

# Rhetorical Devices & Their Functions

What are rhetorical devices?

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

Here’s a list of rhetorical devices and a basic description of their functions. You should know numbers 1 to 30 for the AP English Language exam. Numbers 31 and up are obscure but fun! Add to the list as you see additional ones in your reading or mentioned in class. And try to find one great example of each to help you remember the term and its function.

<b>Device</b>	<b>Function—not what it is but what it does!</b>
1. analogy	to make a pointed comparison, often a very powerful comparison
2. metaphor	“
3. simile	“
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, idea or tone.
8. alliteration	to create a memorable phrase
9. allusion	to lend authority to an idea, to make an association with something the reader knows
10. refrain	to create a memorable phrase
11. anaphora	to create a memorable, powerful effect, to reinforce an idea
12. repetition	“
13. parallelism	“
14. tone	to communicate an attitude towards the subject
15. undertone	to communicate an attitude towards the subject that cuts beyond the attitude 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, cataloguing	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 reform
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, etc.	to provoke the audience to respond in a particular way, to tap into a reader's intellect feelings, needs, values, etc.
28. rhetorical question	to provoke the reader to respond or to think, or to lead them to the next idea
29. short, staccato sentences	to call attention to an idea
30. antithesis	to emphasize a contrast
31. paralipsis	to draw attention to something while pretending not to do so
31. litotes (LIE-toh-tees)	to understate something in order to qualify it
32. antimetabole	to draw attention to an idea through a clever syntax
33. anthimeria	to emphasize something through unorthodox usage
34. zeugma	to emphasize something through unorthodox usage