

***Rhetoric, Reading and Writing:
A Review and Back to Basics
Approach to Ready Writing***

Summer 2020

The University Interscholastic League

Ruben Rodriguez, UIL Ready Writing State Director
ruben.rodriquez@austincc.edu

Before We Get Started...



**Everyone should
remain muted**



**Submit questions
through chat**



**Attendance for
CPE credit**

*Reading and writing
cannot be separated.
Reading is breathing in;
writing is breathing out.*

A Writer's Self-Inventory

Consider and then answer the following questions:

- Describe and explain **3 personal experiences** that have profoundly **affected you** (or family members who have been important in your life or who have had unique life experiences.)
- List and discuss **3** of the **best books** you have read in the last two years (books that have meant something to you, have taught you something, have changed your life, etc.).
- List and discuss **3** of the **most memorable movies** you have seen.
- List and discuss **3 groundbreaking television shows** you have seen and/or watch regularly.
- Describe and explain **3** of the **hottest current events** that you have paid attention to and continue to follow to see what happens.
- Describe and explain **3 big historical moments** (ones that you know well).
- Describe and discuss **at least 2 outside interests** you have and why they are important to you (i.e., art, music, technology, dance, sports, etc.).
- Describe and discuss **at least 2 influential people** in your life—people who have made a difference, and who have made you the person you are. Individuals, who in five or ten years, you will recall fondly.
- Discuss the topic or issue you are the **most passionate** about.
- Discuss a current event you feel is most **significant to you**, and to **HUMANITY**.

A well-informed writer should be aware of the world he or she lives in and always be a “citizen scholar.”

The 3 R's:
A Starting
Point
For
ReadyWriters

- Rhetoric
- Reading (Close)
- (W)Riting

What is *rhetoric*?

Rhetoric is the study of effective speaking and writing. And the art of persuasion. And many other things.

In its long and vigorous history rhetoric has enjoyed many definitions, accommodated different purposes, and varied widely in what it included. And yet, for most of its history it has maintained its fundamental character as a discipline for training students 1) to perceive how language is at work orally and in writing, and 2) to become proficient in applying the resources of language in their own speaking and writing.

Discerning how language is working in others' or one's own writing and speaking, one must (artificially) divide form and content, *what* is being said and *how* this is said. Because rhetoric examines so attentively the *how* of the language, the *methods* and *means* of communication, it has sometimes been discounted as something only concerned with style and appearances, and not with the quality or *content* of communication. For many (such as Plato) rhetoric deals with the superficial at best, the deceptive at worst ("mere rhetoric"), when one might better attend to matters of substance, truth, or reason as attempted in dialectic and philosophy of religion.

Rhetoric has sometimes lived down its critics, but as set forth from antiquity, rhetoric was a comprehensive art just as much concerned with *what* one could say as *how* one might say it. Indeed, a basic premise for rhetoric is the indivisibility of means from meaning; *how* one says something conveys meaning as much as *what* one says. Rhetoric studies the effectiveness of language comprehensively, including its emotional impact (pathos), as much as its propositional content (logos). To see how language and thought worked together, however, it has first been necessary to artificially divide content and form.

Notes On Rhetoric

- From William Pratt, *The College Writer: Essays for Composition*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969.

“Whenever we try to grasp not only the substance of what we read, but its effective relation to the structure and the style, we are making a *rhetorical analysis*, and the end result should be an act of judgment: an evaluation of the extent to which the author has succeeded in achieving his purpose. Rhetorical analysis, then, is the critical examination of a text in an effort to determine its effectiveness and value. ***It means dividing the text into its main ideas and analyzing their arrangement, and the diction and tone used in explaining or defending them.*** Through it we seek to assess the relation of ***means to end***: to evaluate not only the thoughts, but the ***form of expression***, and ***to arrive at a conclusion about whether the form is adequate to the purpose.*** Rhetorical analysis can be applied to any kind of writing, from newspaper to serious articles or books, but it has most value when the critic displays high degree of rhetorical skill and an evident gift for persuasion. The more enduring the work, the more challenging and rewarding will be the task of evaluating it.” (375)

- From Edward P.J. Corbett and Robert J. Connors, *Style and Statement*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

“In the Greek and Roman schools, the study of rhetoric consisted of five canons: (1) the discovery of arguments; (2) the arrangement or organization of the arguments; (3) the style, the verbalization, of the arguments; (4) the memorizing of arguments; (5) the delivery of the arguments. The orator, of course, had to be in command of the language in which he delivered the speech, but if that delivery was effective, it had to be stylistically impressive. The style of the speech played a great part in persuading the listeners. The study of style was very important in the Greek and Latin schools of rhetoric. Style is also very important in the effectiveness of our written or spoken communication delivered in the English language.” (vii)

- The study of style concerns: the kind of ***diction*** used, the varying ***length of sentences***, the ***grammatical variety of sentences***, the ***euphony of sentences***, various ***ways in which parts of sentences are articulated***, and the skillful and effective ways ***figures of speech*** are used. (vii).
- Classical rhetoricians divided the study of figures of speech into two kinds: ***the SCHEMES*** and ***the TROPES***. ***Schemes dealt with the deviation of the normal pattern or arrangements of words in sentences; the tropes dealt with the deviation from the ordinary and principal kind of signification of words.*** (vii)

Notes On Rhetoric Cont.

The SCHEMES (of Construction)

- **Parallelism**—similarity of structure in a pair or series of related words, phrases, or clauses
- **Antithesis**—the juxtaposition of contrasting ideas, often in parallel structure
- **Anastrophe**—inversion of the natural or usual word order
- **Parenthesis**—insertion of some verbal unit in a position that interrupts the normal syntactical flow of the sentence
- **Apposition**—placing side by side two coordinate elements, the second of which serves as an explanation or modification of the first
- **Ellipses**—deliberate omission of a word or words which are readily implied by the context
- **Asyndeton**—deliberate omission of a word or of words which are readily implied by the context
- **Polysyndeton**—deliberate use of many conjunctions
- **Alliteration**—repetition of initial or medial consonants in two or more adjacent words
- **Assonance**—the repetition of similar vowel sounds, preceded and followed by different consonants, in the stressed syllables of adjacent words
- **Anaphora**—repetition of the same word or groups of words at the beginnings of successive clauses
- **Epistrophe**—repetition of the same word or group of words at the end of successive clauses
- **Epanalepsis**—repetition at the end of a clause of a word that occurred at the beginning of the clause
- **Anadiplosis**—repetition of the last word of one clause at the beginning of the following clause
- **Climax**—arrangement of words, phrases, or clauses in an order of increasing importance
- **Antimetabole**—repetition of words, in successive clauses, in reverse grammatical order
- **Chiasmus**—reversal of grammatical structures in successive phrases or clauses
- **Polyptoton**—repetition of words derived from the same root

Notes On Rhetoric Cont.

The TROPES

- Metaphor
- Simile
- Synecdoche
- Metonymy
- Puns
- Anthimeria—the substitution of one part of speech for another
- Periphrasis—the substitution of a descriptive word or phrase for a proper name or of a proper name for a quality associated with the name
- Personification
- Hyperbole
- Litotes
- Rhetorical Question—asking a question, not for the purpose of eliciting an answer but for the purpose of asserting or denying something obliquely
- Irony
- Onomatopoeia
- Oxymoron
- Paradox

Notes On Rhetoric

From *A Writer's Repertoire*, Gwendolyn Gong and Sam Dragga. NY: Harper Collins, 1995.

- So what exactly does *rhetoric* mean? As slippery as the term may be, you will need to understand it in all of its complexity to derive the most benefit from this exploration of rhetoric and writing. The following list gives the function and scope of rhetoric and writing:
- Rhetoric is both a field of humane study and a pragmatic art; that is, we can read it as well as practice it.
- The practice of rhetoric must be viewed as a culturally determined, interdisciplinary process. Rhetoric enables writers and speakers to design messages for particular audiences and purposes. Since people in various cultures and historical periods are likely to adopt different perspectives on what makes communication effective, rhetoric will accommodate the needs of those who practice it...
- When we practice rhetoric we use language, either spoken or written to "induce cooperation" in an audience.
- The purpose of rhetoric, inducing cooperation, involves more than mere persuasion, narrowly defined. Discourse which affects an audience, which informs, moves delights, and teaches, has a rhetorical aim...
- Rhetoric implies choices, for both the speaker or writer and the audience. When we practice rhetoric we design the message, first by making decisions about our subject, audience, point of view, and purpose. Then, we select our best resources of language to express them. In other words, we develop strategies for creating an effect in our audience. However the notion of choice carries with it an important ethical responsibility. Our strategic choice in responding to the message, must be able to adopt, modify, or reject the message. A burglar holds a gun to my head and calmly expresses intention to rob me may induce cooperation, but not by means of rhetoric.

For Close Reading

The United States was founded on hate—the hatred that justified colonial annihilation of American Indians and that perpetuated the enslavement of Africans. Hate divided the country during the Civil War, and a century later, spawned protest movements, with activists vying over issues of justice and human rights. And Americans are not alone in this legacy. Obviously, our globe’s history of colonial conquest and brutality, and the many current hot spots of extreme violence and displacement, reflect deep currents of hate. It would be naïve to argue we’re in the most hateful moment in history. The hate that’s brewing now is harmful, frightening, and increasingly acute. It doesn’t have to be the worst moment in history for it to be bad enough to warrant a concerted effort at reckoning—and change.

The bad news is we all hate. All of us. That includes me—and I’m afraid it also includes you. We first have to face the hard truth. In different ways and to different degrees, consciously or unconsciously, all of us, in one way or another, sometimes treat other individuals and entire groups of human beings as though they are fundamentally less deserving than we are.

We’ve gotten to the point where hate is such an acceptable norm that we not only believe it’s inevitable but we try to overtly market its benefits—and exploit it for profit. There’s now a dating app called Hester, which will match you with a potential love interest based on the things or people you mutually hate. Really. Meanwhile, much of the media relies on making animosity not only palpable but virtually addictive. More and more of us get our news primarily, if not exclusively, from television channels and websites that cater to our hate and present information in ways that reinforce our biases. This not only exploits hate but exacerbates it. Across all media, ratings aren’t going up because viewers are getting more informed but because they’re getting more inflamed. I know I get more clicks and claps every time I roll my eyes on air, whether or not I mean to or not, and whether you think that’s the meanest thing in the world or not. I’m not going to argue about which side or group does it worse. We all hate. And we all do it too much. So what do we do now?

We think we’re good people, but we don’t see how that sphere of moral concern is constricted by hate, by the history and habits and culture of who matters and who doesn’t in our society, which we have all bought into, whether we mean to or not. So we shake our heads about excessive corporate greed and we shake our fists against neo-Nazis marching in the streets, but not enough of us admit that they’re reflections of the society we’ve all created, let alone acknowledge that they’re reflections of ourselves.

We have a crisis of hate in the United States and around the world, and we can’t begin to address it if we don’t first learn to see it—making the invisible visible—uncovering the inadvertent, implicit, deliberate, and the conscious forms of hate all around us and in ourselves. “Real change is systemic and self-implicating, urging us to see our role in vast, complex problems,” writer Anand Giridharadas said in a speech in 2017. Leo Tolstoy wrote, “Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself.” We have to do both. Before it’s too late.

-Sally Kohn (1977), American Political Commentator, *The Opposite of Hate: A Field Guide to Repairing Our Humanity*, 2018.

Style

“Style is the right words in the right places.”

- **Style**—the way writers assemble words to tell the story, develop the argument, dramatize the play, or compose the poem.
- **Style** is best considered as the choice of words in the service of content.
- **Elements of Style:**
 - Diction—word choice levels—formal, neutral, informal
specific/general and concrete/abstract denotation and connotation
 - Rhetoric—the art of persuasive writing, and more broadly, to the general art of writing. count various elements in a passage
determine sentence types locate parallelism
 - Tone—expression of attitude. Tone also refers to those techniques and modes of presentation that reveal or create attitude.

Style Cont.

“Style is the right words in the right places.”

- **TYPICAL PROSE/EXPOSITORY ANALYSIS QUESTIONS:**

Author’s purpose(s)

Narrator’s attitude/speaker’s attitude

Author’s attitude(s) toward or view(s) of subject(s)

Characterization methods/revelation of character

- **ANALYZE THE QUESTION/PROMPT FIRST**

WHAT is the overall question?

HOW are you to answer it?

PROVIDE support from the story/passage.

What is STYLE?

*A Style Workshop for
Writers*

- Questions every writer must address as he/she is developing his/her own unique qualities as a writer:

What is **STYLE**?

What are different "**PEOPLE**" styles?

Do we want the **SAME** styles as others?

- Food for thought:

STYLE –be it fashion, speaking, studying, or writing, an individual's **style** is what makes each of us different and unique. **Style** makes us stand out from the crowd; makes us be noticed. Writers need to know they need to develop their own **style**, especially, when it comes to effectively developing their craft. Writers -- especially young writers -- must know that to develop their own **writing style** is a difficult process, and one very necessary for personal and professional success.

(The following exercise, using the four basic rhetorical devices, will assist you, in recognizing and developing your own **writing style**.)

- **Directions:** Using the paper you have been given, fold the paper into four equal sections and number each section 1 through 4.

What is STYLE?

*A Style Workshop for
Writers Cont.*

Do the following:

- **Section #1:** In a complete sentence, jot down what you heard, saw (in the mirror) touched, tasted, smelled when you woke up this morning. Take a few minutes to write your thoughts down.
- **Section #2:** Now, jot down how you felt getting up this morning, driving to school, how you are feeling right now. Anticipate how you may feel tonight.
- (Now look over Sections #1 and #2, and circle key words you see; words that especially stand out. For instance, circle at least four words—nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs.
- **Section #3:** Individually (or in pairs) list at least two synonyms for each word you circled—the key words you identified. Look for unusual synonyms. If time allows, use a thesaurus if you like.
- **Section #4:** Write one grammatically correct (and punctuated correctly as well) sentence using as much information from sections #1, #2, and #3 as you can.

(Take 5-7 minutes to write your sentence.)

What is STYLE?

*A Style Workshop for
Writers Cont.*

Next, ask for volunteers to read to the class their sentences.

- Note that each square consists of four key rhetorical elements necessary
- **Square #1 = IMAGERY** (Imagery is important because it provides *power* and *unity*.)
- **Square #2 = TONE** (Tone derives from *attitude*.)
- **Square #3 = DICTION** (Diction provides *clarity* through *denotation*, and *forcefulness* through *connotation*. Basically, we discuss diction as either *sophisticated* or *colloquial*.)
- **Square #4 = SYNTAX** (Syntax has to do with *form* when dealing with *coordination* and *subordination* and with *variety* in types of sentences: simple, compound, complex, compound-complex. The sentence in Square #4 is most likely compound-complex.

This exercise shows why **style** and **voice** (“personality”) are so important in creating effective writing. Strong, effective compositions are especially rich in these two areas.

What is “VOICE?”

...and How Do I Find One?

- The writers who take risks, who trust their own style and do not try to follow a “formula” for a good essay have greater success. But “voice” is a very different concept to master. It is even difficult to define. Of all the definitions I have seen, I like Peter Elbow’s best:

“Writing with voice is writing into which someone has breathed. It has that fluency, rhythm, and liveliness that exist naturally in the speech of most people when they are enjoying a conversation.... Writing with real voice has the power to make you pay attention and understand—the words go deep.”

(*Writing with Power*, Oxford, 1981)

- To acquire voice, Ready Writers need to read quality literature, stay aware of current events, develop serious interests in a select few topics, and constantly analyze good writing. Barry Lane says in *After the End* (Heinemann, 1993):

“Finding a voice is a slow process that begins with teaching students to value their own experiences and perceptions and to write them down. Students with the strongest voices often have kept journals for years. They’ve learned to translate their thoughts into words without letting their audience block them out. They sense the importance of what they are saying and struggle to say it better.”

What is “VOICE?”

...and How Do I Find One?
Cont.

- Lane also quotes Geof Hewitt, Vermont’s Writing Consultant to Secondary Schools, on voice:

“The mind working alone produces thought; the heart produces feeling; the tongue makes speech and the hand in isolation makes scribble: all four together create voice.” And all four together create a successful writer.”

Questions?

***Rhetoric, Reading and Writing:
A Review and Back to Basics
Approach to Ready Writing***

Summer 2020

The University Interscholastic League

Ruben Rodriguez, UIL Ready Writing State Director
ruben.rodriquez@austincc.edu