

The image features a blue background with a pattern of white stars and shooting stars. The stars are of various sizes and orientations, some with multiple outlines. Shooting stars are depicted with long, curved tails. The pattern is dense and covers the entire background.

Grade 8: Reading Benchmark

Understanding Rhetoric

8.R.3.4: Explain how an author uses rhetorical devices to support or advance an appeal.

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Rhetoric

Benchmark:

Explain how an author uses rhetorical devices (such as figurative language) to support or advance an appeal (to logos, pathos, or ethos).

Definition of Rhetoric

Rhetoric is the art or skill of speaking or writing formally and effectively, especially as a way to **persuade** or **influence** people.

When an author's or speaker's purpose is to persuade, they create a **rhetorical appeal** by carefully choosing details that will make an impact on the audience. These details could make the audience feel an emotion, think logically about an issue, or agree with an authority or shared values.

Types of Rhetorical Appeals

Aristotle, a Greek philosopher, defined three types of rhetorical appeals:

- **Logos:** An appeal to logical reasoning
- **Pathos:** An appeal to emotion
- **Ethos:** An appeal to a shared source of authority or values

Definition of Rhetorical Device

A **rhetorical device** is language used in a specific way to have an intended effect on the reader or audience.

Authors and speakers can use rhetorical devices to support or advance their rhetorical appeals.

Definition of Figurative Language

Figurative language expresses something other than the literal, or actual, meaning of words.

Figurative language can be used as a rhetorical device.

Example of how figurative language can function as a rhetorical device to support an appeal

In Chapter 10 of his *Narrative*, Frederick Douglass describes “a faint beam of hope, that flickered for a moment, and then vanished.”

- Douglass uses a **metaphor** to compare his hopefulness to a faint light that flickers before going out. He uses this figurative language as a **rhetorical device** to support an **appeal to pathos**. His language moves readers to feel sympathy for the moment when he almost lost hope.

Definition of Irony

Another type of rhetorical device is **irony**.

Irony is the use of words to express something other than (usually the opposite of) the literal meaning.

When a speaker or writer uses irony as a rhetorical device, they invite the audience to join them in dismissing or scorning what someone else would say about a topic.

Example of how irony can function as a rhetorical device to support an appeal

In Chapter 4 of his *Narrative*, Douglass describes Mr. Gore as “a man possessing, in an **eminent** degree, all those traits of character indispensable to what is called a **first-rate** overseer.”

- Douglass uses **irony** when he describes Mr. Gore in such positive terms. As Douglass explains, Mr. Gore is considered to be a “first-rate” overseer because he is especially brutal and cruel—qualities that are not usually valued in society, but that were valued by slaveholders. Douglass uses irony as a **rhetorical device** to support an **appeal to ethos** and show how the values of slaveholders contradict the values of morality and justice that Douglass shares with his audience.

Definition of Rhetorical Question

Another type of rhetorical device is a **rhetorical question**.

A rhetorical question is a question that the author or speaker asks their reader or audience in order to emphasize a point or make an effect.

Sometimes an answer to a rhetorical question is given in a text, but often the reader is left to supply the answer in their own mind.

Example of how a rhetorical question can function as a rhetorical device to support an appeal

In Chapter 10 of his *Narrative*, Douglass asks, “O, why was I born a man, of whom to make a brute!...Why am I a slave?”

- Douglass uses a **rhetorical question** to convey the sense of injustice that he felt when he compared his enslavement to the freedom enjoyed by others. He uses this rhetorical question as a **rhetorical device** to support an **appeal to ethos**. His language moves readers to ask themselves whether it’s fair for some people to be enslaved while others are free.

Definition of Antithesis

Antithesis is a structure where an author uses opposite words in similar phrases to emphasize a contrast.

Antithesis can also be used as a rhetorical device.

Example of how antithesis can function as a rhetorical device to support an appeal

In Chapter 2 of his *Narrative*, Douglass describes the songs of enslaved people: “They would sometimes sing the most pathetic sentiment in the most rapturous tone, and the most rapturous sentiment in the most pathetic tone.”

- Douglass uses **antithesis** to emphasize the complexity of the emotions expressed in these songs. He uses this structure as a **rhetorical device** to support an appeal to **pathos**, moving readers to appreciate that the songs of enslaved people contain both the joy of the human spirit and the despair of suffering.



Rhetoric

How to explain the use of rhetorical devices to support an appeal

Read closely, highlight, and annotate details that are used persuasively.

Notice:

- Figurative language and allusions
- Irony
- Rhetorical questions
- Antithesis, repetition, or other notable sentence structures

How to explain the use of rhetorical devices to support an appeal

Ask yourself: How are the speaker's choices meant to affect the audience? What does the speaker want the audience...

- to picture?
- to feel?
- to think about?

How to explain the use of rhetorical devices to support an appeal

Explain how the rhetorical devices support or advance a rhetorical appeal.

- What type of appeal is the speaker making (logos, pathos, and/or ethos)?
- How does the device support or advance the appeal?

Remember

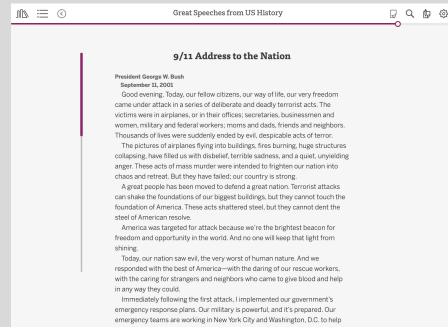
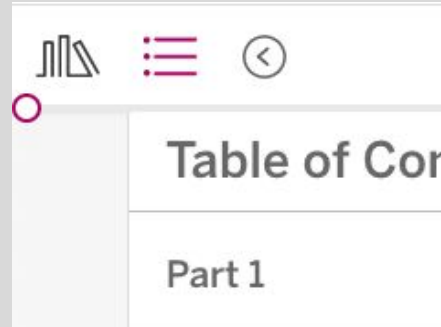
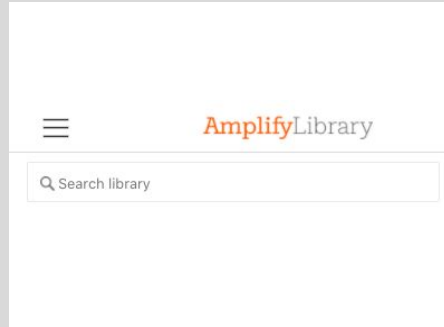
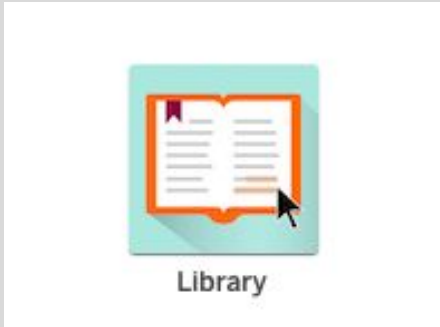
1. Read closely, highlight, and annotate details that are used persuasively.
2. Consider how the speaker's choices are meant to affect the audience.
3. Explain how the rhetorical devices support or advance a rhetorical appeal.

Benchmark in Action: Example of how to explain the use of rhetorical devices to support an appeal



Rhetoric

Get ready to read two passages in “9/11 Address to the Nation” by George W. Bush.



1. Open the Library app.
2. Type “Great Speeches from US History” into the search bar. Click on the title of the book to open it.
3. Click on the Table of Contents. Find and click on “President George W. Bush 2001.”
4. Read paragraphs 3–5 in “9/11 Address to the Nation.”

“9/11 Address to the Nation”

Context for Passage 1

On September 11, 2001, terrorists linked to a group called al-Qaeda perpetrated four separate attacks on the United States, killing 2,977 people and harming more than 25,000. That evening, President George W. Bush made a live televised statement. In his statement, Bush condemned the attacks, offered comfort and assurance, and described some of the government's emergency response plans.

Read paragraphs 3–5 in “9/11 Address to the Nation.”

As you read...

- look for details that are used persuasively.
- consider how the speaker’s choices are meant to impact the audience.
- think about how the rhetorical devices support or advance a rhetorical appeal.

Practice Step 1

Read closely, highlight, and annotate details that are used persuasively.

Notice:

- Figurative language and allusions
- Irony
- Rhetorical questions
- Antithesis, repetition, or other notable sentence structures

Practice Step 1

The pictures of airplanes flying into buildings, fires burning, huge structures collapsing, have filled us with disbelief, terrible sadness, and a quiet, unyielding anger. These acts of mass murder were intended to frighten our nation into chaos and retreat. But they have failed; our country is strong.

A great people has been moved to defend a great nation. Terrorist attacks can shake the foundations of our biggest buildings, but they cannot touch the foundation of America. These acts shattered steel, but they cannot dent the steel of American resolve.

America was targeted for attack because we're the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world. And no one will keep that light from shining.

Today, our nation saw evil, the very worst of human nature. And we responded with the best of America—with the daring of our rescue workers, with the caring for strangers and neighbors who came to give blood and help in any way they could.

Immediately following the first attack, I implemented our government's emergency response plans. Our military is powerful, and it's prepared. Our emergency teams are working in New York City and Washington, D.C. to help with local rescue efforts.

Our first priority is to get help to those who have been injured, and to take every precaution to protect our citizens at home and around the world from further attacks.

The functions of our government continue without interruption. Federal agencies in Washington which had to be evacuated today are reopening for essential personnel tonight, and will be open for business tomorrow. Our financial institutions remain strong, and the American economy will be open for business, as well.

The search is underway for those who are behind these evil acts. I've directed the full resources of our intelligence and law enforcement communities to find those responsible and to bring them to justice. We will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them.

I appreciate so very much the members of Congress who have joined me in strongly condemning these attacks. And on behalf of the American people, I thank the many world leaders who have called to offer their condolences and assistance.

Highlight key details of the speaker's description.

"A great people has been moved to defend a great nation."

"Terrorist attacks can shake the foundations of our biggest buildings, but they cannot touch the foundation of America."

"These acts shattered steel, but they cannot dent the steel of American resolve."

"We're the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity...no one will keep that light from shining."

"the very worst of human nature...the best of America"

Practice Step 1

way of life, our very freedom
 deadly terrorist acts. The
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Annotate to identify the type of device.



“A great people has been moved to defend a great nation.” **repetition**



“Terrorist attacks can shake the foundations of our biggest buildings, but they cannot touch the foundation of America.” **antithesis**



“These acts shattered steel, but they cannot dent the steel of American resolve.” **antithesis, metaphor**



“We’re the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity...no one will keep that light from shining.” **metaphor**



“the very worst of human nature...the best of America” **antithesis**

Practice Step 2

Ask yourself: How are the speaker's choices meant to affect the audience? What does the speaker want the audience...

- to picture?
- to feel?
- to think about?

Practice Step 2 Examples:

- Bush uses **repetition** to remind the audience that America is a "great nation" with "great people."
- He uses **antithesis** to emphasize a contrast between the terrible nature of the attacks ("the very worst of human nature") with the greatness of the people who have stepped up to help out ("the best of America").
- He uses a **metaphor** comparing the United States to "the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world" to make his audience feel proud of their country.

Practice Step 3

Explain how the rhetorical devices support or advance a rhetorical appeal.

- What type of appeal is the speaker making (logos, pathos, and/or ethos)?
- How does the device support or advance the appeal?

Practice Step 3 Examples:

Bush appeals to **pathos** and **ethos** to inspire his audience to feel strong and united and not give up hope.

- He uses many instances of **antithesis** to separate the intention behind the attacks from the result. By contrasting the attackers' goal to "shake the foundations of our biggest buildings" and "shatter steel" against their inability to "touch the foundation of America" or "dent the steel of American resolve," he appeals to **pathos** and inspires a sense of strength and unity.
- He makes an appeal to **ethos** by using **figurative language** that reminds the audience of America's value as the "brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity" that "no one will keep...from shining."

Remember

1. Read closely, highlight, and annotate details that are used persuasively.
2. Consider how the speaker's choices are meant to affect the audience.
3. Explain how the rhetorical devices support or advance a rhetorical appeal.



Rhetoric

Benchmark:

Explain how an author uses rhetorical devices (such as figurative language) to support or advance an appeal (to logos, pathos, or ethos).

Now read paragraphs 11–13 in “9/11 Address to the Nation.”

The screenshot shows a digital reading application interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with a book icon, a menu icon, a back arrow, the title "Great Speeches from US History", and icons for a document, search, share, and settings. Below the navigation bar, the main content area features a vertical purple bar on the left side. The title "9/11 Address to the Nation" is centered in bold. Below the title, the author "President George W. Bush" and the date "September 11, 2001" are listed. The text of the speech is presented in several paragraphs, with the first paragraph starting with "Good evening. Today, our fellow citizens, our way of life, our very freedom came under attack in a series of deliberate and deadly terrorist acts. The victims were in airplanes, or in their offices; secretaries, businessmen and women, military and federal workers; moms and dads, friends and neighbors. Thousands of lives were suddenly ended by evil, despicable acts of terror." The second paragraph begins with "The pictures of airplanes flying into buildings, fires burning, huge structures collapsing, have filled us with disbelief, terrible sadness, and a quiet, unyielding anger. These acts of mass murder were intended to frighten our nation into chaos and retreat. But they have failed; our country is strong." The third paragraph starts with "A great people has been moved to defend a great nation. Terrorist attacks can shake the foundations of our biggest buildings, but they cannot touch the foundation of America. These acts shattered steel, but they cannot dent the steel of American resolve." The fourth paragraph begins with "America was targeted for attack because we're the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world. And no one will keep that light from shining." The fifth and final paragraph starts with "Today, our nation saw evil, the very worst of human nature. And we responded with the best of America—with the daring of our rescue workers, with the caring for strangers and neighbors who came to give blood and help

“9/11 Address to the Nation”

Context for Passage 2

In the final paragraphs of his speech, Bush offers comfort to the grieving and resolves to move forward triumphantly.

Practice reading to explain the use of rhetorical devices to support rhetorical appeals.

Step 1

Read closely, highlight, and annotate details that are used to persuade the audience.

Step 2

Consider how the speaker's choices are meant to affect the audience.

Step 3

Explain how the rhetorical devices support or advance a rhetorical appeal.

Check for Understanding



Rhetoric

Share and Discuss

1. Read closely, highlight, and annotate details that are used persuasively.

Share and Discuss

2. How are the speaker's choices meant to affect the audience?

Share and Discuss

3. Explain how the rhetorical devices support or advance a rhetorical appeal.