

The History and Theory of Rhetoric: An Introduction

7th Edition

Instructor's Manual

James A. Herrick
Daniel DeVinney

Chapter One

An Overview of Rhetoric

Chapter One presents several defining characteristics of rhetorical discourse, as well as discussing the social functions of the art of rhetoric. I have also sought, in the opening chapter, to emphasize the tensions that always have surrounded efforts to define rhetoric.

Review Questions

1. How are the following terms defined in the chapter?
 - a. Rhetoric: The use of symbol systems to achieve the purpose of persuasion, clarity, beauty, or mutual understanding.
 - b. The Art of Rhetoric: The study and practice of effective symbolic expression.
 - c. Rhetorical Discourse: Messages crafted according to the principles of rhetoric.
 - d. Rhetor: Anyone engaged in preparing or presenting rhetorical discourse.
 - e. Symbol: Any mark, sign, sound, or gesture that represents something based on social agreement.
 - f. Rhetorical Theory: The systematic presentation of rhetoric's principles, descriptions of its various functions, and explanations of how rhetoric achieves its goals.
 - g. The Argumentative Hypothesis: A view that the entire purpose of public reasoning, of making arguments, is to demonstrate to others that we have support for our own views.
2. What are the marks or characteristics of rhetorical *discourse* discussed in this chapter?

Rhetorical discourse characteristically is:

 - Planned
 - Adapted to an audience
 - Shaped by human motives
 - Responsive to a situation
 - Persuasion seeking
 - Concerned with contingent issues
3. Which specific resources of language are discussed under the heading "Rhetoric is Planned"?
 - *Inventio* (invention): the process of discovering the arguments and evidence for a case.
 - *Dispositio* (arrangement): effective ordering of arguments and appeals.
 - *Elocutio* (style): the process of finding the right linguistic style for one's message.
4. What *social functions* of the art of rhetoric are discussed in this chapter?

Six social functions of rhetoric are:

 - Ideas are tested
 - Advocacy is assisted
 - Power is distributed
 - Facts are discovered
 - Knowledge is shaped
 - Communities are built

5. Which three types of power are enhanced by an understanding of the art of rhetoric?

Three types of power enhanced by rhetoric are:

- Personal Power
- Psychological Power
- Political Power

6. What is meant by the statement that rhetoric addresses contingent issues?

Rhetoric addresses issues that are undetermined or that have alternative possibilities. Rhetoric does not address issues that are sure to happen or sure not to happen (i.e. the sun rising tomorrow, or France becoming the fifty-first American state). Rhetoric addresses issues that need deliberation where a case can be made for one side of an issue and against other options.

Discussion Questions

1. The following artifacts, Abraham Lincoln's "Second Inaugural Address" and Emily Dickinson's poem "Success Is Counted Sweetest," were written at about the same time, and each is written with reference to the Civil War. The two pieces are often held to represent two different types of discourse: Lincoln's address is categorized as rhetoric, while Dickinson's work fits best into the category of poetry. Thinking back on the characteristics of rhetorical discourse discussed in this chapter, what case could be made, if any, for distinguishing Lincoln's work from Dickinson's? Do they belong in different literary categories? Refer back to the resources of language—argument, appeal, arrangement, and artistic devices—in thinking about these two pieces. Does each employ all four resources?

Theorists have long debated what differentiates rhetoric from poetic discourse. Certainly, many linguistic devices and strategies are common to each. It may help the discussion to point out:

- a) The instrumental or practical role of rhetoric. Is there any difference in what Lincoln and Dickinson might be hoping to accomplish through their writing?
- b) Rhetoric's relationship to an audience whose values must be attended to in composing rhetoric. Did Dickinson write with a particular audience in mind? If so, what effect is an audience likely to have had on her writing?
- c) The author's relationship to what she or he has written when composing rhetoric or poetry.
- d) Rhetoric such as Lincoln's speech clearly is adapted to a particular audience and set of circumstances. Is Dickinson's poem as well?

Ask students whether the distinction between rhetoric and poetry be defended as a genuine one.

2. If rhetoric accomplishes the benefits and performs the functions discussed in this chapter, it might follow that rhetorical training should be a central component in education. Has training in rhetoric or some related discipline been part of your educational experience? Should education focus more on the skills that make up the art of rhetoric?

Answers for this question will vary greatly and depend on students' past educational experiences.

Emphasize the benefits of rhetoric in order to get students to think about what an education in the art

of rhetoric might do for them personally. You then might consider asking them what a world with more education in rhetoric might look like? Would it look better?

3. Is rhetoric pervasive in private and social life, as the chapter suggests? In what realms of life, if any, does rhetoric appear to have little or no part to play? Where is its influence greatest, in your estimation? Where is it present, but hidden?

One of the traditional examples of rhetoric is in politics and in public. This is usually pretty easy for students to grasp, but try to get them to think about other places where persuasion is important. What recent experiences have they tried to be persuaded? You might direct them to conversations with friends, or get them to think about advertising.

4. Steven Mailloux has written that there are “oral, visual, written, digital, gestural” rhetorics. Which other types of rhetoric would you add to this list? What special types or genres would you include under the types you have added?

This question requires students to think outside of the box. Many of the things Mailloux lists are fundamental to communication and thus rhetoric. Ask students to think about what other things communicate meaning? Or might affect someone’s actions or beliefs?

5. Respond to the claim that rhetoric is important to the process of building community. Has it been your experience, when people come together to form a community, that ways of speaking and reasoning in common are an important part of that process? Could a greater understanding of the art of rhetoric enhance this process of building a community?

Ask students to first think about the kinds of communities they are a part of. Families, clubs, sports teams, churches, campus life, fraternities, and departments might all be good examples. Ask students how they speak differently in these different communities. Do they use different language with different groups? Prompt them to think about the difference in language and how that might shape a community identity.

6. Some people have criticized rhetoric for being manipulative. Do you believe that rhetoric is, by its very nature, manipulative? If not, what ethical guidelines might be important for constraining the practice of rhetoric so that it does not become a tool for manipulation?

The idea that rhetoric is manipulative has existed for thousands of years. Part of the goal of the course is to move beyond that idea to see how rhetoric shapes the world productively. Ask students to think about how we might make a more ethical rhetoric, or how we might rid rhetoric of its bad reputation. Does this mean common rules like rhetoric that argue for what you believe is true should be made? Would they be followed?

7. The following speech was delivered by Civil Rights activist Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer on August 22nd, 1964 to the Credentials Committee of the Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City, New Jersey. Though she lacked formal rhetorical training, the speech stands as a powerful example of morally informed oratory. Drawing on this chapter’s discussion of the social functions of argument, write a one-page analysis of how Mrs. Hamer’s testimony before the committee illustrates any two of those functions.

Exam Questions

1. Understanding the art of rhetoric enhances personal power, _____ power, and political power.

Answer: Psychological

2. _____ are rhetorical elements that add form, beauty, and force to symbolic expression.

Answer: Aesthetics

3. _____ is defined as discourse characterized by reasons advanced to support a conclusion, as well as reasoning made public with the goal of influencing an audience.

Answer: Argument

4. One of the social functions of rhetoric is that it builds _____, which means that rhetoric is instrumental in creating beliefs and values within a group of people.

Answer: Community

5. Richard Lanham has defined rhetoric as the study of “how attention is created and allocated.” For this reason, he speaks of rhetoric as teaching the _____.

Answer: economics of attention

6. *Dispositio* or _____ refers to the planned ordering of a message to achieve the effect of persuasion, clarity, or beauty.

Answer: Arrangement

7. Which of the following is **not** considered one of the six social functions of rhetoric?
- a. Ideas are tested
 - b. Knowledge is shaped
 - c. Advocacy is assisted
 - d. Wealth is distributed

Answer: d. Wealth is distributed

8. The word *rhetor* can be defined as:
- a. A type of rhetorical argument
 - b. Anyone engaged in preparing or presenting rhetorical discourse
 - c. An abbreviation for rhetorical discourse
 - d. The name of the ancient Greek city that was the birthplace of rhetoric

Answer: b. Anyone engaged in preparing or presenting rhetorical discourse

9. Which of the following is **not** one of the terms Cicero uses to highlight the planned nature of rhetoric?
- a. *Elocutio*
 - b. *Dispositio*
 - c. *Accio*
 - d. *Inventio*

Answer: c. *Accio*

10. After many instances of racial discrimination are covered in the news, a theater company decides to put on a performance in which a plea for racial harmony is advanced. Which attribute of rhetoric is highlighted from this example?
- a. Rhetoric as conciliatory
 - b. Rhetoric as discovering facts
 - c. Rhetoric as personal power
 - d. Rhetoric as responsive

Answer: d. Rhetoric as responsive

11. Rhetoric can be defined as:
- a. The systematic study and intentional practice of symbolic expression
 - b. The energy inherent in emotion and thought expressed through systems of signs
 - c. The study of how we organize and employ language effectively
 - d. All of the above

Answer: d. All of the above

12. The attribute most often associated with rhetoric is its pursuit of persuasion. Though some rhetorical texts try to be more persuasive than others. Which of the following is the most explicitly persuasive?
- a. A presidential candidate's campaign speech
 - b. A news report on a link between stress and childhood obesity
 - c. A scientific article on the amount of carbon emissions produced annually
 - d. A comedian's monologue on how bad airline food is

Answer: a. A presidential candidate's campaign speech

13. True or False: Issues of power and its distribution have always been central to rhetorical theory.

Answer: True

14. True or False: The term *rhetorical* refers to only language and symbol systems; areas such as architecture and sports are not considered rhetorical.

Answer: False

15. True or False: Concerns about the ethical implications of rhetorical persuasion have only recently developed and are largely due to its use in the political arena.

Answer: False

16. True or False: Rhetoric only addresses issues that need deliberation or issues in which a case can be made for one side and against another.

Answer: True

17. True or False: One social function of rhetoric is that it brings new facts to light through the clash of arguments.

Answer: True

18. True or False: Notes, key, melody, harmony, sound, and rhythm qualify as a system of rhetorical expression.

Answer: True

Terminology questions

Provide the term for the following definitions:

1. A system of belief, or a framework for interpreting the world. (**ideology**)
2. Any mark, sign, sound or gesture that communicates meaning based on social agreement. (**symbol**)
3. The systematic study and intentional practice of effective symbolic expression. (**rhetoric**)
4. A conclusion supported by reasons. Reasoning made public with the goal of influencing an audience. (**argument**)
5. Planned ordering of a message to achieve the greatest persuasive effect. (**arrangement**)

Short answer questions

1. What are six characteristics of rhetoric as a type of discourse?
2. What are the four resources of symbols discussed in Chapter One as assisting the goal of persuasion?
3. Rhetoric as an art performs several social functions. List the functions performed by the art of rhetoric.
4. What are the three types of power associated with rhetoric as discussed in Chapter One?

Briefly describe each.

Essay questions

1. In Chapter One a description of rhetorical *discourse* is advanced. Identify and describe the various characteristics that define the type of discourse called rhetoric. Provide examples of these characteristics in discourse, drawn either from your own experience or from the text.