

Analysis for Rhetoric: Embellishment

Marcus Fabius Quintilianus (c AD 35-c99) was a rhetorician and teacher of oratory in Rome (from AD 68). His most important work is his *On the Training of an Orator* in which he proposes to give an educational schedule for the training of the ideal orator (public speaker). Throughout, he emphasizes the importance of personal integrity and honest conviction in the art of public persuasion. It is a valuable resource for us today because it specifically identifies many of the figures of speech which make writing interesting and effective.

Quintilian divided figures of speech into two kinds:

Tropes – in which *MEANING* is altered from the usual or expected

Schemes – in which *WORD ORDER* is altered from the usual or expected

Tropes include:

pun	irony	litotes
metaphor	hyperbole	oxymoron
simile	synecdoche	paradox
personification	metonymy	rhetorical question
		onomatopoeia

Schemes include:

Balance – parallelism, chiasmus, climax, antithesis

Word Order – anastrophe

Addition – apposition, parenthesis

Omission – zeugma, asyndeton, polysyndeton

Repetition – anadiplosis, polyptoton, anaphora

Sound – alliteration, assonance, consonance

Tropes

Tropes involve alterations in the usual meanings of words or phrases.

PUN: a play on the meaning of words

Three types of puns:

1] repetition of a single word in two different senses

"But if we don't hang together, we will hang separately."

—Benjamin Franklin

2] a play on words that sound alike but are different in meaning

He couldn't get his bearings straight in the Bering Straits.

3] use of a single word with two different meanings within the context of the sentence

The photograph that appeared in the London Times caused a royal flush.

The ink, like our pig, keeps running out of the pen.

METAPHOR: an implied comparison between two unlike things

"True are is a conduit between body and soul, between feeling unabstracted and abstraction unfelt."

—John Gardner, *On Moral Fiction*

SIMILE: an explicit comparison between two unlike things signaled by the use of LIKE or AS

"Laws are like cobwebs, which may catch small flies, but let wasps and hornets break through."

—Jonathan Swift, "A Critical Essay Upon the Faculties of the Mind"

"...a writer, like an acrobat, must occasionally try a stunt that is too much for him."

—E. B. White, "The Ring of Time"

PERSONIFICATION: attributing human qualities to an inanimate object

The grass is green and neatly cut, and the buildings cast a watchful eye over the clean, quiet campus.

High blood pressure is very real and dangerous, snatching the lives of many people.

IRONY: The Greek word from which irony is derived meant "liar" or "dissembler," and in using irony, the writer takes on another voice or role that states the opposite of what is expressed. Quintilian tells us that if the character of the speaker or the nature of the subject is out of keeping with the words, it becomes clear that the speaker means something other than what is said. Thus something that is ironical in one context may be quite true in another.

The new outdoor swimming pool and six more tennis courts were important additions to the Wilson University campus, even though the library funds had to be cut back. After all, the students, accustomed as they are to a country-club life, would have been at a loss without their little luxuries.

Firing with a chemical suit, usually referred to as MOPP gear, is one of the most enjoyable days—it's well over 100 degrees, and you get to spend your day in a one-inch thick, carbon-lined outfit complete with rubber boots and gloves. After all of this fun stuff comes qualification day.

HYPERBOLE: exaggeration; deliberate exaggeration for emphasis

"You might have to go back to the Children's Crusade in AD. 1212 to find as unfortunate and fatuous an attempt at manipulated hysteria as the Women's Liberation movement."

—Helen Lawrenson, "The Feminine Mistake"

"Four hostile newspapers are more to be feared than a thousand bayonets."

—Attributed to Napoleon Bonaparte

LITOTES: opposite of hyperbole, litotes (lit-o-tees) intensifies an idea by understatement

It wasn't my best moment.

Jim is not the best student in the Western world.

SYNECDOCHE: related to classification and division

Translated from the Greek, synecdoche means "understanding one thing for another"; thus a part is substituted for the whole, or the species for the genus. Quintilian tells us that one word makes us think of all the things in the class, so "bread" stands for food, "hands" refer to helpers, and the slang expression "wheels" means a car.

METONYMY: designation of one thing with something closely associated with it

Thus we call the head of the committee the CHAIR, the king the CROWN, and the newspaper the PRESS. In the common expression "man of the cloth," the reference designates a priest because of the customary cloth collar associated with the position.

OXYMORON: contradiction; two contradictory terms or ideas are used together

Parting is such sweet sorrow.

Extremes meet, and there is no better example than the haughtiness of humility.

PARADOX: a statement that appears to be contradictory but, in fact, has some truth

He worked hard at being lazy.

Frank and explicit—this is the right line to take when you wish to conceal your own mind and to confuse the minds of others.

Absolute seriousness is never without a dash of humor.

ONOMATOPOEIA: refers to the use of words whose sound reinforces their meaning

drip, cackle, bang, snarl, pop

RHETORICAL QUESTION: commonly defined as those questions that do not require answer. Classical rhetoricians recognized that there are different kinds of rhetorical questions, and that each serves quite a different function.

Four kinds of rhetorical questions:

1) **Asking the Reader** – The Greeks saw this kind of question as a way of taking counsel with the reader. You address the question to your reader expecting the reader to consider the answer.

What would you have done under the same circumstances?

Have you ever felt so much like crying that you actually felt a real lump in your throat?

[In this way, you directly involve the reader in the subject and guide that reader's attention to what you are talking about.]

2) **Asking the Writer** – In this figure, the question is addressed to the writer, thus suggesting the writer's thinking process.

Was this really what I wanted? I knew it was not what I expected when I enrolled in the program.

[With this kind of rhetorical question, you review with the reader the questions that you raised in thinking about your subject. It is a way of talking through an idea with your reader.]

3) **Criticizing** – In this kind of question, the writer is making a criticism in the form of a question.

How can you be so intolerant?

How can citizens fail to vote?

[You can often make a statement or a request by putting it in the form of a question. Such a device varies the monotony of a series of statements or requests and gives them added emphasis.]

4) **Asking and Answering** -- In this kind of rhetorical question, the writer asks a question and then proceeds to answer it. This is a common device in prose, and may serve as a way of organizing a paper or making the writer's method of development clear to the reader.

Why has the incidence of rape increased in our society? Studies show that rape has increased as the portrayal of violence and sex on television has increased.

Schemes

Schemes are arrangements of ideas, words, or phrases that are stylistically effective. Often, as in parallelism, the pattern of the words effectively serves to reinforce the meaning. Cicero defined the schemes as the "gestures of language."

BALANCE

In the following schemes of balance, the syntactic structure of each sentence supports its meaning. Similar ideas are expressed in similar grammatical structure, contrasting ideas in contrasting grammatical structure, or a series of ideas in climactic order.

PARALLELISM: expresses similar or related ideas in similar grammatical structures

"...for the support of this declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Protection, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor."

—from The Declaration of Independence

He tried to make the law clear, precise, and equitable.

CHIASMUS: derived from the Greek letter *CHI* (X); grammatical structure of the first clause or phrase is reversed in the second, sometimes repeating the same words

"And so, my fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country."

—John F. Kennedy

Reversing the syntactic order emphasizes the reversal in meaning. Such a device is useful in writing to emphasize differences in meaning.

CLIMAX: writer arranges ideas in order of importance from the least to the most important
I spent the day cleaning the house, reading poetry, and putting my life in order.

ANTITHESIS: the juxtaposition of contrasting ideas
"Our knowledge separates as well as unites; our orders disintegrate as well as bind; our art brings us together and sets us apart."

WORD ORDER (Syntax)

In English, standard word order usually follows the subject-verb-object pattern. Adjectives ordinarily precede nouns. Deviation from normal word order signals emphasis.

ANASTROPHE: word order is reversed or rearranged
Anastrophe in Greek means a "turning back," and in this figure the usual word order is reversed
"Unseen in the jungle, but present are tapirs, jaguars, many species of snake and lizard, ocelots, armadillos, marmosets, howler monkeys, toucans and macaws and a hundred other birds, deer bats, peccaries, capybaras, agoutis, and sloths. Also present in this jungle, but variously distant, are Texaco derricks and pipelines, and some of the wildest Indians in the world, blowgun-using Indians, who killed missionaries in 1956 and ate them."

ADDITION

Effective writers can add words or phrases to a sentence to vary the style and draw emphasis to certain parts of the sentence.

APPOSITION: the placing next to a noun another noun or phrase that explains it
Pollution, the city's primary problem, is an issue.
John, my brother, is coming home.

PARENTHESIS: the insertion of words, phrases, or a sentence that is not syntactically related to the rest of the sentence. Such material is set off from the rest of the sentence in one of two ways. Either is acceptable.

By dashes: *He said that it was going to rain—I could hardly disagree—before the game was over.*

By parentheses: *He said that it was going to rain (I could hardly disagree) before the game was over.*

OMISSION

Not only can words be added in stylistically effective ways, they can also be omitted for emphasis.

ZEUGMA: The writer uses one word to govern several successive words or clauses.
She discovered New York and her world.

ASYNDETON: Conjunctions are omitted, producing a fast-paced and rapid prose.

I came, I saw, I conquered.

But in a larger sense we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground.

POLYSYNDETON: The use of many conjunctions has the opposite effect; it slows the pace of the writing.

I kept remembering everything, lying in bed in the mornings--the small steamboat that had a long rounded stern like the lip of a Ubangi, and how quietly she ran on the moonlight sails, when the older boys played their mandolins and the girls sang and we ate doughnuts dipped in sugar, and how sweet the music was on the water in the shining night, and what it had felt like to think about girls then.

ANAPHORA: the regular repetition of the same word or phrase at the beginning of successive phrases or clauses

We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing-grounds. We shall fight in the fields and in the streets,...

The Lord sitteth above the water floods. The Lord remaineth a King forever. The Lord shall give strength unto his people. The Lord shall give his people the blessing of peace.

SOUND

Another kind of repetition that is particularly effective in oratory is the repetition of certain sounds within a paragraph or a sentence. Such use of sounds reinforces meaning not only in orations, but in written prose as well. However, sounds must serve a purpose. Meaningless repetition of sounds would be monotonous, and to be effective sounds must reinforce the meaning in some way.

ALLITERATION: the repetition of the same sound at the beginning of successive words

Even though large tracts of Europe have fallen or may fall into the grip of the Gestapo, we shall not flag or fail.

ASSONANCE: involves the repetition of sounds within words

From nose to toes, the body is beginning to sag.

No pain, no gain.

CONSONANCE: words at the ends of verses in which the final consonants in the stressed syllables agree but the words that precede them differ; sometimes called "half rime"

A quietness distilled,

As twilight long begun.

Or Nature, spending with herself

Sequestered afternoon,

—Emily Dickinson