

Rhetorical Devices

a supplemental resource to the Rhetoric Support Document

Rhetorical Devices are the tools that writers and speakers use to achieve their purpose. As “rhetorical appeals” shift to “rhetoric” in English 1, rhetorical devices begin to be included in instruction moving forward.

The Standards: Rhetoric enters the language of the *2024 SC CCR ELA Standards* in ELA.E1.AOR.5.3.

Overarching Standard ELA.AOR.5: Evaluate and critique how an author uses words, phrases, and text structures to craft text.

Indicator	Grade-level Indicator	Essential Vocabulary	Insights
ELA.E1.AOR.5.3	Analyze an author’s argument while evaluating the effectiveness of the types of reasoning and/or the rhetoric used in an informational text.	Argument Reasoning Rhetoric	In English 1, students begin evaluating the effectiveness of an author or speaker’s use of <i>*reasoning</i> and an author or speaker’s use of <i>rhetoric</i> . In grades 6-8, students built their knowledge of the rhetorical appeals. In English 1, rhetoric now includes both <i>rhetorical appeals</i> and <i>rhetorical devices</i> .
ELA.E2.AOR.5.3	Compare how two authors with opposing views develop arguments in informational texts; evaluate the effectiveness of each author’s reasoning, rhetoric, and/or validity of claims.	Argument Reasoning Rhetoric Claims	In grades 5-8, students traced an author’s argument, to include claim, reasons, and evidence. Students also examined an author’s reasoning and the rhetorical appeals. In English 1, students began analyzing an author or speaker’s use of rhetoric, to include the rhetorical appeals. English 2 increases the difficulty by asking students to analyze the work of two authors and how they develop their arguments. Additionally, students begin evaluating how effective each author’s use of reasoning or rhetoric is and whether each author’s claims are valid.

Indicator	Grade-level Indicator	Essential Vocabulary	Insights
ELA.E3. AOR.5.3	Compare the development of multiple arguments on the same topic while evaluating the effectiveness of each author's reasoning, rhetoric, and/or validity of claims in informational texts; evaluate each author's use of information.	Argument Claim Reasoning Rhetoric	Students in English 3 are now applying their knowledge of arguments to multiple arguments on the same topic and evaluating which author's reasoning, rhetoric, and use of information is more effective. Students continue to evaluate whether each author's claims are valid.
ELA.E4. AOR.5.3	Evaluate and critique multiple arguments on the same topic while evaluating the effectiveness of each author's reasoning, rhetoric, and/or validity of claims informational text; evaluate and critique each author's use of information.	Argument Reasoning Rhetoric Claims	English 4 increases the cognitive demand from English 3. Students in English 4 continue to evaluate multiple arguments on the same topic, while also critiquing each author's argument. To critique requires going beyond forming an opinion or making a judgment and includes proposing specific feedback

Examples of Rhetorical Devices

The table below provides a list of common rhetorical devices, along with their rhetorical functions and examples to guide instruction. **It is important to note that these specific rhetorical devices are not named in the ELA standards.** *This is not intended to be a prescriptive or exhaustive list, but a tool to support instruction.*

Term	Rhetorical Function	Example
Anaphora	By repeating a word or phrase at the beginning of a series of statements, an author or speaker can place emphasis on a particular point or idea.	"We Shall Fight on the Beaches" by Winston Churchill
Anecdote	By telling a brief amusing story, an author or speaker can personalize a message or topic to an audience.	"In my younger and more vulnerable years my father gave me some advice that I've been turning over in my mind ever since." F Scott Fitzgerald, <i>The Great Gatsby</i>
Asyndeton	By omitting conjunctions between words and phrases, an author or speaker can speed up the pace or rhythm of a line or sentence.	"Are all thy conquests, glories, triumphs, spoils,/ Shrunk to this little measure?" William Shakespeare, <i>Julius Caesar</i>

Term	Rhetorical Function	Example
Metonymy	By substituting the name of a person, concept, or item by something closely related to it, an author or speaker can creatively place emphasis on the topic to which they are referring.	Referring to a monarch or monarchy as “The Crown”.
Parallelism	By using similar grammatical structure, sounds, and/or meter, an author or speaker can place emphasis on a particular point or idea.	“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness.” Charles Dickens, <i>A Tale of Two Cities</i>
Polysyndeton	By using a conjunction between each word, phrase, or clause, an author or speaker can slow down the pace or rhythm of a line or sentence and can create an effect of building up or giving weight to the words being spoken.	“Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays the couriers from the swift completing of their appointed rounds.” US Postal Service
Repetition	By using repetition, an author or speaker can place emphasis on a particular point and can increase the intensity of what is being repeated.	“I Have a Dream” by Martin Luther King, Jr.
Rhetorical Question	A rhetorical question is not intended to be answered. It is used for effect or to place emphasis on a particular point.	“What’s in a name? That which we call a rose/ By any other name would smell as sweet.” William Shakespeare, <i>Romeo and Juliet</i>

Figurative Language and Literary Devices as Rhetoric

It is important for teachers to note that an author or speaker may also use literary devices and figurative language as devices of rhetoric. **The following examples of figurative language and literary devices are listed in the 2024 SC CCR ELA Standards and indicators.** In addition to their glossary definitions, their functions as rhetorical devices have been included.

Term	Definition	Rhetorical Function
Alliteration	The repetition of the same letter or sound at the beginning of adjacent or connected words	An author or speaker may repeat a letter or sound across multiple words to create a rhythm that draws the audience's attention.
Allusion	A short, indirect reference to a person, place, thing, or idea of importance, and which is external to the text (e.g., "We walked into a Garden of Eden when we entered the forest"); allusions are often found in mythology, religious texts, and historical events.	An author or speaker may use a brief reference with which the audience is familiar to establish a clear connection to a point.
Hyperbole	Inflated or overstated statements or claims not meant to be taken literally; intentional exaggeration to emphasize a point or to add humor.	An author or speaker may use hyperbolic language to emphasize the importance of a point or idea to the audience.
Irony	A literary technique in which words, events, or other elements have an outcome or meaning contrary to what is stated or anticipated; irony can often be created through a difference in perspective between the author, characters, narrator, and/or audience. Types of Irony Include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dramatic Irony • Verbal Irony • Situational Irony <i>Refer to the glossary for a more complete definition.</i>	An author or speaker may use irony to emphasize a point or create a humorous effect.

Term	Definition	Rhetorical Function
Metaphor	An implied comparison that is untrue in a literal way; metaphors help illustrate or describe a concept or situation by comparing it to something else; authors use metaphors to express emotions and enhance descriptions creatively (e.g., “His fingers had become translucent icicles after playing in the snow”); the purpose of the metaphor is to show the reader how cold it is outside without directly saying, “it is freezing outside”; by comparing “fingers” to “translucent icicles”, the reader creates a mental image of how cold it is	An author or speaker may use an implied comparison between two unrelated items or concepts to reveal a connection between them and deepen understanding for the audience.
Onomatopoeia	A word that mimics the sound it represents (e.g., “boom,” “oink,” “sizzle”).	Onomatopoeia creates imagery for the audience, allowing them to gain a deeper understanding of the point the author is making.
Sarcasm	The use of verbal irony to point out flaws, mock, or insult a person, object, or idea; an author often uses sarcasm to create specific effects in writing.	An author or speaker may use sarcasm to emphasize their opinion on a topic or person in a critical manner.
Satire	The use of humor and/or irony in art and literature to expose truths about people, institutions, or society; an author often uses satire to create specific effects in writing.	An author or speaker may use satire to criticize a person or concept in a humorous manner.
Simile	A figure of speech in which two different or dissimilar things are directly compared using “like” or “as”; similes are often used to connect ideas or objects in a creative or unexpected way.	As with metaphors, an author or speaker may use a comparison between two unrelated items or concepts to reveal a connection between them and deepen understanding for the audience. In the case of similes, the comparison is explicitly stated, providing additional clarity to the audience.
Tone	A writer or speaker’s feeling toward a subject, character, or audience communicated through the author’s choice of words and detail; tone can be formal, informal, serious, humorous, sarcastic, and/or objective based on the task and audience of the text.	An author or speaker may intentionally utilize specific word choices or details to provide insight into his or her attitude towards the topic about which they are writing or speaking.

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Term	Definition	Rhetorical Function
Understatement	The intentional use of language to lessen or minimize the impact of an event or feeling; an author often uses understatement to create specific effects in writing.	An author or speaker may use understatement to emphasize a particular point or to have a humorous effect on the audience.