

Rhetorical Analysis Terms and Definitions

Term	Definition	Example
allegory	a story with two (or more) levels of meaning--one literal and the other(s) symbolic; often in allegories, characters are given names that make their symbolic meaning clear	George Orwell's <i>Animal Farm</i>
alliteration	the repetition of the initial consonant sounds in two or more neighboring words	
allusion	a brief reference to literature, geographical locations, historical events, legends, myths, traditions and/or elements of popular culture	
analogy	a comparison of two things, which are alike in several aspects, for clarification and explanation; sometimes analogies establish a pattern of reasoning by using a less abstract and more familiar argument	
apostrophe	a figure of speech that directly addresses an absent or imaginary person or thing or a personified abstraction, such as love or liberty; the effect may add familiarity or emotional intensity. In older poetry, often indicated by "O! So-and-So"...	
colloquial	using slang or informalities in speech or writing; (noun = colloquialism)	
connotation	the implied or suggested meaning of a word; association	
denotation	the strict, literal, dictionary definition of a word	
dialect	the use of words, phrases, grammatical constructions and sounds that capture everyday (or colloquial) language; dialect shows the actual way people speak, which often differs markedly from standard English.	

Term	Definition	Example
diction	word choice; diction must be "named," i.e. described as specifically as possible. An author's choice of diction contributes to the tone and mood of the piece.	
dysphemism	a degenerative or less agreeable substitute for words or concepts; can often create an insult.	"boneyard," instead of cemetery
euphemism	a more agreeable or less offensive substitute for an unpleasant word or concept	
facetious language	joking or jesting often inappropriately; meant to be humorous or funny: not serious	
homily	a sermon or serious talk, speech or lecture involving moral or spiritual advice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider MLK's—"I Have a Dream" speech. Consider parental and religious homilies. 	
hyperbole	exaggeration for emphasis or humor	
imagery	the use of language to describe and/or evoke sensory experience; Imagery must, like diction, be "named." Pay attention to a writer's diction and use of detail for hints about how to name the imagery.	
irony	the contrast between what is expected and reality Review: What are the three main types of irony?	<p>_____ irony:</p> <p>_____ irony:</p> <p>_____ irony:</p>

Term	Definition	Example
metaphor	one thing is spoken of as though it were something else; through this identification of dissimilar things, a comparison is suggested or implied	
extended metaphor	A metaphor which is drawn-out beyond the usual word or phrase to extend throughout a stanza, an entire poem, through or across paragraphs, usually by using multiple comparisons between the unlike objects or ideas.	
metonymy	a figure of speech in which the name of one object is substituted for that of another object closely associated with it	
oxymoron	a combination of contradictory words and meanings	
onomatopoeia	words that imitate the natural sounds they name	
paradox	a statement that appears to be self-contradictory or opposed to common sense but upon closer examination contains some degree of truth or validity	
parody	a work (literature, music, film) that closely imitates the style or content of another work with the specific aim of comic effect and/or ridicule	
personification	presenting or describing concepts, animals or inanimate objects by giving them human qualities	
point of view	the perspective from which a story is told (or an essay is written): first person (I, we), second person (you), or third person (he, she, it, they). Also can mean the author's position about the subject	
pun	a play on words that are either identical in sound (homonyms) or similar in sound, but that are sharply different in meaning	
repetition	words, phrases, actions, and ideas that appear over and over again; usually, repetition in good literature highlights a pattern or makes a point	

Term	Definition	Example
rhetoric	the art of writing and speaking effectively and persuasively; refers to the choices an author or speaker makes in order to do so	
sarcasm	biting, caustic language that is meant to hurt or ridicule someone or something	
satire	a work (literature, music, film) that uses irony, wit, parody, caricature, hyperbole, understatement and sarcasm to target human vices and follies or social institutions and conventions for reform or ridicule	
shift	a change in verb tense, location, speaker, narrative method, setting or tone	
simile	a comparison between two things which are not alike, but which share at least one common element; similes explain an unfamiliar thing by comparing it to something familiar; similes use <i>like</i> , <i>as</i> , or similar explicit words to make the comparison	
style	the sum of choices an author makes in blending diction, syntax, figurative language, and other literary and rhetorical devices	
symbolism	objects and actions that stand for or represent something beyond their literal meaning	
syntax	sentence construction. Some authors heavily use prepositional phrases, for example. Hemmingway uses prepositional phrases liberally in order to describe. Perhaps some sentences are written with a short and choppy cadence to parallel an intense action in the text. The sentence structure in this case would contribute to the text's intensity. SCHEMES are also examples of syntax.	Provide an example of a short passage with interesting or notable syntax:
text	something written, performed or spoken considered as an object to be examined: movies, books, poetry, etc. are considered texts.	
theme	the central idea or message of a text; the insight it offers; Theme is not typically stated directly.	

Term	Definition	Example
thesis	(also thesis statement) the sentence or group of sentences that directly express a writer's opinion, purpose, idea or meaning	
tone	the author's attitude toward his or her subject and/or toward the audience	
litotes, aka understatement	the minimalization of fact or presentation of something as less significant than it is; the opposite of hyperbole	

- ☐ *Alliteration – repetition of consonant sound in neighboring words*
- ☐ *Assonance – repetition of internal vowel sounds in neighboring words*
- ☐ *Euphemism – substituting inoffensive term for offensive one*
- ☐ *Hyperbole – extreme exaggeration*
- ☐ *Irony – meaning often contradicted by appearance of ideas*
- ☐ *Metaphor – comparison between two unlike things to show commonalities*
- ☐ *Onomatopoeia – use of words that imitate their associated sounds*
- ☐ *Oxymoron – contradictory terms appear side by side*
- ☐ *Personification – inanimate object or abstraction is given human like qualities*
- ☐ *Pun – a play on words*
- ☐ *Simile – comparison between two things using like or as*
- ☐ *Understatement. – deliberately making something more important than it is*
- ☐ *Anaphora – repetition of the same word/phrases at beginning of successive clauses or verses*
- ☐ *Antithesis – the juxtaposition of contrasting ideas in balanced phrases*
- ☐ *Apostrophe – breaking off discourse to address some absent person or thing*
- ☐ *Chiasmus – verbal pattern where second half of expression is balanced with the first part, but reversed*
- ☐ *Litotes – understatement where an affirmative is expressed by negating its opposite*
- ☐ *Metonymy – describing something indirectly by referring to the things around it.*
- ☐ *Paradox – a statement that appears to contradict itself*
- ☐ *Synecdoche - a part is used to represent the whole, the general represents the specific.*