

## Reading Guide: Rhetoric

The tools of creative writing and speaking for thousands of years were codified in a system known loosely as **rhetoric**. Rhetoric is the art of persuasion, but its tools can also be used to make language ornate, convincing, or poetic. Here are some illustrative terms taken from *A Handbook of Rhetoric*:

**Anadiplosis** repeats the last word of one phrase, clause, or sentence at or very near the beginning of the next. It can be generated in series for the sake of beauty or to give a sense of logical progression:

Pleasure might cause her read, reading might make her know,/ Knowledge might pity win, and pity grace obtain . . . . --Philip Sidney

**Antanagoge**: placing a good point or benefit next to a fault criticism, or problem in order to reduce the impact or significance of the negative point:

True, he always forgets my birthday, but he buys me presents all year round.

**Antiphrasis**: one word irony, established by context:

"Come here, Tiny," he said to the *fat* man.  
It was a *cool* 115 degrees in the shade.

**Apophasis** (also called **praeteritio** or **occupatio**) asserts or emphasizes something by pointedly seeming to pass over, ignore, or deny it. This device has both legitimate and illegitimate uses. Legitimately, a writer uses it to call attention to sensitive or inflammatory facts or statements while he remains apparently detached from them:

We will not bring up the matter of the budget deficit here, or how programs like the one under consideration have nearly pushed us into bankruptcy, because other reasons clearly enough show . . . .

Therefore, let no man talk to me of other expedients: of taxing our absentees . . . of curing the expensiveness of pride, vanity, idleness, and gaming of learning to love our country . . . .--Jonathan Swift

**Epizeuxis**: repetition of one word (for emphasis):

The best way to describe this portion of South America is lush, lush, lush.  
What do you see? Wires, wires, everywhere wires.

**Hypotaxis**: using *subordination* to show the relationship between clauses or phrases (and hence the opposite of **parataxis**):

They asked the question because they were curious.

**Parataxis:** writing successive *independent* clauses, with coordinating conjunctions, or no conjunctions:

We walked to the top of the hill, and we sat down.

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. --Genesis 1:1-2 (KJV)

I came; I saw; I conquered. (*Veni vidi vici*)—Julius Caesar

**Pleonasm:** using more words than required to express an idea; being redundant. Normally a vice, it is done on purpose on rare occasions for emphasis:

We heard it with our own ears.

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You should know the terms defined and illustrated in the *Norton Anthology* pp. 2944-60. Essential are the ones found in the section entitled “Rhythm and Meter” (pp. 2944-48), and in the section entitled “Rhyme and Stanza” (pp. 2948-50). Absolutely and superlatively essential beyond doubt or any uncertainty are all of the terms in “Figurative Language” (pp. 2950-53). In the final section, “Terms of Literary Art,” some of the more immediately important ones are:

Allegory, Symbol, Emblem, Type  
Burlesque  
Catastrophe and Catharsis  
Chiasmus  
Didactic poetry  
Dramatic irony  
Epigram  
Elegy  
Euphemism  
Genre  
Imitation  
Irony  
Myth  
Ode  
pastoral  
Pathos  
Realism and Naturalism  
Rhetoric  
Romance  
Satire  
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