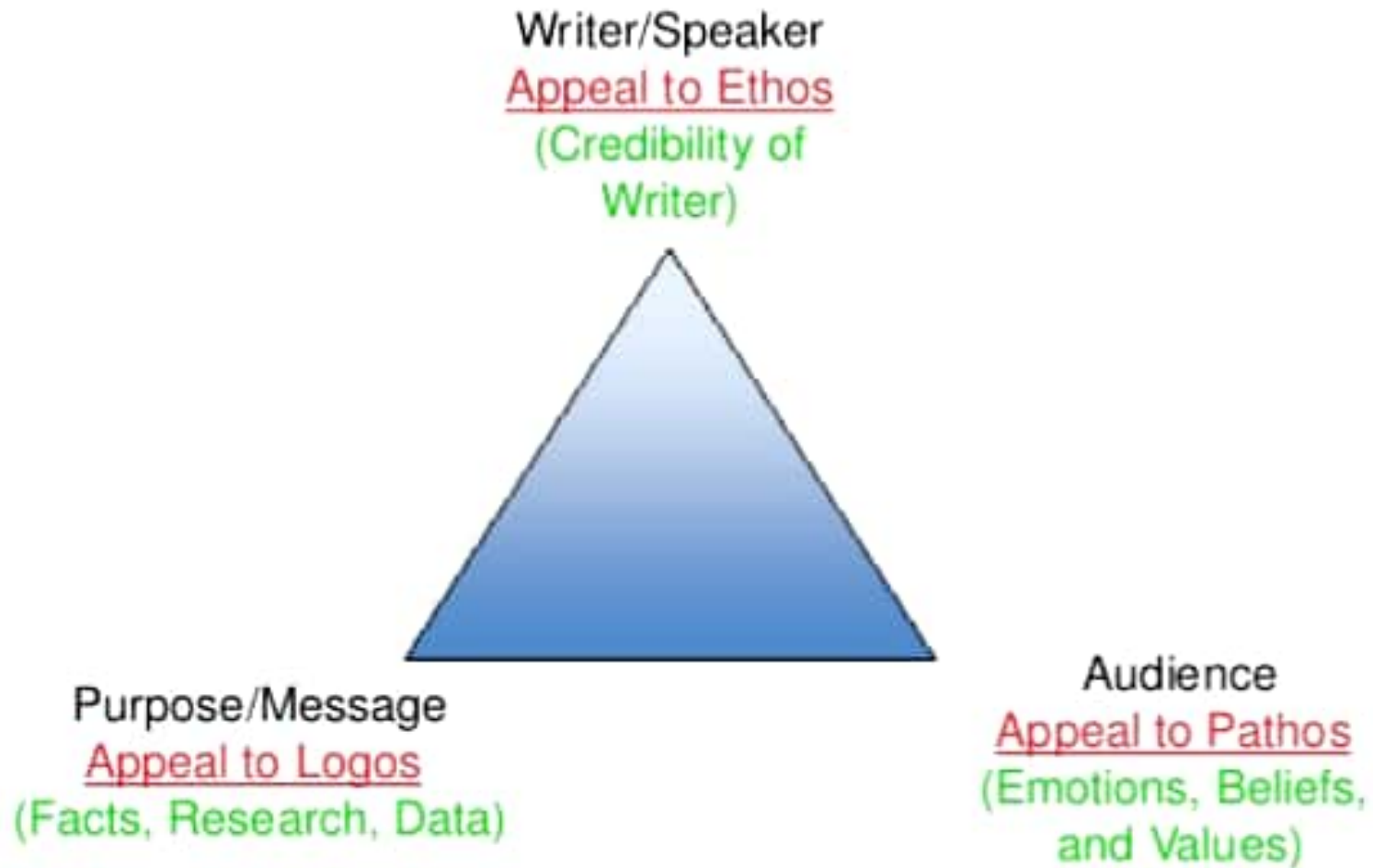
Appeal to Logos

- ▶ logical argument
- ▶ appeal to reason or logic
- ▶ frequently includes the use of data, statistics, math, research, order, and "objectivity."

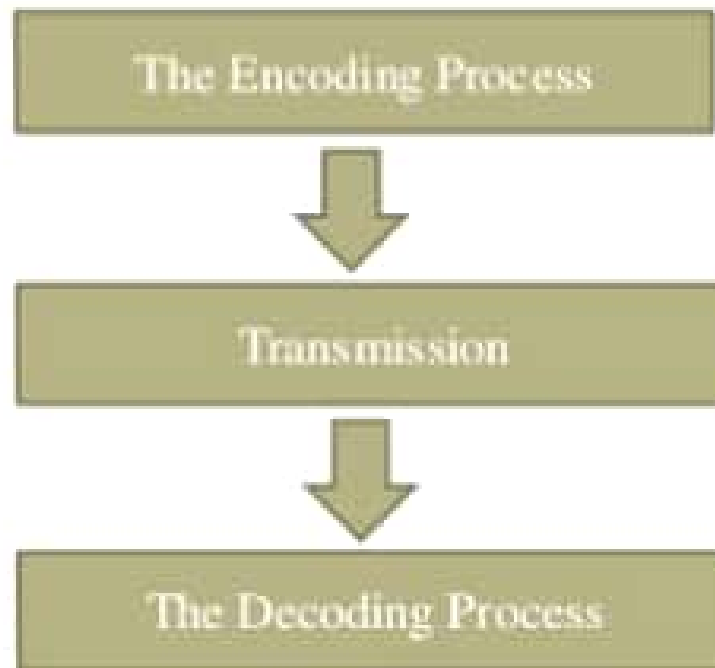
Examples of Appeal to Logos:

- ▶ When advertisements claim that their products are “37% more effective than the competition,” they are making an appeal to logos.
- ▶ When a lawyer claims that her client is innocent because he had an alibi, that too is an appeal to logos because it is logically inconsistent for her client to have been in two places at once.

A More Complete Rhetorical Triangle



Process involved in Rhetorical Communication



Encoding Process

- The speaker should turn his ideas into something that the receiver can understand.
- The words are carefully chosen according to it.



Transmission

- Primary channel may be written or oral.
- In some cases, the channel may be visual as well.
- For example Television ,Radios etc.



Decoding Process

- The decoding process mainly depends on the receiver and the way he perceives things.
- The elements involved in perceiving,
 - Hearing or seeing
 - Interpretation
 - Evaluation
 - Response.



Other Elements That Determine Success or failure

- Noise
 - Interference to the sender message.
 - Misunderstanding of the intended message by the receiver .
- Feedback channel
 - Helps the speaker to adapt according to the receiver feedback which may increase the chances of success.

Rhetorical Communication Model



Rhetorical Devices:

A rhetorical device is a linguistic device used primarily to influence beliefs and attitudes and behavior. It uses language to establish a belief or feeling that may or may not be linked to any logical support.

Rhetorical Devices

- They are often referred to as “slanters” because they try to put a slant or spin on the information.
- They do not add any logical power to an argument, but they are extremely effective in providing psychological power to an argument.

Rhetorical Devices

- A rhetorical device is simply a choice of words or arrangement of words that carry a particular connotation that emphasizes the writer's/speaker's goal.
- They are used to lead an audience in a certain direction or to a particular conclusion.

Rhetorical Devices

- Rhetorical devices are not *bad*, it is just that, *in themselves*, they give us neither a reason to accept nor a reason to reject an argument.
- However, used effectively, rhetorical devices enhance the writer's/speaker's purpose – usually by connecting images to intended meanings..

Simile:

- A figure of speech (more specifically a trope) that compares two distinct and unlike things by using words such as **like** or **as** to link the comparison. The comparison can be used to create a visual image or add power to the speaker's original point.
- "The Governor was reaching for any explanation that would justify his actions, like a drowning man clutching at a piece of driftwood."

Metaphor:

- A figure of speech (more specifically a trope) that associates two distinct things.
- By establishing a visual image, metaphors often effect the audience's belief without including specific evidence.
- Example: *Obama is a criminal and he should be removed from office before he destroys the freedoms of this great nation.*

Metaphor

- Rather than always making a direct comparison, metaphor is different from simile in that it establishes a “figure” that provides an image for a reader.
- “I really *plowed* through *The Hunger Game* last night.”
- “I waded through the conversation, trying not to upset my parents.”
- “When he is around his girlfriend, he is a real doormat.”

Hyperbole

- **Hyperbole** is extravagant overstatement; obvious exaggeration for effect; an extravagant statement that is *not intended to be understood literally*.
 - “I’d rather have my lower extremities shoved into a wood chipper than spend another minute in English class.” The exaggeration is obvious making the intended message extremely clear.

Rhetorical Explanations

- A **rhetorical explanation** is an explanation that is intended to influence the hearer's attitudes or behavior by attempting to make connections that may not have validity.
 - "He is going to vote for Obama because he has always liked people who can't stand by their decisions."
 - "Nathan obviously lacks character, insight and intelligence; he's an Eagles fan for goodness sake."

Stereotypes

- A **stereotype** is a thought about or an image of a group of people, animals, or things that is based on little or no evidence.
 - “Blondes have more fun.”
 - “Men are pigs.”
 - “Bald teachers are the best teachers.”
 - “Thespians are all giant wussies.”
- I'm only kidding—I was in theater too!

Downplayer

- A **downplayer** is a word or expression that is used to play down or diminish the importance of a claim.
 - “So Beau, I see that you’re only in one AP class?” Here the downplayer is “only,” and the implication is that with only one AP course, you can’t be a very significant scholar. Or
 - Quotation marks can be used to downplay the significance of something: *Tara plans to get her “education” from Del Tech.*