

# Learn the Secrets of **ARGUMENTATIVE SPEECHES**

*Classic Rhetorical Devices in Today's Speeches & Media*

**Listen** like an **Educated Citizen**  
**Read** Transcripts like an **Expert**  
**Write** Speeches like a **Professional**



## Notes for Students:

1. If there are ANY vocabulary words you don't understand, OR if there are any concepts/steps that you don't know how to complete in this booklet, talk to your teacher! 😊
2. Some of the rhetorical devices and figures of speech in this flipbook are in literature too... they're not just for speeches and nonfiction!

# Review

## Any argument, including a speech, should have:

- An engaging introduction or “**hook**”
- A clear **thesis**, message, or claim.
- **Facts, examples, and reasons** to prove or support the claim (preferably from credible sources!)
- A conclusion that summarizes and/or inspires the audience. If you want the audience to act, such as voting or buying, this moment is the “**call to action**”.

## In addition, the best speeches also...

- **Consider the level of formality.** How formal should your word choices and speaking style be?
- **Consider the audience.** Is it a big or small group? Who is listening (supporters or critics)? How hard will you have to work to keep their attention?
- **Use the right tone and vocabulary.** Can this audience handle certain terminology? Do they expect you to seem mature, fun, respectful, apologetic, or other?
- **Think about their genre.** How long are speeches like this supposed to be? What qualities should they have?
- **Remember the media being used.** Will this be online?

# Judging a Speech's Quality

Think about the speech that you are reading, writing, or listening to. When evaluating if it is “good” or if it is “done”, ask yourself if it...

- Meets all of the criteria on the left** of this page. Is it a “complete” and professional argument?
- Sounds good out loud, and not just on paper.** If it's your speech, read it out loud to ensure that it flows well, that no sentences are too long, and that everything will be smooth for you as a reader.
- Uses ethos, pathos, and logos.
  - Ethos:** the author's credibility. Can we tell that this person is an authority figure on this topic? Why should we listen to him/her?
  - Pathos:** emotional appeals and/or stories. Can we relate to this person or speech? Is it engaging or emotional?
  - Logos:** use of logic and reasoning. Does the speech appeal to our minds and seem legitimate?

**NEXT STEP:** On the blank flap above, write down what your gut reaction is to this speech so far. Is it “good”? What could be better?

## THE BASICS



CUT ALONG DASHED GUIDELINE

# Parallelism

Parallelism is a broad category that includes many techniques, but in general, it's all about **repeating either exact words or word patterns**.

For example, in grammar, **parallel structure** means that we format a list's items in the same way. Here's an example of parallel structure in which the verbs are all conjugated into the same tense:

- **Correct:** We hiked, swam, and ran in the triathlon.
- **Incorrect:** We hiked, swim, and will run in the triathlon.

Parallel structure has been used since ancient times by speechwriters, novelists, and other writers who wanted to create a certain rhythm:

- **Julius Caesar** once said to the Roman Senate, "Veni, vidi, vici." = "We came, we saw, we conquered."

Parallelism can also apply to repeated patterns in **word order**:

- **Alexander Pope** wrote, "To err is human; to forgive divine."
  - (Notice how he used two infinitive verbs, "to err" and "to forgive", as well as two adjectives, "human" and "divine"?)
- **Neil Armstrong's** first words on the moon were, "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind."
  - (Notice how he repeats some words ("one"), but mostly just repeats a word pattern or a part of speech? "one [adjective] [noun] for [noun]").

# Anaphora & Epistrophe

The left sidebar talked about repeating word PATTERNS. Now, here are two techniques that repeat EXACT words/phrases.

**Anaphora** is when a writer repeats specific words at the BEGINNING of a sentence or phrase:

- "**We shall** not flag or fail. **We shall** go on to the end. **We shall** fight in France, **we shall** fight on seas and oceans, **we shall** fight with growing confidence..." (Winston Churchill)

**Epistrophe** is when a writer repeats specific words at the END of a sentence or phrase:

- "...and that government of the people, by the people, and for the people, shall not perish from the Earth" (Abraham Lincoln)

Some writers do BOTH! 😊

- "**It was** the best of times, **it was** the worst of times, **it was** the age of wisdom, **it was** the age of foolishness..." (Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*)
- "**There is no** Negro problem. **There is no** Southern problem. **There is no** Northern problem. There is only an American problem" (Lyndon B. Johnson)

**NEXT STEP:** See if your speech already has any parallel structure, anaphora, or epistrophe in it. If not, WRITE ONE that COULD be added on the blank flap above.

## PARALLELISM & REPETITION



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# Antithesis

Synonym Alert! The word “antithesis” has different meanings in the world. Make sure you’re studying THIS definition for antithesis, *as used in the context of rhetoric*.

**Antithesis** is a rhetorical device in which two opposite words or concepts are put together in a sentence to create contrast.

It’s technically a form of **parallel structure**, because words and/or patterns tend to get repeated.

**Examples** (repeated from this booklet). Can you see which pairs are opposites?

- Alexander Pope wrote, “To err is **human**; to forgive **divine**.”
- “It was the **best** of times, it was the **worst** of times, it was the age of **wisdom**, it was the age of **foolishness**...” (Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*)

### New Examples:

- “We must learn **to live** together as brothers or **perish** together as fools” (Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.)
- “We will **extend a hand** if you are willing to **unclench your fist**” (Barack Obama)
- “**To be**, or **not to be**, that is the question” (Shakespeare, *Hamlet*)

Speechwriters often like to use antithesis to show a sense of before and after, present vs. future, or “us vs. them”.

**Antithesis can be either very unifying or create serious division!**

# Chiasmus

**Chiasmus** is *somewhat* similar to parallel structure, because it occurs when a writer repeats a pattern or concept IN REVERSE WORD ORDER.

**Note:** *Antithesis was about true opposites; chiasmus is about reverse word order or patterns. They may look similar, but they’re not the same!*

This technique is sometimes used to show wit or sarcasm! ☺ You’ll sometimes see them in jingles, slogans, and song lyrics, and not just in speeches.

### New Examples:

- “All for one, and one for all” (Alexander Dumas, *The Three Musketeers*)
- “Do I love you because you’re beautiful, or are you beautiful because I love you?” (Oscar Hammerstein, *Cinderella*)
- “Bad men live that they may eat or drink, whereas good men eat and drink that they may live” (Socrates)
- “With my mind on my money, and my money on my mind” (Snoop Dogg)
- “Those who mind don’t matter, and those who matter don’t mind” (Bernard Baruch)

**NEXT STEP:** These two techniques don’t often happen naturally while writing; they usually require more planning. See if there are any in your speech; if not, write one of each (on the blank flap above) that you could add to it!

## ANTITHESIS & CHIASMUS



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\*Author’s side note: Yes, I know that technically, chiasmus and antimetabole are different things, but in this page I’m using them interchangeably. Feel free to edit this page if you prefer.

# Hypophora

**Hypophora** is a really fun figure of speech in which a writer raises a question and then immediately answers it.

**Side Note:** A “hypothetical question” or a “rhetorical question” is when a writer asks a question that does NOT get answered. Hypophora is the opposite!

**Why use hypophora?** Well, it can...

- Make the audience feel like they're in **dialogue** with the speaker; it feels more **interactive**
- Raise **curiosity** to hear the answer
- Make the speaker seem **smart**, confident, and in control (since they know the answer). That's why so many politicians and leaders use it!

**Examples: Question & Answer**

- **“But why, some say, the moon? Why choose this as our goal? ... We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard...”** (John F. Kennedy)
- **“You ask, what is our aim? I can answer in one word: It is victory, victory at all costs, victory in spite of all terror, victory, however long and hard the road may be”** (Winston Churchill)
- **“There are those who are asking the devotees of civil rights, ‘When will you be satisfied?’ We can never be satisfied as long as the Negro is the victim of the unspeakable horrors of police brutality”** (Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.)
- **“What does all this mean for farm workers? It means the right to vote in free elections is a sham... It means the short life expectancy and the inhuman living and working conditions will continue”** (Cesar Chavez).

**NEXT STEP:** On the blank flap above, make some observations about how rhythmically interesting this speech is (or isn't). Make a suggestion of what could be changed to make it better.

# Spoken Rhythms

Have you ever listened to a really boring speech? Chances are, the *delivery* of that speech was equally or more to blame than the content itself.

Thus, while rhythm isn't \*exactly\* a formal rhetorical device, all speechwriters DO have to make sure that their drafts sound more like a speech than a boring essay! A rhythmically interesting speech will help keep the audience's attention, so we want to avoid being too *monotone* or talking too much at one plodding tempo/beat.

There are a few ways that a speechwriter can make a draft more rhythmically interesting:

- **Cadence:** the rising and falling of your voice's pitches (also known as intonation).
- **Speed & Volume:** Try to vary these as much as possible!
- **Sentence Length:** Try to switch up long & short sentences. (If you want to get fancy, you can match the sentence length to what you're trying to accomplish... short sentences for bold statements, and longer sentences for more flowery ones).
- **Sentence Structures:** Just like sentence length, you can vary sentence types or syntax (word order):
  - **Simple:** One independent clause
    - Ex: “We're here to put a dent in the universe.”
  - **Compound:** 2 independent clauses in one sentence
    - Ex: “Give me liberty, or give me death!”
  - **Complex:** One dependent clause and one independent clause (doesn't matter which is first).
    - Ex: “If we must die, we die defending our rights.”

## HYPOPHORA & CADENCE



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# Allusion

**Allusion** is a brief reference to an outside source, such as a historical person, historical event, piece of literature, religious text, or cultural icon.

## Allusion is used to...

- Make a **connection** with the listener/reader
- Create **imagery** in the audience's head
- Provoke **emotions**, including humor, anger, nostalgia, pride, or fear
- Add to the author's **ethos**, such as to make him or her look smarter

## Have you heard any of these short, informal examples before?

- "He's such a **Romeo**."
- "It's a total **Garden of Eden**."
- "Hey **Einstein**, what's the answer?"
- "Man, that dilemma is such a **Catch-22**."
- "The basketball player's **Achilles' heel** is his ego."
- "Don't act like such a **Scrooge!**"

## Formal examples:

- "**Olympus** is but the outside of the earth everywhere" (Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*)
- "Five score years ago, a **Great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand today**, signed the **Emancipation Proclamation**" (Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.)
- "And I can pledge our nation to a goal: When we see **that wounded traveler on the road to Jericho**, we will not pass to the other side" (George W. Bush)
- "Stay **gold**, Ponyboy" (SE Hinton, *The Outsiders*)
- "Tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night's **Plutonian shore!**" (Edgar Allan Poe, "The Raven")
- "Mr. President, it is natural to man to indulge in the illusions of hope. We are apt to shut our eyes against a painful truth, and **listen to the song of that siren till she transforms us into beasts**" (Patrick Henry)

# Imagery

One reason why allusion works so well is because it creates an image in the reader's mind... but there are many ways to create positive (or negative) pictures in an audience!

**Imagery** is literal and metaphorical language that creates an image in the reader or listener's mind. As a reminder, imagery is usually associated with **sensory detail**: sight, smell, sound, touch, and taste.

## Why would a speech use imagery? It...

- Helps the listener imagine a better world/future
- Makes the listener feel disgust at the present, past, or negative possible future
- Makes the listener imagine the product being sold
- Keeps the listener's attention, helps him/her understand, and possibly aids memory

**Here are a few extended examples of spoken imagery. Can you identify sight, sound, touch, and more?**

- "The shadows are lengthening for me. The twilight is here. My days of old have vanished – tones and tints. They have gone glimmering through the dreams of things that were. Their memory is one of wondrous beauty, watered by tears and coaxed and caressed by the smiles of yesterday. I listen, then, but with thirsty ear, for the witching melody of faint bugles blowing reveille, of far drums beating the long roll" (General Douglas MacArthur)
- "Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice. Now is the time to open the doors of opportunity to all God's children. Now is the time to lift our nation from the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood" (Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.)

**NEXT STEP:** Try to identify moments of allusion and imagery in your speech. How do they aid in the reader's attention, visualizing, or comfort zones? If it doesn't have any, how could it be better by adding some? (Answer one of those two questions on the flap above.)

## ALLUSION & IMAGERY



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# Metaphor & Simile

Here's the easy part, which might be review for you:

- **Figurative language** is when words are used to convey non-literal meanings. (Similes and metaphors are two types of figurative language.)
- **Similes** are comparisons using "like" or "as"
- **Metaphors** are comparisons without "like" or "as".

Here are a few quick examples:

- **Simile:** "A Republic whose history, like the path of the just, is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (William Jennings Bryan)
- **Metaphor:** "But there are many mountains left to climb. We will not rest until every American enjoys the fullness of freedom, dignity, and opportunity as our birthright" (Ronald Reagan).

## Extended Metaphors

An **extended metaphor** is a comparison that lasts across several sentences. It might last in less than one paragraph, or for several of them.

Extended metaphors enjoy the "perks" of other figurative language, and then some:

- Creates an **image** in the listener's mind
- Helps the audience **remember** the point, since an idea is repeated or built up over time
- Can make a complex concept **easier** to understand

**Here are a few examples from speeches and other genres:**

- "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players; They have their exits and their entrances; And one man in his time plays many parts" (Shakespeare, As You Like It)
- "But soft! What light through yonder window breaks? It is the East, and Juliet is the sun!" (Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet)
- "America has tossed its cap over the great wall of space!" (John F. Kennedy)
- "This... decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice. It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of their captivity" (Dr. King)

# Example

**Here's a longer example.** *Can you identify all the ways that the extended metaphor appears or is used? Highlight every instance that you see.*

"In a sense we've come to our nation's capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men, yes, black men as well as white men, would be guaranteed the 'unalienable Rights' of 'Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.' It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note, insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check, a check which has come back marked 'insufficient funds'" (Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., "I Have a Dream" speech).

**Notice that this extended metaphor...**

- Stretches across five sentences
- Uses a lot of synonyms; it's not redundant
- Isn't random; it helps illustrate a larger point about what America "owed" black Americans
- (Also has *allusion*, by the way!)

**NEXT STEP:** Extended metaphors take more effort to identify (while reading) or to draft (while writing).

- First, see if your speech already has one.
- If not, the next step is to see if there are any similes or metaphors that you could turn INTO one by making it longer.
- Don't already see one? Write an extended metaphor on the blank flap above that COULD go in this speech.

## EXTENDED METAPHORS



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# Propaganda Techniques

**Propaganda techniques are improper appeals to emotion** used for the purpose of swaying the opinions of an audience; they also include **misuse of facts, such as leaving something out or being vague**. They can be tame and meant to persuade, or they can be manipulative in an unfair way.

(By the way, all the examples given on this flap are from REAL speeches or commercials. I didn't include the names to protect the speakers' identities.)

## Some of these techniques aren't THAT bad...

- **Beautiful people:** showing celebs or beautiful people to make you want to be like them
  - *Example: (When car commercials show seemingly rich, attractive people driving luxury cars)*
- **Common man:** The opposite of beautiful people; appealing to the normal person who is "just like you"
  - *Example: (When commercials for medicine show a normal, everyday person in pain who needs help)*
- **Flag-waving:** Using patriotism to one's advantage
  - *Example: (When commercials wave an American flag or do patriotic things that are off-topic)*
- **Loaded words:** Purposely using the right synonym to evoke the most (positive or negative) emotion possible
  - *Example: "Built Ford Tough" sounds manly or durable and may appeal to those who drive trucks*
- **Nostalgia:** Making us yearn for the past or "good old days", such as returning to past ways
  - *Example: (An ad features old-time football players creating the first half-time; some cute girls show up with sodas)*
- **Testimonials:** When a celebrity OR normal person endorses an action/product (to add to its credibility)
  - *Example: (When Michael Jordan appears on a Hanes commercial, or when a "real user" tells how a product changed his/her life)*

**NEXT STEP:** First, check to see if your speech uses any propaganda techniques. If so, ask yourself if you can remove it OR if it needs revision; make sure it doesn't cross a line! **On the blank flap above**, write an example of a propaganda technique in your speech, OR write one that you've seen in your lifetime.

## Other techniques are mildly inappropriate or situational...

- **Bandwagon:** Using peer pressure to make you want to join in what a larger group is doing
  - *Example: (When a deodorant company tells you to "smell like a man"...)*
- **Card-stacking:** Only "piling on" or stacking the good reasons and ignoring the negative facts (or vice versa!)
  - *Example: (When a commercial to join the military advertises travel and learning opportunities, and doesn't mention length of commitment or danger!)*
- **Glittering generalities:** Vaguely talking about something in a positive light without getting specific with details.
  - *Example: When politicians say "Yes we can!"*
- **Overpromising:** Promising more to the audience than you can actually guarantee
  - *Example: "If I am elected, everybody will have a job, I guarantee it."*
- **Oversimplification:** Making something seem more simple than it actually is, ignoring its complexity or full truth
  - *Example: "To blame the current situation on any single policy platform, administration, or military operation is a comically absurd oversimplification."*
- **Quotes out of context:** Only giving some of the quote, fact, or story instead of the whole thing
  - *Example: A movie review originally said, "The action in this fast-paced, hysterically overproduced and surprisingly entertaining film is as realistic as a Road Runner cartoon." But the quote was cut down to "Hysterically... entertaining."*

## Some techniques are downright bad...

- **Ad hominem attacks:** personal attacks and/or name-calling instead of attacking the argument itself, which is usually unprofessional and may "cross a line"
  - *Example: "He's not a great athlete. He's a fraud, a cheat, and a liar."*
- **Fear tactics:** Purposely scaring the audience into doing or avoiding something. (Fear tactics often use hyperbole or other propaganda too, which is why they're not okay.)
  - *Example: "The worst thing we could do is go back to the very same policies that created this mess in the first place... be afraid of the future..."*

# USE WITH CAUTION: PROPAGANDA



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# Logical Fallacies

Fallacies are similar to, but more serious than, propaganda techniques. **Fallacies are flaws in logic or reasoning.** (Propaganda is more about misuse of emotion or facts.)

Although fallacies get used all the time, **they're rarely considered acceptable.** If you can successfully call someone out on using one, then it weakens their argument!

**Here are some of the most common, serious fallacies** to watch out for when you read, write, and listen:

- 
- **Begging the question:** The argument is based on a flawed assumption, or uses a premise to support itself (which makes zero sense).
    - *Example: "Freedom of speech is important because we should be allowed to talk freely."*
  - **Confirmation bias:** Selectively reading, hearing or noticing ONLY the things that support your existing opinion (ignoring evidence for the other side).
    - *Example: Reading a study and only picking up on the facts that help your side, even though the article is mostly against your side.*
  - **Correlation vs. Causation (a.k.a. Post hoc fallacy):** Saying that one thing causes the other when it actually doesn't; maybe they're only somewhat related.
    - *Example: Saying that "smoking causes cancer" can be true, but technically it isn't always true. They are correlated, and smoking CAN cause cancer, but it's not a perfect causation relationship 100% of the time.*
  - **Extrapolation:** Making huge predictions about the future based on insufficient evidence/data. This is a type of exaggeration or hyperbole.
    - *Example: Arguing that the economy is "going" to fall apart if a certain candidate is elected, if we really can't prove it.*
  - **False Dichotomy (a.k.a. Either/Or fallacy):** Someone oversimplifies and presents an issue as only having two options, when there really might be more; this is often used to scare someone into making a decision. This strategy ignores all forms of compromise or other alternatives.
    - *Example: Arguing that there are only two candidates to vote for, when there may be third-party candidates or other options.*

- **Faulty comparison:** Comparing two things that are too different to make it a fair comparison, OR making a comparison that is illogical. (This can overlap with name-calling in some circumstances.)
  - *Example: Arguing that broccoli has less fat than a chocolate bar is not only obvious, but it's a bit unfair because they're completely different foods.*
  - *Example: It's not okay to call someone "like Hitler" who really isn't!*
- **Guilt by association:** Saying that one person or thing is guilty just because something/someone else is guilty. (This can overlap with stereotyping.)
  - *Example: Saying that someone is a criminal just because their brother is.*
- **Hasty generalization:** Making a decision, assumption, or sweeping generalization too soon, based on a stereotype or insufficient evidence.
  - *Example: Based on this one bad cookie, all the other types of cookies made by that company are also bad.*
- **Red herring:** Distracting an opponent/audience with facts or ideas that are off-topic or not accurate; this can include using a distracting *appeal to pity* or a misleading *fear tactic* to distract from the real topic.
  - *Example: If two candidates are discussing the economy in a debate, and one candidate derails the topic on purpose to avoid answering it.*
- **Slippery slope:** Claiming that one action step will quickly escalate to much more significant ones, even if there's no evidence that it'll actually happen.
  - *Example: Claiming that allowing refugees into a country will escalate into them taking over the country (when that's not true).*
- **Tu Quoque ("You too"):** Arguing that someone's argument is invalid because they don't follow their own advice, or they don't meet their own criteria.
  - *Example: Since my gym teacher weighs 500 pounds, I don't have to listen to his advice to get 30 minutes of exercise daily.*

**NEXT STEP:** On the blank flap above, tell me if there are any fallacies in the speech right now. If there **ARE**, then tell me how they could be fixed, removed, or revised; if there are **NOT**, then write a fake example of one that **COULD** have gone in this speech.

## Glossary

Here's some of the big vocabulary words or phrases from this booklet, in order of appearance. **Can you define all of these?**

1. Rhetoric
2. Rhetorical Devices
3. Ethos
4. Pathos
5. Logos
6. Call to action
7. Parallelism
8. Parallel structure
9. Anaphora
10. Epistrophe
11. Antithesis
12. Chiasmus
13. Hypothetical question
14. Hypophora
15. Cadence
16. Allusion
17. Imagery
18. Sensory detail
19. Figurative language
20. Simile
21. Metaphor
22. Extended metaphor
23. Propaganda
24. Logical Fallacies

## Self-Assessment

1. What are the top five things you have learned from this booklet?
2. How have you grown or changed as a speechwriter (or maybe even ?)
3. What changes have you made to your writing since the first draft? (How has the quality of your speech improved?)
4. Is there anything that you still don't understand, OR that you need help with in your writing?
5. Is there anything else you want me to know about you, this experience, or your current draft of writing?