

TOP TEN RHETORICAL DEVICES & THEIR EFFECTS



Your Metaphorical "Back Pocket"



10. Polysyndeton/Asyndeton

Deliberate use of a series of conjunctions (*speeds up or adds frenetic quality to rhythm of sentence*)

"To be educated is to master a body of facts and skills and have them on call 24 hours a day, as you talk and walk and read and work and garden and scheme and think."

9. Subordinate Clauses

A Subordinating conjunction makes the meaning of one clause dependent on another (*idea to be emphasized is in the independent clause*)

"Although the London publishing house of Methuen had brought out the year before, in 1951, a little book entitled simply *West Africa*, my classmates and I would not have known it at the time."

8. Parallelism

The repetition of similar words, phrases, sentence or paragraphs (*attract reader's attention, add emphasis and rhythm*)

"Rituals are vital especially of clans without histories because they evoke a past, imply a future, and hint at continuity"

7. Short Sentences

Telegraphic – shorter than five word sentences (*calls attention to an idea*)

"They carried the sky. The whole atmosphere, they carried it, the humidity, the monsoons, the stink of fungus and decay, all of it, they carried gravity."

6. Verbal Irony

Conveys meaning opposite to the literal meaning (*criticize or ridicule*)

“Lord knows we could do with less nationalism (to say nothing of its ugly siblings, racism, religious sectarianism or class snobbery)”

5. Analogy

Drawing a comparison to show similarity (explains something unfamiliar by pointing out its similarity to something familiar)

Grasshopper example from the Howells MC passage (real one and artificial one represent ways of looking at writing)

4. Antithesis

The juxtaposition of contrasting ideas, often in parallel structure (*to make a pointed or powerful comparison*)

“We must learn to live together as brothers or perish together as fools.”

3. Connotation

Implied or suggested meaning of a word (to cast subject into a particular light, to imply)

“...born in this century, tempered by war...”

2. Appositive

Noun or noun phrase that tells you something about a nearby noun or pronoun (clarifies a term sometimes to produce a feeling or idea)

“Before this ugly edifice...was a grass plot...which evidently found something congenial in the soil that had so early borne **the black flower of civilized society**, a prison.”

1. Metaphor

Direct comparison (makes abstract familiar and concrete, or cast subject into a particular light, to imply)

“The fountain of knowledge will dry up unless it is continuously replenished by streams of new learning.”

The fact that two very unlike things can be referred to in terms of one another comments upon them both.

No metaphor is "just a metaphor." All have significant implications, and they must be chosen carefully, especially in regard to the connotations the vehicle (image) will transfer to the tenor.

Consider, for example, the differences in meaning conveyed by these statements:

- That club is a cancer.
- That club is really blossoming now.