

Speaking to Elephants: Persuasion Beyond Logic

Study the rhetorical devices terminology, definitions, and examples; then play a matching game by cutting out the cards and pairing them again correctly. How many can you remember?

Alliteration:

Repetition of sounds at the beginning of words in close proximity

"I see also the dull, drilled, docile, brutish masses of the Hun soldiery plodding on like a swarm of crawling locusts..." (Winston Churchill on the German invasion of Russia)

Allusion:

An expression that calls to mind another text without direct reference

"I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted..." (Martin Luther King, 1963, quoting Isaiah 40:4-5)

Amplification:

Repetition extended with detail

"I have but the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart of a king, and of a king of England, too." (Queen Elizabeth I, 1588)

Anaphora:

Repetition of words or phrases at the beginning of sentences/lines

"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, 1940)

Anecdote:

A small story that is interesting or biographical to illustrate a lesson

"I am honoured to be with you today at your commencement... I never graduated from college. Truth be told, this is the closest I've ever gotten..."

(Steve Jobs, Stanford, 2005)

Antithesis:

A contrast of opposing ideas

"One small step for man; one giant leap for mankind." (Neil Armstrong, 1969)

Asyndeton:

A lack of conjunctions ('and') between words in a list

"We shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardships, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty."

(John F Kennedy, Inaugural Address, 1961)

Chiasmus:

A reversal of one phrase in the next; a forward and backward pattern

"Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country." (John F Kennedy, Inaugural Address, 1961)

Eponym:

(similar to allusion) using a famous name to convey an idea

"You don't have to be Einstein to figure this out."
(common usage)

Expletive:

Inserting a phrase into the middle of a sentence for emphasis

“And this city – this Golden City which is both ancient and youthful – stands as a living monument to your unconquerable spirit.” (Barack Obama, 2009)

Hyperbole:

A dramatic exaggeration, straining truthfulness

“I’m so hungry, I could eat a horse.” (common usage)

Hypophora:

Asking a question then answering it in the same speech

“You ask what is our policy? I will say: it is to wage war, by land, sea, and air, with all our might...” (Winston Churchill, 1940)

Litotes:

(opposite of hyperbole) a deliberate understatement

“The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.” (Franklin D Roosevelt, 1933)

Parallelism:

Successive phrases using the same grammatical construction

“I stand here today humbled by the task before us, grateful for the trust you have bestowed, mindful of the sacrifices borne by our ancestors...” (Barack Obama, 2008)

Polysyndeton:

(opposite of asyndeton) using 'and' to connect words in a list

"Time and again these men and women struggled and sacrificed and worked till their hands were raw so that we might live a better life..." (Barack Obama, 2008)

Tricolon:

A pattern of three, also called the 'rule of three'

"Veni, vidi, vici..." ("I came, I saw, I conquered...")
(Julius Caesar, 47BC)

Varied sentences:

Following a long sentence with a short sentence (or vice versa)

"We dedicate this day to all the heroes and heroines in this country and the rest of the world who sacrificed in many ways and surrendered their lives so that we could be free. Their dreams have become reality." (Nelson Mandela, 1994)