ENGLISH 3201

Persuasive Strategies and Rhetorical Devices

There are three types of persuasive strategies; a good argument will use the combination of all 3.

Logos – logical argument; an appeal to logic or reason

Ethos – appeals based on the reliability, credibility, or expertise of the writer

Pathos – appeals to the audience’s needs, values or emotions

Rhetorical devices are techniques of using language that will increase the persuasiveness of a piece of writing.

1. Questions
   a. Rhetorical question: thoughtful questions that aren’t meant to be answered.
      i. Can we really expect the school to keep paying from its limited resources?
   b. Hypophora: asking a question and answering it.
      i. But what was the result of this move on the steel industry? The annual reports for that year clearly indicate. . . .

2. Description and Imagery
   a. Imagine being cast out into the cold street, lonely and frightened.

3. Parallel structures
   a. To show kindness is praiseworthy; to show hatred is evil.

4. Figurative Language (i.e. using metaphor, simile and personification)
   a. While we wait and do nothing, we must not forget that the fuse is already burning.

5. The ‘rule of three’
   a. I ask you, is this fair, is it right, is it just?

6. Anaphora: the intentional repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of a line for emphasis.
   a. Will he read the book? Will he learn what it has to teach him? Will he live according to what he has learned?
   b. Not time, not money, not laws, but willing diligence will get this done.

7. Hyperbole (using exaggeration for effect)
   a. While we await your decision, the whole school holds its breath.
8. Anecdote
   a. An anecdote is a short and interesting story taken from your past experience - or that of someone you know or have heard about. Audiences love anecdotes.

9. Euphemisms and connotation
   a. overweight vs. fat.
   b. issue vs. problem.

10. Downplaying and understating
    a. Using key words to make important things seem unimportant
       i. Mere, merely, so-called, however, although, despite.
    b. Expressing things in such a way as to understate it's importance
       i. The earthquake interrupted business somewhat in the downtown area.

11. Distinctio
    a. The intentional reference or definition of a word in order to remove confusion, misunderstanding or ambiguity
       i. By “impossible” I mean currently beyond our technological capabilities.

12. Apophasis
    a. The raising of an issue by claiming not to mention it
       i. We won’t even talk about his criminal record…

13. Antithesis
    a. A figure of speech in which sharply contrasting ideas are juxtaposed in a balanced or parallel phrase or grammatical structure
       i. There are no red states or blue states. There are only the United States of America.

14. Juxtaposition
    a. The act of positioning dissimilar ideas, concepts and statements together
       i. The not-so-young people who braved the bitter cold and scorching heat to knock on doors of perfect strangers.

15. Allusion
    a. By using allusion, you not only associate yourself with the ideas of the original text but also create a bond with the audience by evoking shared knowledge
       i. The words, “government of the people, by the people, and for the people” are lifted from the Gettysburg Address.