

Rhetorical Analysis Toolbox

Rhetorical Strategies and their Functions

Q. What are rhetorical strategies?

A. Rhetorical strategies are techniques writers use for a particular effect. All writers draw from a “toolbox” of rhetorical strategies as they express ideas to evoke responses in their readers.

Here’s a list of a number of rhetorical strategies and their general functions. Add to the list as you see additional examples in your reading.

DEVICE	FUNCTION
1. analogy	to make a pointed comparison, often a very powerful comparison
2. metaphor	same
3. simile	same
4. hyperbole	to provoke a response to cast something in a strong light
5. understatement	to spark the reader’s imagination, or make a pointed observation
6. juxtaposition	to call attention to extremes
7. imagery	to illustrate an idea, a feeling, or the particular qualities of something; to produce a feeling or an idea
8. alliteration	to create a memorable phrase, create rhythm, emphasize
9. allusion	to lend authority to an idea, to make an association with something the reader knows, to create a memorable phrase
10. refrain	to create a memorable phrase, create rhythm, emphasize
11. anaphora	to create a memorable, powerful effect, to reinforce an idea
12. repetition	same
13. parallelism	same
14. tone	to communicate an attitude towards the subject
15. undertone	to communicate an attitude towards the subject the cuts beyond the attitudes that appears on the surface
16. words w/heavy connotations	to cast the subject in a particular light, to imply
17. selection of detail	to concretize a particular idea, fact, or feeling
18. lists	to create a sense of overwhelming force or magnitude
19. irony	to convey complexity

20. paradox	to point out an apparent contradiction
21. anecdote	to provide a concrete example or humanize an abstract concept
22. humor	to disarm the audience, diffuse hostility, warm the reader to the writer's ideas
23. satire	to ridicule and inspire form
24. sarcasm, verbal irony	to ridicule or criticize
25. invective	to ridicule, chastise or convey contempt
26. narrative pace	to convey energy or intense feelings (or lack thereof)
27. appeals to reason, emotion, patriotism, religion, ethics	to provoke the audience to respond in a particular way, to tap into a readers values
28. rhetorical question	to provoke the reader to respond or to think
29. short, staccato sentences	to call attention to an idea
30. paralipsis	to draw attention to something while pretending not to do so

VERBS THAT DESCRIBE WHAT AUTHORS “DO”

*COMMUNICATES

Acquaints
Advertises
Announces
Appeals
Betrays
Breaks
Carries
Concludes
Connects
Corresponds
Declares
Discloses
Divulges
Enlightens
Evokes
Hints
Impacts
Implies
Informs
Introduces
Makes known
Offers
Proclaims
Provides
Relates
Reports
Reveals
Signifies
States
Suggests
Transfers
Transmits
Unfolds

*DESCRIBES

Depicts
Explains
Expresses
Illustrates
Portrays

*COMPRISES

Amounts to
Composes
Contains
Embodies
Encompasses
Holds
Includes
Incorporates

*REVEALS

Acknowledges
Bares
Clarifies
Demonstrates
Discloses
Displays
Elucidates
Exemplifies
Exhibits
Exposes
Illustrates
Manifests
Opens
Sheds light on
Shows
Unveils

*ENHANCES

Adorns
Aggrandizes
Amplifies
Augments
Builds up
Complements
Elevates
Exaggerates
Fleashes out
Heightens
Increases
Intensifies
Lifts
Magnifies
Raises
Reinforces
Strengthens

*EXAMINES

Analyzes
Compares
Contrasts
Dissects
Explores
Investigates
Questions
Probes

*DEVELOPS

Broadens
Enlarges
Expands
Explains

*REINFORCES

Adds to
Backs up
Bolsters
Buttresses
Carries
Confirms
Defends
Emphasizes
Enlarges
Fortifies
Increases
Props
Proves
Stresses
Substantiates
Supplements
Supports
Sustains
Underlines
Underscores
Validates
Verifies

*USES

Utilizes
Employs
Makes use of
Exercises
Applies

*CONVEYS

Communicates
Discloses
Expresses
Imparts
Projects
Relates
Reveals
Tells
Sends

*SYMBOLIZES

Connotes
Denotes
Designates
Emblemizes
Embodies
Epitomizes
Equates
Exemplifies
Illustrates
Likens
Links
Mirrors
Personifies
Represents
Shows

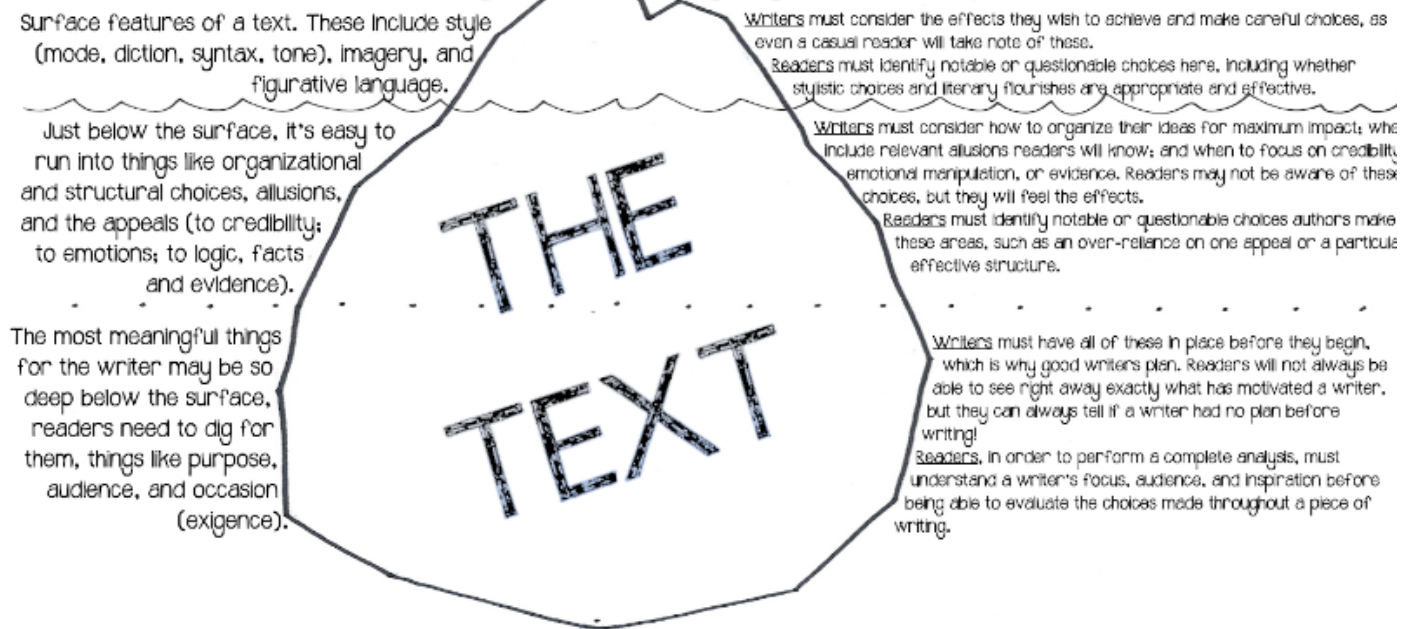
*COMMENTS

Affirms
Asserts
Clarifies
Construes
Criticizes
Discloses
Elucidates
Explains
Expounds
Interjects
Mentions
Notes
Notices
Observes
Points out
Reflects
Remarks
Touches on

*CLAIMS

Argues
Asserts
Concedes
Contends
Establishes
Maintains
Makes a case
Qualifies
Rebuts
Reasons
States

David Jolliffe's Rhetorical Framework Diagram for AP English Language and Composition



The Death of Ethos, Pathos, and Logos

“You cannot ‘use ethos, logos, or pathos’, they are the result of the author’s choices, not the choices themselves”--Andrea Peel, AP Lang Teacher, AP Forum

I really want to say “ethos,” so instead I might say...

- The author notes his or her experience in this area by...
- The author endears herself to her audience by...
- The author demonstrates that she is a model of morality by...
- The author makes it clear that he cares for his/her audience by...
- The author establishes her credibility by ...
- The author reminds her audience of their long-standing relationship when she writes ...
- The author offers a number of concessions, including _____, suggesting to readers she has thoroughly considered the matter.
- The speaker’s repeated use of “we,” “us,” and “our” suggests to listeners that she is on their side.
- The author’s use of a [formal/informal] style, as exemplified by _____, helps to establish her credibility with an audience expecting exactly that.
- The author’s affiliative use of _____ gives readers a feeling of familiarity and respect.
- The author’s (device) contributes to his/her credibility by _____.
- The writer inspires trust...
- The writer reinforces his/her authority...
- The writer alludes to his/her experience
- The writer creates a bond with the audience...
- The writer engenders unity...

I really want to say “pathos,” so instead I might say...

- The author causes the audience to feel _____ by...
- The author reminds the audience of _____ experiences by...
- The author inspires a sense of _____ by...
- Writing “_____” is a sneaky way to manipulate the audience into feeling ...
- The author knows stoking the readers’ anger will push them into action, and does so by ...
- The speaker’s repetition of _____ builds a feeling of _____ within her listeners.
- The use of _____ imagery lends the text a sense of _____.
- The authors loaded words, such as _____ and _____, are designed to give readers a feeling of ...
- The author’s allusion to _____ creates a feeling of _____, as that is likely the reader’s memory of the original experience.
- The author’s (device) contributes to the emotional weight of the piece by _____.
- The writer elicits empathy...
- The writer begs sympathy...
- The writer utilizes the audience's sense of (fear, hope, patriotism, etc...) as a tool to...
- The writer tugs on our heartstrings...
- The writer captures hearts by...
- The writer engenders guilt/emotion/empathy/fear/unity/patriotism/hope etc...
- The writer inspires...
- The writer employs an emotional (humorous, cautionary, vivid, etc.) anecdote...

I really want to say “logos,” so instead I might say...

- The author demonstrates the sensical nature of _____ by offering data which serves to....
- The author notes the fallacy in _____ 's argument by clarifying that....
- The author notes the various benefits/advantages of _____ by ...
- The author notes the various disadvantages of _____ by ...
- The author provides various examples which serve to....
- The author uses a clever analogy when she compares ...
- The author uses evidence that will appeal to her audience, citing _____ as a way to acknowledge what the audience already knows about _____.
- The author’s [syllogistic/inductive/deductive] reasoning in this section should leave readers confident in her conclusion that _____.
- The writer incorporates statistics...
- The writer manipulates data...
- The writer argues from precedent...
- The writer cites _____ authority...
- The writer connects... and builds...
- The writer reasons...
- The writer classifies...
- The writer strategically arranges examples/presents data/moves from ... to ...
- The writer constructs the claim/evidence/argument/reasoning...