

Project: Persuasive Essay: Thomas Paine's Use of Persuasion

Assignment: Choose a contemporary issue that is of national concern. Write a 500 word essay that persuades readers that they should be concerned as well. Use rhetorical appeals similar to those used in *The American Crisis*. Make sure you provide evidence to support your argument.

Rhetorical Devices

Alliteration- repetition of initial consonant sound

The initial consonant sound is usually repeated in two neighbouring words (sometimes also in words that are not next to each other). Alliteration draws attention to the phrase and is often used for emphasis.

Examples:

- for the greater good of ... (1)
- safety and security (1)
- share a continent but not a country (2)

Allusion- indirect reference to a person, event or piece of literature

Allusion is used to explain or clarify a complex problem. Note that allusion works best if you keep it short and refer to something the reader / audience is familiar with, e.g.:

- famous people
- history
- (Greek) mythology
- literature
- the bible

If the audience is familiar with the event or person, they will also know background and context. Thus, just a few words are enough to create a certain picture (or scene) in the readers' minds. The advantages are as follows:

- We don't need lengthy explanations to clarify the problem.
- The reader becomes active by reflecting on the analogy.
- The message will stick in the reader's mind.

Examples:

- the Scrooge Syndrome (allusion on the rich, greedy and mean Ebenezer Scrooge from Charles Dickens' "Christmas Carol")

- The software included a Trojan Horse. (allusion on the Trojan horse from Greek mythology)
- Plan ahead. It was not raining when Noah built the Ark. (Richard Cushing) (allusion on the biblical Ark of Noah)

Anaphora- successive clauses or sentences start with the same word(s)

The same word or phrase is used to begin successive clauses or sentences. Thus, the reader's / listener's attention is drawn directly to the message of the sentence.

Example:

- Every child must be taught these principles. Every citizen must uphold them. And every immigrant, by embracing these ideals, makes our country more, not less, American. (2)
- If we had no winter, the spring would not be so pleasant; if we did not sometimes taste of adversity, prosperity would not be so welcome. (Anne Bradstreet)
- The beginning of wisdom is silence. The second step is listening. (unknown)
- A man without ambition is dead. A man with ambition but no love is dead. A man with ambition and love for his blessings here on earth is ever so alive. (Pearl Bailey)

Antithesis- contrasting relationship between two ideas

Antithesis emphasises the contrast between two ideas. The structure of the phrases / clauses is usually similar in order to draw the reader's / listener's attention directly to the contrast.

Examples:

- That's one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind. (Neil Armstrong)
- To err is human; to forgive, divine. (Pope)
- It is easier for a father to have children than for children to have a real father. (Pope)

Hyperbole- deliberate exaggeration

Used sparingly, hyperbole effectively draws the attention to a message that you want to emphasise.

Example:

- I was so hungry, I could eat an elephant.
- I have told you a thousand times.

Hypophora- question raised and answered by the author / speaker

The author / speaker raises a question and also gives an answer to the question. Hypophora is used to get the audience's attention and make them curious. Often the question is raised at the beginning of a paragraph and answered in the course of that paragraph. Hypophora can also be used, however, to introduce a new area of discussion.

Example:

- Why is it better to love than be loved? It is surer. (Sarah Guitry)
- How many countries have actually hit [...] the targets set at Rio, or in Kyoto in 1998, for cutting greenhouse-gas emissions? Precious few. (6)

Metaphor -figurative expression

Metaphor compares two different things in a figurative sense. Unlike in a simile (A is like B.), "like" is not used in metaphor (A is B.).

Example:

- Truths are first clouds, then rain, then harvest and food. (Henry Ward Beecher)
- Through much of the last century, America's faith in freedom and democracy was a rock in a raging sea. Now it is a seed upon the wind, taking root in many nations. (2)

Parallelism-parallel sentence structure

Successive clauses or sentences are similarly structured. This similarity makes it easier for the reader / listener to concentrate on the message.

Example:

- We are bound by ideals that move us beyond our backgrounds, lift us above our interest, and teach us what it means to be citizens. (2)
- The mediocre teacher tells, The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires. (William A. Ward)
- The mistakes of the fool are known to the world, but not to himself. The mistakes of the wise man are known to himself, but not to the world. (Charles Caleb Colton)
- Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I may remember. Involve me and I will learn. (Benjamin Franklin)

Personification-attribution of human characteristics to animals, inanimate objects or abstractions

Animals, inanimate objects or abstractions are represented as having human characteristics (behaviour, feelings, character etc.). Personification can make a narration more interesting and lively.

Examples:

- Why these two countries would remain at each other's throat for so long. (3)
- I closed the door, and my stubborn car refused to open it again.
- The flowers nodded their heads as if to greet us.
- The frogs began their concert.

Repetition-repeating words or phrases

Words or phrases are repeated throughout the text to emphasise certain facts or ideas.

Examples:

- Down, down, down. Would the fall never come to an end! »I wonder how many miles I've fallen by this time?« she said aloud. [...]
- Down, down, down. There was nothing else to do, so Alice soon began talking again. [...] (5)
-
- America, at its best, matches a commitment to principle with a concern for civility. A civil society demands from each of us good will and respect, fair dealing and forgiveness. [...]
- America, at its best, is also courageous. Our national courage [...]
- America, at its best, is compassionate. In the quiet of American conscience, we know that deep, persistent poverty is unworthy of our nation's promise. [...] (2)

Rhetorical Question- question without a direct answer

The author / speaker raises a question, but doesn't answer it directly as he/she sees the answer (usually Yes or No) as obvious.

Rhetorical questions are used to provoke, emphasise or argue.

Examples:

- When public money brings windfalls to a few, why should the state not take a share? (6)
- But was the best way to win them over to threaten to ignore them altogether? Like so many things this week, the administration's diplomacy needs a smoother touch. (6) (Note that the sentence following the question is not an answer to it.)

Simile- direct comparison

Two things are compared directly by using 'like' (A is like B.).

Other possibilities are for example:

- A is (not) like B
- A is more/less than B
- A is as ... as B
- A is similar to B
- A is ..., so is B
- A does ..., so does B

Examples:

- concrete box-style buildings are spreading like inkblots (3)
- The rabbit-hole went straight on like a tunnel (5)
- Personality is to a man what perfume is to a flower. (Charles Schwab)
- My friend is as good as gold.

Understatement- weaken or soften a statement

A statement is deliberately weakened to sound ironical or softened to sound more polite.

Note that understatement is a common feature of the English language (especially British English) used in everyday-life situations.

Examples:

- I know a little about running a company. (a successful businessman might modestly say.)
- I think we have slightly different opinions on this topic. (instead of: I don't agree with you at all.)

Assignment: Choose a contemporary issue that is of national concern. Write a 500 word essay that persuades readers that they should be concerned as well. Use rhetorical appeals similar to those used in *The American Crisis*. Make sure you provide evidence to support your argument.

What is an issue that you care deeply about?

What must we all do to help/fix/solve/end this issue?

The outlining of this paper will depend upon the issue you select. Below is a general idea of what you will need in the different sections of your essay.

General Outline Idea

Introduction: Give background about the issue. End with a clear thesis statement that tells the audience what they **MUST DO!**

Body Paragraphs (you should have two or three):

These paragraphs will help you to build your case. Use evidence and examples that prove this is an issue. Make sure to explain what will happen if we do nothing. Talk about what things will be like if we do follow your advice.

Conclusion:

End by telling the audience exactly what they must do to solve this issue.