

25 Giants of Rhetoric

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“Knowing rhetorical devices is good. Detecting them is better. Using them is MasterCard.”

Alliteration

Recurrence of initial consonant sounds.

Veni, vidi, vici. — Cesar
Suddenly, tragedy traveled through our trivial life.

Allusion

Short, informal reference to a famous person or event.

If only Leonidas and his 300 were here. And then I faced my personal Waterloo.

Amplification

Repeating a word or expression while adding more detail to it.

Adventure. My life is an adventure. My life is an adventure similar to the one of Tom Sawyer.

Anadiplosis

Repetition of word or phrase at or very near the beginning of the next clause or sentence.

I grew up in a village, a village full of cows. These cows were our friends back then.

Anaphora

Repetition of the same word or words at the beginning of successive phrases, clauses, or sentences.

Love is the question. Love is the answer. Love is everything.

Antimetabole

Reversing the order of repeated words or phrases (a loosely chiasmic structure, AB-BA).

When you doubt your power, you give power to your doubt. — Honore de Balzac

Antithesis

Contrasting relationship between two ideas.

That's one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind. — Neil Armstrong.
I was the right fish in the wrong pond.

Assonance

Similar vowel sounds repeated in successive or proximate words containing different consonants.

One proud round cloud in white high night.

Asyndeton

Omitting of conjunctions between words, phrases, or clauses.

Public speaking is all about self-confidence, message, impact.

Climax

A good-better-best structure.

The good thing about Barcelona is the food. What's even better is the Mediterranean flair. The best, by far, is the climate.

Epistrophe

Repetition at the end of successive phrases, clauses or sentences.

When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child. — The Apostle Paul

Epizeuxis

Repetition of words in immediate succession, for vehemence or emphasis.

O horror, horror, horror. — Macbeth

Eponym

Substitutes for a particular attribute the name of a famous person recognized for that attribute.

Is she smart? That girl is an Einstein.

Hyperbole

Deliberately exaggerates conditions for emphasis or effect.

The bag weighed a ton.
I can give you a thousand reasons!

Metaphor

Comparing two things saying one is the other.

All the world's a stage, And all the men and women merely players. — Shakespeare, As You Like It

Oxymoron

Combines contradictory terms.

Black milk.
Dark light.
Likeable lawyer. ;)

Paradox

Anomalous juxtaposition of incongruous ideas.

I can resist anything except temptation. — Oscar Wilde
We spend the time we don't have.

Paralipsis

Asserts or emphasizes something by pointedly seeming to ignore, or deny it.

If you were not my father, I would say you were perverse. — Antigone

Parallelism

Gives two or more parts of the sentences a similar form.

What you see is what you get.

Personification

Gives an inanimate (non-living) object human traits and qualities.

The stars danced playfully in the moonlit sky.
The book cried; everyone ignored it.

Pleonasm

Use of more words than required to express an idea; being redundant.

The point he made was blank, empty and hollow.

Procatleipsis

Anticipates an objection and answers it.

In the past, I faced objection at this point. What convinced them was the fact that ...

Rhetorical Question

Asking a question as a way of asserting something.

Don't we all work too much?
Have you never lied in your life?

Simile

Directly compares two things through some connective.

They fought like lions.
Cute as a kitten.
I feel happier than a bee on a spring flower field.

Synechdoche

A type of metaphor in which the part stands for the whole.

Four wheels on fire.
All these brains in the room, and no answer to the problem.