

The book cover features a grid of colored rectangles. At the top is a wide orange bar. Below it, the left side is a large green rectangle containing the title and author's name. The right side of this section is a light blue rectangle. Below the green rectangle is a row of four dark red rectangles. The bottom half of the cover is a large red rectangle, with a light blue rectangle on its right side. At the very bottom is a dark red bar.

# A Handbook of Rhetorical Devices

Robert A. Harris

## **A Preface of Quotations**

Whoever desires for his writings or himself, what none can reasonably condemn, the favor of mankind, must add grace to strength, and make his thoughts agreeable as well as useful. Many complain of neglect who never tried to attract regard. It cannot be expected that the patrons of science or virtue should be solicitous to discover excellencies which they who possess them shade and disguise. Few have abilities so much needed by the rest of the world as to be caressed on their own terms; and he that will not condescend to recommend himself by external embellishments must submit to the fate of just sentiments meanly expressed, and be ridiculed and forgotten before he is understood. --Samuel Johnson

Men must be taught as if you taught them not; And things unknown propos'd as things forgot. --Alexander Pope

Style in painting is the same as in writing, a power over materials, whether words or colors, by which conceptions or sentiments are conveyed. --Sir Joshua Reynolds

Whereas, if after some preparatory grounds of speech by their certain forms got into memory, they were led to the praxis thereof in some chosen short book lessoned thoroughly to them, they might then forthwith proceed to learn the substance of good things, and arts in due order, which would bring the whole language quickly into their power. --John Milton

## **Introduction**

Good writing depends upon more than making a collection of statements worthy of belief, because writing is intended to be read by others, with minds different from your own. Your reader does not make the same mental connections you make; he does not see the world exactly as you see it; he is already flooded daily with thousands of statements demanding assent, yet which he knows or believes to be false, confused, or deceptive. If your writing is to get through to him--or even to be read and considered at all--it must be interesting, clear, persuasive, and memorable, so that he will pay attention to, understand, believe, and remember the ideas it communicates. To fulfill these requirements successfully, your work must have an appropriate and clear thesis, sufficient arguments and reasons supporting the thesis, a logical and progressive arrangement, and, importantly, an effective style.

While style is probably best learned through wide reading, comprehensive analysis and thorough practice, much can be discovered about effective writing through the study of some of the common and traditional devices of style and arrangement. By learning, practicing, altering, and perfecting them, and by testing their effects and nuances for yourself, these devices will help you to express yourself better and also teach you to see the interrelatedness of form and meaning, and the psychology of syntax, metaphor, and diction both in your own writing and in the works of others.

The rhetorical devices presented here generally fall into three categories: those involving emphasis, association, clarification, and focus; those involving physical organization, transition, and disposition or arrangement; and those involving decoration and variety. Sometimes a given device or trope will fall mainly into a single category, as for example an expletive is used mostly for emphasis; but more often the effects of a particular device are multiple, and a single one may operate in all three categories. Parallelism, for instance, helps to order, clarify, emphasize, and beautify a thought. Occasionally a device has certain effects not readily identifiable or explainable, so I have not always been able to say why or when certain ones are good or should be used. My recommendation is to practice them all and develop that sense in yourself which will tell you when and how to use them.

Lots of practice and experimentation are necessary before you will feel really comfortable with these devices, but too much practice in a single paper will most assuredly be disastrous. A journal or notebook is the best place to experiment; when a device becomes second nature to you, and when it no longer appears false or affected--when indeed it becomes genuinely built in to your writing rather than added on--then it may make its formal appearance in a paper. Remember that rhetorical devices are aids to writing and not ends of writing; you have no obligation to toss one into every paragraph. Further, if used carelessly or excessively or too frequently, almost any one of these devices will probably seem affected, dull, awkward, or mechanical. But with a little care and skill, developed by practice, anyone can master them, and their use will add not just beauty and emphasis and effectiveness to your writing, but a kind of freedom of thought and expression you never imagined possible.

Practice these; try them out. Do not worry if they sometimes ring false at first. Play with them--learn to manipulate and control your words and ideas--and eventually you will master the art of aggressive instruction: keeping the reader focused with anaphora, emphasizing a point with an expletive, explaining to him with a metaphor or simile, organizing your work in his mind with metabasis, answering his queries with hypophora or procatalepsis, balancing possibilities with antithesis. You will also have gone a long

way toward fulfilling the four requirements mentioned at the beginning: the devices of decoration and variety will help make your reader pay attention, the devices of organization and clarification will help him understand your points, the devices of association and some like procatalepsis will help him believe you, and the devices of emphasis, association, beauty, and organization will help him remember.

#### Resources

Of course, I modestly recommend my book, *Writing with Clarity and Style*, that contains more than 60 of the devices discussed below, and many sidebars on style and writing effectiveness. Get it from the publisher at [123Writing.com](http://123Writing.com) or get a used copy from [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com) here: [Writing With Clarity and Style](http://Amazon.com).

If you want a relatively inexpensive book that through a rather dramatic coincidence includes more than half of the devices described here (and none of the many others not described here), and covers many of the same points, [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com) has *Rhetorical Devices: A Handbook and Activities for Student Writers*.

For really serious students of rhetoric and style, I recommend *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student* by Edward P. J. Corbett and Robert J. Connors, now in its fourth edition. It's the standard and covers aspects of style as well as the tropes.

## RHETORICAL DEVICES

**1. A Sentential Adverb** is a single word or short phrase, usually interrupting normal syntax, used to lend emphasis to the words immediately proximate to the adverb. (We emphasize the words on each side of a pause or interruption in order to maintain continuity of the thought.) Compare:

- \* But the lake was not drained before April.
- \* But the lake was not, in fact, drained before April.

Sentential adverbs are most frequently placed near the beginning of a sentence, where important material has been placed:

\* All truth is not, indeed, of equal importance; but if little violations are allowed, every violation will in time be thought little. --Samuel Johnson

But sometimes they are placed at the very beginning of a sentence, thereby serving as signals that the whole sentence is especially important. In such cases the sentence should be kept as short as possible:

- \* In short, the cobbler had neglected his soul.

- \* Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life. --John 4:14 (NIV)

Or the author may show that he does not intend to underemphasize an objection or argument he rejects:

- \* To be sure, no one desires to live in a foul and disgusting environment. But neither do we want to desert our cities.

In a few instances, especially with short sentences, the sentential adverb can be placed last:

- \* It was a hot day indeed.

- \* Harold won, of course.

A common practice is setting off the sentential adverb by commas, which increases the emphasis on the surrounding words, though in many cases the commas are necessary for clarity as well and cannot be omitted. Note how the adverb itself is also emphasized:

- \* He without doubt can be trusted with a cookie.

- \* He, without doubt, can be trusted with a cookie.

A sentential adverb can emphasize a phrase:

- \* The Bradys, clearly a happy family, live in an old house with squeaky floors.

Transitional phrases, accostives, some adverbs, and other interrupters can be used for emphasizing portions of sentences, and therefore function as kinds of quasi-sentential adverbs in those circumstances.

- \* We find a few people, however, unwilling to come.

- \* "Your last remark," he said, "is impertinent."

- \* There is nothing, Sir, too little for so little a creature as man. --Samuel Johnson

Some useful sentential adverbs include the following: in fact, of course, indeed, I think, without doubt, to be sure, naturally, it seems, after all, for all that, in brief, on the whole, in short, to tell the truth, in any event, clearly, I suppose, I hope, at least, assuredly, certainly, remarkably, importantly, definitely. In formal writing, avoid these and similar colloquial emphases: you know, you see, huh, get this. And it goes without saying that you should avoid the unprintable expletives.

**2. Asyndeton** consists of omitting conjunctions between words, phrases, or clauses. In a list of items, asyndeton gives the effect of unpremeditated multiplicity, of an extemporaneous rather than a labored account:

\* On his return he received medals, honors, treasures, titles, fame.

The lack of the "and" conjunction gives the impression that the list is perhaps not complete. Compare:

\* She likes pickles, olives, raisins, dates, pretzels.

\* She likes pickles, olives, raisins, dates, and pretzels.

Sometimes an asyndetic list is useful for the strong and direct climactic effect it has, much more emphatic than if a final conjunction were used. Compare:

\* They spent the day wondering, searching, thinking, understanding.

\* They spent the day wondering, searching, thinking, and understanding.

In certain cases, the omission of a conjunction between short phrases gives the impression of synonymy to the phrases, or makes the latter phrase appear to be an afterthought or even a substitute for the former. Compare:

\* He was a winner, a hero.

\* He was a winner and a hero.

Notice also the degree of spontaneity granted in some cases by asyndetic usage. "The moist, rich, fertile soil," appears more natural and spontaneous than "the moist, rich, and fertile soil - "

Generally, asyndeton offers the feeling of speed and concision to lists and phrases and clauses, but occasionally the effect cannot be so easily categorized. Consider the "flavor" of these examples:

\* If, as is the case, we feel responsibility, are ashamed, are frightened, at transgressing the voice of conscience, this implies that there is One to whom we are responsible, before whom we are ashamed, whose claims upon us we fear. --John Henry Newman

\* In books I find the dead as if they were alive; in books I foresee things to come; in books warlike affairs are set forth; from books come forth the laws of peace. --Richard de Bury

\* We certainly have within us the image of some person, to whom our love and veneration look, in whose smile we find our happiness, for whom we yearn, towards whom we direct our pleadings, in whose anger we are troubled and waste away. --John Henry Newman

**3. Polysyndeton** is the use of a conjunction between each word, phrase, or clause, and is thus structurally the opposite of asyndeton. The rhetorical effect of polysyndeton, however, often shares with that of asyndeton a feeling of multiplicity, energetic enumeration, and building up.

\* They read and studied and wrote and drilled. I laughed and played and talked and flunked.

Use polysyndeton to show an attempt to encompass something complex:

\* The water, like a witch's oils, / Burnt green, and blue, and white. --S. T. Coleridge

\* [He] pursues his way, / And swims, or sinks, or wades, or creeps, or flies. --John Milton

The multiple conjunctions of the polysyndetic structure call attention to themselves and therefore add the effect of persistence or intensity or emphasis to the other effect of multiplicity. The repeated use of "nor" or "or" emphasizes alternatives; repeated use of "but" or "yet" stresses qualifications. Consider the effectiveness of these:

\* And to set forth the right standard, and to train according to it, and to help forward all students towards it according to their various capacities, this I conceive to be the business of a University. --John Henry Newman

\* We have not power, nor influence, nor money, nor authority; but a willingness to persevere, and the hope that we shall conquer soon.

In a skilled hand, a shift from polysyndeton to asyndeton can be very impressive:

\* Behold, the Lord maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof. And it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the taker of usury, so with the giver of usury to him. --Isaiah 24:1-2 (KJV)

**4. Understatement** deliberately expresses an idea as less important than it actually is, either for ironic emphasis or for politeness and tact. When the writer's audience can be expected to know the true nature of a fact which might be rather difficult to describe adequately in a brief space, the writer may choose to understate the fact as a means of employing the reader's own powers of description. For example, instead of endeavoring to describe in a few words the horrors and destruction of the 1906 earthquake in San Francisco, a writer might state:

\* The 1906 San Francisco earthquake interrupted business somewhat in the downtown area.

The effect is not the same as a description of destruction, since understatement like this necessarily smacks of flippancy to some degree; but occasionally that is a desirable effect. Consider these usages:

\* Henry and Catherine were married, the bells rang, and everybody smiled . . . . To begin perfect happiness at the respective ages of twenty-six and eighteen is to do pretty well . . . . --Jane Austen

\* Last week I saw a woman flayed, and you will hardly believe how much it altered her person for the worse. --Jonathan Swift

\* You know I would be a little disappointed if you were to be hit by a drunk driver at two a.m., so I hope you will be home early.

In these cases the reader supplies his own knowledge of the facts and fills out a more vivid and personal description than the writer might have.

In a more important way, understatement should be used as a tool for modesty and tactfulness. Whenever you represent your own accomplishments, and often when you just describe your own position, an understatement of the facts will help you to avoid the charge of egotism on the one hand and of self-interested puffery on the other. We are always more pleased to discover a thing greater than promised rather than less than promised--or as Samuel Johnson put it, "It is more pleasing to see smoke brightening into



flame, than flame sinking into smoke." And it goes without saying that a person modest of his own talents wins our admiration more easily than an egotist. Thus an expert geologist might say, "Yes, I know a little about rocks," rather than, "Yes, I'm an expert about rocks." (An even bigger expert might raise his eyebrows if he heard that.)

Understatement is especially useful in dealing with a hostile audience or in disagreeing with someone, because the statement, while carrying the same point, is much less offensive. Compare:

\* The second law of thermodynamics pretty much works against the possibility of such an event.

\* The second law of thermodynamics proves conclusively that that theory is utterly false and ridiculous.

Remember, the goal of writing is to persuade, not to offend; once you insult or put off your opponent, objector, or disbeliever, you will never persuade him of anything, no matter how "obviously wrong" he is or how clearly right you are. The degree and power of pride in the human heart must never be underestimated. Many people are unwilling to hear objections of any kind, and view disagreement as a sign of contempt for their intellect. The use of understatement allows you to show a kind of respect for your reader's understanding. You have to object to his belief, but you are sympathetic with his position and see how he might have come to believe it; therefore, you humbly offer to steer him right, or at least to offer what you think is a more accurate view. Even those who agree with you already will be more persuaded because the modest thinker is always preferable to the flaming bigot. Compare these statements and consider what effect each would have on you if you read them in a persuasive article:

\* Anyone who says this water is safe to drink is either stupid or foolish. The stuff is poisoned with coliform bacteria. Don't those idiots know that?

\* My opponents think this water is drinkable, but I'm not sure I would drink it. Perhaps they are not aware of the dangerous bacterial count . . . [and so on, explaining the basis for your opinion].

**5. Litotes**, a particular form of understatement, is generated by denying the opposite or contrary of the word which otherwise would be used. Depending on the tone and context of the usage, litotes either retains the effect of understatement, or becomes an intensifying expression. Compare the difference between these statements:

\* Heat waves are common in the summer.

\* Heat waves are not rare in the summer.

Johnson uses litotes to make a modest assertion, saying "not improperly" rather than "correctly" or "best":

\* This kind of writing may be termed not improperly the comedy of romance. . . .

Occasionally a litotic construction conveys an ironic sentiment by its understatement:

\* We saw him throw the buckets of paint at his canvas in disgust, and the result did not perfectly represent his subject, Mrs. Jittery.

Usually, though, litotes intensifies the sentiment intended by the writer, and creates the effect of strong feelings moderately conveyed.

\* Hitting that telephone pole certainly didn't do your car any good.

\* If you can tell the fair one's mind, it will be no small proof of your art, for I dare say it is more than she herself can do. --Alexander Pope

\* A figure lean or corpulent, tall or short, though deviating from beauty, may still have a certain union of the various parts, which may contribute to make them on the whole not displeasing. --Sir Joshua Reynolds

\* He who examines his own self will not long remain ignorant of his failings.

\* Overall the flavors of the mushrooms, herbs, and spices combine to make the dish not at all disagreeable to the palate.

But note that, as George Orwell points out in "Politics and the English Language," the "not un-" construction (for example, "not unwilling") should not be used indiscriminately. Rather, find an opposite quality which as a word is something other than the quality itself with an "un" attached. For instance, instead of, "We were not unvictorious," you could write, "We were not defeated," or "We did not fail to win," or something similar.

**6. Parallelism** is recurrent syntactical similarity. Several parts of a sentence or several sentences are expressed similarly to show that the ideas in the parts or sentences are equal in importance. Parallelism also adds balance and rhythm and, most importantly, clarity to the sentence.

Any sentence elements can be paralleled, any number of times (though, of course, excess quickly becomes ridiculous). You might choose parallel subjects with parallel modifiers attached to them:

\* Ferocious dragons breathing fire and wicked sorcerers casting their spells do their harm by night in the forest of Darkness.

Or parallel verbs and adverbs:

\* I have always sought but seldom obtained a parking space near the door.

\* Quickly and happily he walked around the corner to buy the book.

Or parallel verbs and direct objects:

\* He liked to eat watermelon and to avoid grapefruit.

Or just the objects:

\* This wealthy car collector owns three pastel Cadillacs, two gold Rolls Royces, and ten assorted Mercedes.

Or parallel prepositional phrases:

\* He found it difficult to vote for an ideal truth but against his own self interest.

\* The pilot walked down the aisle, through the door, and into the cockpit, singing "Up, Up, and Away."

Notice how paralleling rather long subordinate clauses helps you to hold the whole sentence clearly in your head:

\* These critics--who point out the beauties of style and ideas, who discover the faults of false constructions, and who discuss the application of the rules--usually help a lot in engendering an understanding of the writer's essay.

\* When, at the conclusion of a prolonged episode of agonizing thought, you decide to buy this car; when, after a hundred frantic sessions of begging stonefaced bankers for the money, you can obtain sufficient funds; and when, after two more years of impatience and frustration, you finally get a driver's license, then come see me and we will talk about a deal.

\* After you corner the market in Brazilian coffee futures, but before you manipulate the price through the ceiling, sit down and have a cup of coffee with me (while I can still afford it).

It is also possible to parallel participial, infinitive, and gerund phrases:

\* He left the engine on, idling erratically and heating rapidly.

\* To think accurately and to write precisely are interrelated goals.

\* She liked sneaking up to Ted and putting the ice cream down his back, because he was so cool about it.

In practice some combination of parts of speech or sentence elements is used to form a statement, depending as always on what you have to say. In addition, the parallelism, while it normally should be pretty close, does not have to be exact in its syntactical similarity. For example, you might write,

\* He ran up to the bookshelves, grabbed a chair standing nearby, stepped painfully on his tiptoes, and pulled the fifty-pound volume on top of him, crushing his ribs and impressing him with the power of knowledge.

Here are some other examples of parallelism:

\* I shall never envy the honors which wit and learning obtain in any other cause, if I can be numbered among the writers who have given ardor to virtue, and confidence to truth. --Samuel Johnson

\* They had great skill in optics, and had instructed him to see faults in others, and beauties in himself, that could be discovered by nobody else. . . . --Alexander Pope

\* For the end of a theoretical science is truth, but the end of a practical science is performance. --Aristotle

**7. Chiasmus** might be called "reverse parallelism," since the second part of a grammatical construction is balanced or paralleled by the first part, only in reverse order. Instead of an A,B structure (e.g., "learned unwillingly") paralleled by another A,B structure ("forgotten gladly"), the A,B will be followed by B,A ("gladly forgotten"). So instead of writing, "What is learned unwillingly is forgotten gladly," you could write, "What is learned unwillingly is gladly forgotten." Similarly, the parallel sentence, "What is now great was at first little," could be written chiasmically as, "What is now great was little at first." Here are some examples:

\* He labors without complaining and without bragging rests.

\* Polished in courts and hardened in the field, Renowned for conquest, and in council skilled. --Joseph Addison

\* For the Lord is a Great God . . . in whose hand are the depths of the earth; the peaks of the mountains are his also. --Psalm 95:4

Chiasmus is easiest to write and yet can be made very beautiful and effective simply by moving subordinate clauses around:

\* If you come to them, they are not asleep; if you ask and inquire of them, they do not withdraw themselves; they do not chide if you make mistakes; they do not laugh at you if you are ignorant. --Richard de Bury

Prepositional phrases or other modifiers can also be moved around to form chiastic structures. Sometimes the effect is rather emphatic:

\* Tell me not of your many perfections; of your great modesty tell me not either.

\* Just as the term "menial" does not apply to any honest labor, so no dishonest work can be called "prestigious."

At other times the effect is more subdued but still desirable. Compare the versions of these sentences, written first in chiastic and then in strictly parallel form. Which do you like better in each case?

\* On the way to school, my car ran out of gas; then it had a flat on the way home.

\* On the way to school, my car ran out of gas; then on the way home it had a flat.

\* Sitting together at lunch, the kids talked incessantly; but they said nothing at all sitting in the dentist's office.

\* Sitting together at lunch, the kids talked incessantly; but sitting in the dentist's office, they said nothing at all.

\* The computer mainframe is now on sale; available also at a discount is the peripheral equipment.

\* The computer mainframe is now on sale; the peripheral equipment is also available at a discount.

Chiasmus may be useful for those sentences in which you want balance, but which cannot be paralleled effectively, either because they are too short, or because the emphasis is placed on the wrong words. And sometimes a chiastic structure will just seem to "work" when a parallel one will not.

**8. Zeugma** includes several similar rhetorical devices, all involving a grammatically correct linkage (or yoking together) of two or more parts of speech by another part of speech. Thus examples of zeugmatic usage would include one subject with two (or more) verbs, a verb with two (or more) direct objects, two (or more) subjects with one verb, and so forth. The main benefit of the linking is that it shows relationships between ideas and actions more clearly.

In one form (prozeugma), the yoking word precedes the words yoked. So, for example, you could have a verb stated in the first clause understood in the following clauses:

- \* Pride opresseseth humility; hatred love; cruelty compassion. --Peacham
- \* Fred excelled at sports; Harvey at eating; Tom with girls.
- \* Alexander conquered the world; I, Minneapolis.

A more important version of this form (with its own name, diazeugma) is the single subject with multiple verbs:

- \* . . . It operated through the medium of unconscious self-deception and terminated in inveterate avarice. --Thomas Love Peacock
- \* Mr. Glowry held his memory in high honor, and made a punchbowl of his skull. --Ibid.
- \* This terrace . . . took in an oblique view of the open sea, and fronted a long track of level sea-coast . . . --Ibid.
- \* Fluffy rolled on her back, raised her paws, and meowed to be petted.

Notice that two or three verb phrases are the usual proportion. But if you have a lot to say about the actions of the subject, or if you want to show a sort of multiplicity of behavior or doings, you can use several verbs:

- \* When at Nightmare Abbey, he would condole with Mr. Glowry, drink Madeira with Scythrop, crack jokes with Mr. Hilary, hand Mrs. Hilary to the piano, take charge of her fan and gloves, and turn over her music with surprising dexterity, quote Revelations with Mr. Toobad, and lament the good old times of feudal darkness with the Transcendental Mr. Flosky. --Thomas Love Peacock

Two or more subordinate relative pronoun clauses can be linked prozeugmatically, with the noun becoming the yoking word:

\* His father, to comfort him, read him a Commentary on Ecclesiastes, which he had himself composed, and which demonstrated incontrovertibly that all is vanity. --Thomas Love Peacock

\* O books who alone are liberal and free, who give to all who ask of you and enfranchise all who serve you faithfully! --Richard de Bury

You could have two or more direct objects:

\* With one mighty swing he knocked the ball through the window and two spectators off their chairs.

\* He grabbed his hat from the rack in the closet, his gloves from the table near the door, and his car keys from the punchbowl.

Or a preposition with two objects:

\* Mr. Glowry was horror-struck by the sight of a round, ruddy face, and a pair of laughing eyes. --Thomas Love Peacock

Sometimes you might want to create a linkage in which the verb must be understood in a slightly different sense:

\* He grabbed his hat from the rack by the stairs and a kiss from the lips of his wife.

\* He smashed the clock into bits and his fist through the wall.

In hypozeugma the yoking word follows the words it yokes together. A common form is multiple subjects:

\* Hours, days, weeks, months, and years do pass away. --Sherry

\* The moat at its base, and the fens beyond comprised the whole of his prospect. --Peacock

\* To generate that much electricity and to achieve that kind of durability would require a completely new generator design.

It is possible also to hold off a verb until the last clause:

\* The little baby from his crib, the screaming lady off the roof, and the man from the flooded basement were all rescued.

Hypozeugma can be used with adjectives or adjective phrases, too. Here, Peacock uses two participial phrases, one past and one present:

\* Disappointed both in love and in friendship, and looking upon human learning as vanity, he had come to a conclusion that there was but one good thing in the world, videlicet, a good dinner . . . .

The utility of the zeugmatic devices lies partly in their economy (for they save repetition of subjects or verbs or other words), and partly in the connections they create between thoughts. The more connections between ideas you can make in an essay, whether those connections are simple transitional devices or more elaborate rhetorical ones, the fewer your reader will have to guess at, and therefore the clearer your points will be.

**9. Antithesis** establishes a clear, contrasting relationship between two ideas by joining them together or juxtaposing them, often in parallel structure. Human beings are inveterate systematizers and categorizers, so the mind has a natural love for antithesis, which creates a definite and systematic relationship between ideas:

- \* To err is human; to forgive, divine. --Pope
- \* That short and easy trip made a lasting and profound change in Harold's outlook.
- \* That's one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind. --Neil Armstrong

Antithesis can convey some sense of complexity in a person or idea by admitting opposite or nearly opposite truths:

- \* Though surprising, it is true; though frightening at first, it is really harmless.
- \* If we try, we might succeed; if we do not try, we cannot succeed.
- \* Success makes men proud; failure makes them wise.

Antithesis, because of its close juxtaposition and intentional

contrast of two terms or ideas, is also very useful for making relatively fine distinctions or for clarifying differences which might be otherwise overlooked by a careless thinker or casual reader:

- \* In order that all men may be taught to speak truth, it is necessary that all likewise should learn to hear it. --Samuel Johnson
- \* The scribes and Pharisees sit on Moses' seat; so practice and observe whatever they tell you, but not what they do; for they preach, but do not practice. --Matt. 23:2-3 (RSV)



\* I agree that it is legal; but my question was, Is it moral?

\* The advertisement indeed says that these shoes are the best, but it means that they are equal; for in advertising "best" is a parity claim and only "better" indicates superiority.

Note also that short phrases can be made antithetical:

\* Every man who proposes to grow eminent by learning should carry in his mind, at once, the difficulty of excellence and the force of industry; and remember that fame is not conferred but as the recompense of labor, and that labor, vigorously continued, has not often failed of its reward. --Samuel Johnson

**10. Anaphora** is the repetition of the same word or words at the beginning of successive phrases, clauses, or sentences, commonly in conjunction with climax and with parallelism:

\* To think on death it is a misery,/ To think on life it is a vanity;/ To think on the world verily it is,/ To think that here man hath no perfect bliss. --Peacham

\* In books I find the dead as if they were alive; in books I foresee things to come; in books warlike affairs are set forth; from books come forth the laws of peace. --Richard de Bury

\* Finally, we must consider what pleasantness of teaching there is in books, how easy, how secret! How safely we lay bare the poverty of human ignorance to books without feeling any shame! --Ibid.

\* The wish of the genuine painter must be more extensive: instead of endeavoring to amuse mankind with the minute neatness of his imitations, he must endeavor to improve them by the grandeur of his ideas; instead of seeking praise, by deceiving the superficial sense of the spectator, he must strive for fame by captivating the imagination. --Sir Joshua Reynolds

\* Slowly and grimly they advanced, not knowing what lay ahead, not knowing what they would find at the top of the hill, not knowing that they were so near to Disneyland.

\* They are the entertainment of minds unfurnished with ideas, and therefore easily susceptible of impressions; not fixed by principles, and therefore easily following the current of fancy; not informed by experience, and consequently open to every false suggestion and partial account. --Samuel Johnson

Anaphora can be used with questions, negations, hypotheses, conclusions, and subordinating conjunctions, although care must be taken not to become affected or to sound rhetorical and bombastic. Consider these selections:

\* Will he read the book? Will he learn what it has to teach him? Will he live according to what he has learned?

\* Not time, not money, not laws, but willing diligence will get this done.

\* If we can get the lantern lit, if we can find the main cave, and if we can see the stalagmites, I'll show you the one with the bat skeleton in it. be used for

Adverbs and prepositions can anaphora, too:

\* They are masters who instruct us without rod or ferule, without angry words, without clothes or money. --Richard de Bury

\* She stroked her kitty cat very softly, very slowly, very smoothly.

**11. Epistrophe** (also called antistrophe) forms the counterpart to anaphora, because the repetition of the same word or words comes at the end of successive phrases, clauses, or sentences:

\* Where affections bear rule, there reason is subdued, honesty is subdued, good will is subdued, and all things else that withstand evil, for ever are subdued. --Wilson

\* And all the night he did nothing but weep Philoclea, sigh Philoclea, and cry out Philoclea. --Philip Sidney

\* You will find washing beakers helpful in passing this course, using the gas chromatograph desirable for passing this course, and studying hours on end essential to passing this course.

Epistrophe is an extremely emphatic device because of the emphasis placed on the last word in a phrase or sentence. If you have a concept you wish to stress heavily, then epistrophe might be a good construction to use. The danger as usual lies in this device's tendency to become too rhetorical. Consider whether these are successful and effective or hollow and bombastic:

\* The cars do not sell because the engineering is inferior, the quality of materials is inferior, and the workmanship is inferior.

\* The energies of mankind are often exerted in pursuit, consolidation, and enjoyment; which is to say, many men spend their lives pursuing power, consolidating power, and enjoying power.

**12. Anadiplosis** repeats the last word of one phrase, clause, or sentence at or very near the beginning of the next. It can be generated in series for the sake of beauty or to give a sense of logical progression:

\* Pleasure might cause her read, reading might make her know,/ Knowledge might pity win, and pity grace obtain . . . . --Philip Sidney

Most commonly, though, anadiplosis is used for emphasis of the repeated word or idea, since repetition has a reinforcing effect:

\* They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water. --Jer. 2:13

\* The question next arises, How much confidence can we put in the people, when the people have elected Joe Doax?

\* This treatment plant has a record of uncommon reliability, a reliability envied by every other water treatment facility on the coast.

\* In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. --John 1:1

Notice how the main point of the sentence becomes immediately clear by repeating the same word twice in close succession. There can be no doubt about the focus of your thought when you use anadiplosis.

**13. Conduplicatio** resembles anadiplosis in the repetition of a preceding word, but it repeats a *key word* (not just the last word) from a preceding phrase, clause, or sentence, at the beginning of the next.

- If this is the first time duty has moved him to act against his desires, he is a very weak man indeed. Duty should be cultivated and obeyed in spite of its frequent conflict with selfish wishes.
- The strength of the passions will never be accepted as an excuse for complying with them; the passions were designed for subjection, and if a man suffers them to get the upper hand, he then betrays the liberty of his own soul. --Alexander Pope
- She fed the goldfish every day with the new pellets brought from Japan. Gradually the goldfish began to turn a brighter orange than before.

Like anadiplosis, conduplicatio serves as an effective focusing device because with it you can pull out that important idea from the sentence before and put it clearly at the front of the new sentence, showing the reader just what he should be concentrating on. Since keeping the reader focused on your train of thought is critical to good writing, this device

can be especially helpful as a transitional connector when the previous sentence has two or more possible main points, only one of which is to be continued in the discussion. Suppose, for example, you have this sentence:

- Submitting a constitutional amendment to a popular vote through a general referendum always runs the risk of a campaign and a vote based upon the selfishness rather than the sense of justice of the voter.

Now, the next sentence could begin with, "Previous campaigns . . ." or "The strength of the appeal to selfish interests . . ." or "Therefore constitutional amendments are best left . . ." all depending on which concept you wish to develop. If you began the next sentence with, "But there certainly can be no doubt that the general referendum will continue to be exploited by those whose issues are aided by the innate selfishness of human beings," the reader would have to go a considerable distance into the sentence before he would find out exactly which idea is being carried forward and developed.

**14. Epanalepsis** repeats the beginning word of a clause or sentence at the end. The beginning and the end are the two positions of strongest emphasis in a sentence, so by having the same word in both places, you call special attention to it:

- Water alone dug this giant canyon; yes, just plain water.
- To report that your committee is still investigating the matter is to tell me that you have nothing to report.

Many writers use epanalepsis in a kind of "yes, but" construction to cite common ground or admit a truth and then to show how that truth relates to a more important context:

- Our eyes saw it, but we could not believe our eyes.
- The theory sounds all wrong; but if the machine works, we cannot worry about theory.
- In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world. -- John 16:33 (NASB)

**15. Hypophora** consists of raising one or more questions and then proceeding to answer them, usually at some length. A common usage is to ask the question at the beginning of a paragraph and then use that paragraph to answer it:

- There is a striking and basic difference between a man's ability to imagine something and an animal's failure. . . . Where is it that the animal falls short? We get a clue to the answer, I think, when Hunter tells us . . . . --Jacob Bronowski
- What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter? . . . What does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God. --Rom. 4:1,3 (NIV)

This is an attractive rhetorical device, because asking an appropriate question appears quite natural and helps to maintain curiosity and interest. You can use hypophora to

raise questions which you think the reader obviously has on his mind and would like to see formulated and answered:

- What behavior, then, is uniquely human? My theory is this . . . . --H. J. Campbell
- But what was the result of this move on the steel industry? The annual reports for that year clearly indicate. . . .

Hypophora can also be used to raise questions or to introduce material of importance, but which the reader might not have the knowledge or thought to ask for himself:

- How then, in the middle of the twentieth century, are we to define the obligation of the historian to his facts?..... The duty of the historian to respect his facts is not exhausted by . . . . --Edward Hallett Carr
- But it is certainly possible to ask, How hot is the oven at its hottest point, when the *average* temperature is 425 degrees? We learned that the peak temperatures approached . . . .

And hypophora can be used as a transitional or guiding device to change directions or enter a new area of discussion:

- But what are the implications of this theory? And how can it be applied to the present problem?
- How and why did caveat emptor develop? The question presents us with mysteries never fully answered. --Ivan L. Preston

Notice how a series of reasonable questions can keep a discussion lively and interesting:

- How do we know the FTC strategy is the best, particularly in view of the complaints consumerists have made against it? Isn't there some chance that greater penalties would amount to greater deterrents? Why not get the most consumer protection simultaneously with the most punishment to offenders by easing the requirements for guilt without easing the punishment? . . . It happens that that's been tried, and it didn't work very well. --Ivan L. Preston

In the above example, the writer went on for several paragraphs to discuss the case which "didn't work very well." It would also be possible for a writer to ask several questions and then answer them in an orderly way, though that has the danger of appearing too mechanical if not carefully done.

**16. Rhetorical question** (erotesis) differs from hypophora in that it is not answered by the writer, because its answer is obvious or obviously desired, and usually just a yes or no. It is used for effect, emphasis, or provocation, or for drawing a conclusionary statement from the facts at hand.

- But how can we expect to enjoy the scenery when the scenery consists entirely of garish billboards?
- . . . For if we lose the ability to perceive our faults, what is the good of living on? -- Marcus Aurelius

- Is justice then to be considered merely a word? Or is it whatever results from the bartering between attorneys?

Often the rhetorical question and its implied answer will lead to further discussion:

- Is this the end to which we are reduced? Is the disaster film the highest form of art we can expect from our era? Perhaps we should examine the alternatives presented by independent film maker Joe Blow . . . .
- I agree the funding and support are still minimal, but shouldn't worthy projects be tried, even though they are not certain to succeed? So the plans in effect now should be expanded to include . . . . [Note: Here is an example where the answer "yes" is clearly desired rhetorically by the writer, though conceivably someone might say "no" to the question if asked straightforwardly.]

Several rhetorical questions together can form a nicely developed and directed paragraph by changing a series of logical statements into queries:

- We shrink from change; yet is there anything that can come into being without it? What does Nature hold dearer, or more proper to herself? Could you have a hot bath unless the firewood underwent some change? Could you be nourished if the food suffered no change? Do you not see, then, that change in yourself is of the same order, and no less necessary to Nature? --Marcus Aurelius

Sometimes the desired answer to the rhetorical question is made obvious by the discussion preceding it:

- The gods, though they live forever, feel no resentment at having to put up eternally with the generations of men and their misdeeds; nay more, they even show every possible care and concern for them. Are you, then, whose abiding is but for a moment, to lose patience--you who are yourself one of the culprits? -- Marcus Aurelius

When you are thinking about a rhetorical question, be careful to avoid sinking to absurdity. You would not want to ask, for example, "But is it right to burn down the campus and sack the bookstore?" The use of this device allows your reader to think, query, and conclude along with you; but if your questions become ridiculous, your essay may become wastepaper.

**17. Procatleipsis**, by anticipating an objection and answering it, permits an argument to continue moving forward while taking into account points or reasons opposing either the train of thought or its final conclusions. Often the objections are standard ones:

- It is usually argued at this point that if the government gets out of the mail delivery business, small towns like Podunk will not have any mail service. The answer to this can be found in the history of the Pony Express . . . .
- To discuss trivialities in an exalted style is, as the saying is, like beautifying a pestle. Yet some people say we should discourse in the grand manner on

trivialities and they think that this is a proof of outstanding oratorical talent. Now I admit that Polycrates [did this]. But he was doing this in jest, . . . and the dignified tone of the whole work was itself a game. Let us be playful.... [but] also observe what is fitting in each case . . . . --Demetrius

Sometimes the writer will invent probable or possible difficulties in order to strengthen his position by showing how they could be handled if they should arise, as well as to present an answer in case the reader or someone else might raise them in the course of subsequent consideration:

- But someone might say that this battle really had no effect on history. Such a statement could arise only from ignoring the effect the battle had on the career of General Bombast, who was later a principal figure at the Battle of the Bulge.
- I can think of no one objection that will possibly be raised against this proposal, unless it should be urged that the number of people will be thereby much lessened in the kingdom. This I freely own, and it was indeed the principal design in offering it to the world. --Jonathan Swift

Objections can be treated with varying degrees of seriousness and with differing relationships to the reader. The reader himself might be the objector:

- Yet this is the prime service a man would think, wherein this order should give proof of itself. If it were executed, you'll say. But certain, if execution be remiss or blindfold now, and in this particular, what will it be hereafter and in other books? --John Milton

Or the objector may be someone whose outlook, attitude, or belief differs substantially from both writer and reader-though you should be careful not to set up an artificial, straw-man objector:

- Men of cold fancies and philosophical dispositions object to this kind of poetry, [saying] that it has not probability enough to affect the imagination. But to this it may be answered that we are sure, in general, there are many intellectual beings in the world besides ourselves . . . who are subject to different laws and economies from those of mankind . . . . --Joseph Addison
- Occasionally a person of rash judgment will argue here that the high-speed motor is better than the low-speed one, because for the same output, high speed motors are lighter, smaller, and cheaper. But they are also noisier and less efficient, and have much greater wear and shorter life; so that overall they are not better.

By mentioning the obvious, and even the imaginatively discovered objections to your argument, you show that (1) you are aware of them and have considered them and (2) there is some kind of reasonable response to them, whether given in a sentence or in several paragraphs. An objection answered in advance is weakened should your opponent bring it up, while an objection ignored, if brought up, may show you to be

either ignorant or dishonest. Indeed, it might be better to admit an objection you cannot answer than to suppress it and put yourself on the side of darkness and sophistry:

- Those favoring the other edition argue that the same words in this text cost more money. This I admit, and it does seem unfortunate to pay twice the price for essentially the same thing. Nevertheless, this text has larger type, is made better, and above all has more informative notes, so I think it is worth the difference.

Finally, note that procatleipsis can be combined with hypophora, so that the objection is presented in the form of a question:

- I now come to the precepts of Longinus, and pretend to show from them that the greatest sublimity is to be derived from religious ideas. But why then, says the reader, has not Longinus plainly told us so? He was not ignorant that he ought to make his subject as plain as he could. For he has told us. . . . --John Dennis
- But you might object that, if what I say is actually true, why would people buy products advertised illogically? The answer to that lies in human psychology . . . .

**18. Metabasis** consists of a brief statement of what has been said and what will follow. It might be called a linking, running, or transitional summary, whose function is to keep the discussion ordered and clear in its progress:

- Such, then, would be my diagnosis of the present condition of art. I must now, by special request, say what I think will happen to art in the future. --Kenneth Clark
- We have to this point been examining the proposal advanced by Smervits only in regard to its legal practicability; but next we need to consider the effect it would have in retarding research and development work in private laboratories.
- I have hitherto made mention of his noble enterprises in France, and now I will rehearse his worthy acts done near to Rome. --Peacham

The brief little summary of what has been said helps the reader immensely to understand, organize, and remember that portion of your essay.

Metabasis serves well as a transitional device, refocusing the discussion on a new but clearly derivative area:

- Now that I have made this catalogue of swindles and perversions, let me give another example of the kind of writing that they lead to. --George Orwell

It can also be used to clarify the movement of a discussion by quickly summing up large sections of preceding material:

- By the foregoing quotation I have shown that the language of prose may yet be well adapted to poetry; and I have previously asserted that a large portion of the language of every good poem can in no respect differ from that of good prose. I will go further. I do not doubt that it may be safely affirmed, that there neither is, nor can be, any essential difference between the language of prose and metrical composition. --William Wordsworth



- Having thus explained a few of the reasons why I have written in verse, and why I have chosen subjects from common life, and endeavored to bring my language near to the real language of men, . . . I request the reader's permission to add a few words with reference solely to these particular poems and to some defects which will probably be found in them. --Ibid.
- Now that we have discussed the different kinds of cactus plants available to the landscape architect, their physical requirements for sun, soil, irrigation, and drainage, and the typical design groupings selected for residential areas, we ought to examine the architectural contexts which can best use-enhance and be enhanced by--cactus planters and gardens.
- Thus we have surveyed the state of authors as they are influenced from without, either by the frowns or favor of the great, or by the applause or censure of the critics. It remains only to consider how the people, or world in general, stand affected towards our modern penmen, and what occasion these adventurers may have of complaint or boast from their encounter with the public. --Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury

One caution should be mentioned. Metabasis is very difficult to use effectively in short papers: since it is a summarizing device, it must have some discussion to sum up. In practice, this means something on the order of five pages or more. Thus, metabasis could be very handy in the middle of a ten or twenty page paper; in a three page paper, though, both its necessity and its utility would be questionable. But use your own judgment.

Words used to signal further discussion after the summary include these: now, next, additionally, further, besides, equally important, also interesting, also important, also necessary to mention, it remains. You can also use words of comparison and contrast, such as these: similarly, on the other hand, by contrast.

**19. Distinctio** is an explicit reference to a particular meaning or to the various meanings of a word, in order to remove or prevent ambiguity.

- To make methanol for twenty-five cents a gallon is impossible; by "impossible" I mean currently beyond our technological capabilities.
- The precipitate should be moved from the filter paper to the crucible quickly--that is, within three minutes.
- Mr. Haskins describes the process as a simple one. If by simple he means easy to explain on paper, he is correct. But if he means there are no complexities involved in getting it to work, he is quite mistaken.
- The modern automobile (and here I refer to the post-1975, desmogged American car) is more a product of bolt-on solutions than of revolutionary engineering.

Many of our words, like those of evaluation (better, failure high quality, efficient, unacceptable) and those referring to abstract concepts which are often debated (democracy, justice, equality, oppression) have different meanings to different people, and sometimes to the same person at different times. For example, the governments of both Communist China and the United States are described as "democracies," while it could be argued rather convincingly that neither really is, depending on the definition of democracy used. Semanticist S. I. Hayakawa even goes so far as to claim that "no word ever has exactly the same meaning twice," and while that for practical purposes seems to be a substantial exaggeration, we should keep in mind the great flexibility of meaning in a lot of our words. Whenever there might be some doubt about your meaning, it would be wise to clarify your statement or terms. And *distinctio* is one good way to do that.

Some helpful phrases for *distinctio* include these: blank here must be taken to mean, in this context [or case] blank means, by blank I mean, that is, which is to say. You can sometimes use a parenthetical explanation or a colon, too: Is this dangerous (will I be physically harmed by it)?

**20. Amplification** involves repeating a word or expression while adding more detail to it, in order to emphasize what might otherwise be passed over. In other words, amplification allows you to call attention to, emphasize, and expand a word or idea to make sure the reader realizes its importance or centrality in the discussion.

- In my hunger after ten days of rigorous dieting I saw visions of ice cream--mountains of creamy, luscious ice cream, dripping with gooey syrup and calories.
- This orchard, this lovely, shady orchard, is the main reason I bought this property.
- . . . Even in Leonardo's time, there were certain obscure needs and patterns of the spirit, which could discover themselves only through less precise analogies--the analogies provided by stains on walls or the embers of a fire. --Kenneth Clark
- Pride--boundless pride--is the bane of civilization.
- He showed a rather simple taste, a taste for good art, good food, and good friends.

But amplification can overlap with or include a repetitive device like anaphora when the repeated word gains further definition or detail:

- The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed,/ A refuge in times of trouble. --Psalm 9:9 (KJV)

Notice the much greater effectiveness this repetition-plus detail form can have over a "straight" syntax. Compare each of these pairs:

- The utmost that we can threaten to one another is death, a death which, indeed, we may precipitate, but cannot retard, and from which, therefore, it cannot become a wise man to buy a reprieve at the expense of virtue, since he knows not

how small a portion of time he can purchase, but knows that, whether short or long, it will be made less valuable by the remembrance of the price at which it has been obtained. --adapted from S. Johnson

- The utmost that we can threaten to one another is that death which, indeed, we may precipitate . . . .
- In everything remember the passing of time, a time which cannot be called again.
- In everything remember the passing of a time which cannot be called again.

**21. Scesis Onomaton** emphasizes an idea by expressing it in a string of generally synonymous phrases or statements. While it should be used carefully, this deliberate and obvious restatement can be quite effective:

- We succeeded, we were victorious, we accomplished the feat!
- Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that deal corruptly. --Isaiah 1:4
- But there is one thing these glassy-eyed idealists forget: such a scheme would be extremely costly, horrendously expensive, and require a ton of money.
- Wendy lay there, motionless in a peaceful slumber, very still in the arms of sleep.
- May God arise, may his enemies be scattered, may his foes flee before him. -- Psalm 68:1 (NIV)

Scesis onomaton does have a tendency to call attention to itself and to be repetitive, so it is not used in formal writing as frequently as some other devices. But if well done, it is both beautiful and emphatic.

**22. Apophasis** (also called praeteritio or occupatio) asserts or emphasizes something by pointedly seeming to pass over, ignore, or deny it. This device has both legitimate and illegitimate uses. Legitimately, a writer uses it to call attention to sensitive or inflammatory facts or statements while he remains apparently detached from them:

- We will not bring up the matter of the budget deficit here, or how programs like the one under consideration have nearly pushed us into bankruptcy, because other reasons clearly enough show . . . .
- Therefore, let no man talk to me of other expedients: of taxing our absentees . . . of curing the expensiveness of pride, vanity, idleness, and gaming of learning to love our country . . . .--Jonathan Swift
- If you were not my father, I would say you were perverse. --*Antigone*
- I will not even mention Houdini's many writings, both on magic and other subjects, nor the tricks he invented, nor his numerous impressive escapes, since I want to concentrate on . . . .
- She's bright, well-read, and personable--to say nothing of her modesty and generosity.

Does the first example above make you feel a little uneasy? That can be a clue to the legitimacy (or lack of it) of usage. If apophasis is employed to bring in irrelevant statements while it supplies a screen to hide behind, then it is not being used rightly:

- I pass over the fact that Jenkins beats his wife, is an alcoholic, and sells dope to kids, because we will not allow personal matters to enter into our political discussion.
- I do not mean to suggest that Mr. Gates is mainly responsible for the inefficiency and work blockage in this office, just because the paperwork goes through him. . .

The "I do not mean to suggest [or imply]" construction has special problems of its own, because many writers use it quite straightforwardly to maintain clarity and to preclude jumping to conclusions by the reader. Others, however, "do not mean to imply" things that the reader would himself never dream are being implied. The suggestion is given, though, and takes hold in the brain--so that the implication is there, while being safely denied by the writer.

Apophasis is handy for reminding people of something in a polite way:

- Of course, I do not need to mention that you should bring a No. 2 pencil to the exam.
- Nothing need be said here about the non-energy uses of coal, such as the manufacture of plastics, drugs, and industrial chemicals . . . .

Some useful phrases for apophasis: *nothing need be said about, I pass over, it need not be said (or mentioned), I will not mention (or dwell on or bring up), we will overlook ' I do not mean to suggest (or imply), you need not be reminded, it is unnecessary to bring up, we can forget about, no one would suggest.*

**23. Metanoia** (correctio) qualifies a statement by recalling it (or part of it) and expressing it in a better, milder, or stronger way. A negative is often used to do the recalling:

- Fido was the friendliest of all St. Bernards, nay of all dogs.
- The chief thing to look for in impact sockets is hardness; no, not so much hardness as resistance to shock and shattering.
- And if I am still far from the goal, the fault is my own for not paying heed to the reminders--nay, the virtual directions--which I have had from above. --Marcus Aurelius
- Even a blind man can see, as the saying is, that poetic language gives a certain grandeur to prose, except that some writers imitate the poets quite openly, or rather they do not so much imitate them as transpose their words into their own work, as Herodotus does. --Demetrius

Metanoia can be used to coax the reader into expanding his belief or comprehension by moving from modest to bold:

- These new textbooks will genuinely improve the lives of our children, or rather the children of the whole district.

Or it can be used to tone down and qualify an excessive outburst (while, of course, retaining the outburst for good effect):

- While the crack widens and the cliff every minute comes closer to crashing down around our ears, the bureaucrats are just standing by twiddling their thumbs--or at least they have been singularly unresponsive to our appeals for action.

The most common word in the past for invoking metanoia was "nay," but this word is quickly falling out of the language and even now would probably sound a bit strange if you used it. So you should probably substitute "no" for it. Other words and phrases useful for this device include these: rather, at least, let us say, I should say, I mean, to be more exact, or better, or rather, or maybe. When you use one of the "or" phrases (or rather, or to be more exact), a comma is fine preceding the device; when you use just "no," I think a dash is most effective.

**24. Aporia** expresses doubt about an idea or conclusion. Among its several uses are the suggesting of alternatives without making a commitment to either or any:

- I am not sure whether to side with those who say that higher taxes reduce inflation or with those who say that higher taxes increase inflation.
- I have never been able to decide whether I really approve of dress codes, because extremism seems to reign both with them and without them.

Such a statement of uncertainty can tie off a piece of discussion you do not have time to pursue, or it could begin an examination of the issue, and lead you into a conclusion resolving your doubt.

Aporia can also dismiss assertions irrelevant to your discussion without either conceding or denying them:

- I do not know whether this legislation will work all the miracles promised by its backers, but it does seem clear that . . . .
- I am not sure about the other reasons offered in favor of the new freeway, but I do believe . . . .
- Yes, I know the assay report shows twenty pounds of gold per ton of ore, and I do not know what to say about that. What I do know is that the richest South African mines yield only about three ounces of gold per ton.

You can use aporia to cast doubt in a modest way, as a kind of understatement:

- I am not so sure I can accept Tom's reasons for wanting another new jet.
- I have not yet been fully convinced that dorm living surpasses living at home. For one thing, there is no refrigerator nearby . . . .

Ironic doubt--doubt about which of several closely judgable things exceeds the others, for example--can be another possibility:

- . . . Whether he took them from his fellows more impudently, gave them to a harlot more lasciviously, removed them from the Roman people more wickedly, or altered them more presumptuously, I cannot well declare. --Cicero
- And who was genuinely most content--whether old Mr. Jennings dozing in the sun, or Bill and Molly holding hands and toying under the palm tree, or old Mrs. Jennings watching them agape through the binoculars-I cannot really say.

And you can display ignorance about something while still showing your attitude toward it or toward something else:

- It is hard to know which ice cream is better, banana or coffee.
- I have often wondered whether they realize that those same clothes are available for half the price under a different label.

**25. Simile** is a comparison between two different things that resemble each other in at least one way. In formal prose the simile is a device both of art and explanation, comparing an unfamiliar thing to some familiar thing (an object, event, process, etc.) known to the reader.

When you compare a noun to a noun, the simile is usually introduced by *like*:

- I see men, but they look like trees, walking. --Mark 8:24
- After such long exposure to the direct sun, the leaves of the houseplant looked like pieces of overcooked bacon.
- The soul in the body is like a bird in a cage.

When a verb or phrase is compared to a verb or phrase, *as* is used:

- They remained constantly attentive to their goal, as a sunflower always turns and stays focused on the sun.
- Here is your pencil and paper. I want you to compete as the greatest hero would in the race of his life.

Often the simile--the object or circumstances of imaginative identity (called the vehicle, since it carries or conveys a meaning about the word or thing which is likened to it)-precedes the thing likened to it (the tenor). In such cases, *so* usually shows the comparison:

- The grass bends with every wind; so does Harvey.
- The seas are quiet when the winds give o're; / So calm are we when passions are no more. --Edmund Waller

But sometimes the *so* is understood rather than expressed:

- As wax melts before the fire,/ may the wicked perish before God. --Psalm 68:2b

Whenever it is not immediately clear to the reader, the point of similarity between the unlike objects must be specified to avoid confusion and vagueness. Rather than say, then, that "Money is like muck," and "Fortune is like glass," a writer will show clearly how these very different things are like each other:

- And money is like muck, not good except it be spread. --Francis Bacon
- Fortune is like glass--the brighter the glitter, the more easily broken. --Publilius Syrus
- Like a skunk, he suffered from bad publicity for one noticeable flaw, but bore no one any ill will.
- James now felt like an old adding machine: he had been punched and poked so much that he had finally worn out.
- This paper is just like an accountant's report: precise and accurate but absolutely useless.

Many times the point of similarity can be expressed in just a word or two:

- Yes, he is a cute puppy, but when he grows up he will be as big as a house.
- The pitching mound is humped too much like a camel's back.

And occasionally, the simile word can be used as an adjective:

- The argument of this book utilizes pretzel-like logic.
- This gear has a flower-like symmetry to it.

Similes can be negative, too, asserting that two things are unlike in one or more respects:

- My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun. . . . --Shakespeare
- John certainly does not attack the way a Sherman tank does; but if you encourage him, he is bold enough.

Other ways to create similes include the use of comparison:

- Norman was more anxious to leave the area than Herman Milquetoast after seeing ten abominable snowmen charging his way with hunger in their eyes.
- But this truth is more obvious than the sun--here it is; look at it; its brightness blinds you.

Or the use of another comparative word is possible:

- Microcomputer EPROM (Erasable Programmable Read Only Memory) resembles a chalk board in that it is used for consultation instead of figuring, and shows at each glance the same information unless erased and rewritten.
- His temper reminds me of a volcano; his heart, of a rock; his personality, of sandpaper.
- His speech was smoother than butter. . . .--Psalm 55:21

So a variety of ways exists for invoking the simile. Here are a few of the possibilities:

x is like y	x is not like y	x is the same as y
x is more than y	x is less than y	x does y; so does z
x is similar to y	x resembles y	x is as y as z

x is y like z	x is more y than z	x is less y than z
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But a simile can sometimes be implied, or as it is often called, submerged. In such cases no comparative word is needed:

- The author of this poem is almost in the position of a man with boxes and boxes of tree ornaments, but with no tree to decorate. The poet has enough imagery handy to decorate anything he can think of, if only he can fix upon a "trim invention." The "sense" he does locate is obscured; the ivy hides the building completely.
- When I think of the English final exam, I think of dungeons and chains and racks and primal screams.
- Leslie has silky hair and the skin of an angel.

**26. Analogy** compares two things, which are alike in several respects, for the purpose of explaining or clarifying some unfamiliar or difficult idea or object by showing how the idea or object is similar to some familiar one. While simile and analogy often overlap, the simile is generally a more artistic likening, done briefly for effect and emphasis, while analogy serves the more practical end of explaining a thought process or a line of reasoning or the abstract in terms of the concrete, and may therefore be more extended.

- You may abuse a tragedy, though you cannot write one. You may scold a carpenter who has made you a bad table, though you cannot make a table. It is not your trade to make tables. --Samuel Johnson
- He that voluntarily continues ignorance is guilty of all the crimes which ignorance produces, as to him that should extinguish the tapers of a lighthouse might justly be imputed the calamities of shipwrecks. --Samuel Johnson
- . . . For answers successfully arrived at are solutions to difficulties previously discussed, and one cannot untie a knot if he is ignorant of it. --Aristotle

Notice in these examples that the analogy is used to establish the pattern of reasoning by using a familiar or less abstract argument which the reader can understand easily and probably agree with.

Some analogies simply offer an explanation for clarification rather than a substitute argument:

- Knowledge always desires increase: it is like fire, which must first be kindled by some external agent, but which will afterwards propagate itself. --Samuel Johnson
- The beginning of all evil temptations is inconstancy of mind, and too little trust in God. For as a ship without a guide is driven hither and thither with every storm, so an unstable man, that anon leaveth his good purpose in God, is diversely tempted.



The fire proveth gold, and temptation proveth the righteous man. --Thomas a Kempis

When the matter is complex and the analogy particularly useful for explaining it, the analogy can be extended into a rather long, multiple-point comparison:

- The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. (And so forth, to the end of the chapter.] --I Cor. 12:12 (NIV)

The importance of simile and analogy for teaching and writing cannot be overemphasized. To impress this upon you better, I would like to step aside a moment and offer two persuasive quotations:

- The country parson is full of all knowledge. They say, it is an ill mason that refuseth any stone: and there is no knowledge, but, in a skilful hand, serves either positively as it is, or else to illustrate some other knowledge. He condescends even to the knowledge of tillage, and pastorage, and makes great use of them in teaching, because people by what they understand are best led to what they understand not. --George Herbert
- To illustrate one thing by its resemblance to another has been always the most popular and efficacious art of instruction. There is indeed no other method of teaching that of which anyone is ignorant but by means of something already known; and a mind so enlarged by contemplation and enquiry that it has always many objects within its view will seldom be long without some near and familiar image through which an easy transition may be made to truths more distant and obscure. --Samuel Johnson

**27. Metaphor** compares two different things by speaking of one in terms of the other. Unlike a simile or analogy, metaphor asserts that one thing *is* another thing, not just that one is like another. Very frequently a metaphor is invoked by the *to be* verb:

Affliction then is ours; / We are the trees whom shaking fastens more. --George Herbert

- Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life." --John 6:35 [And compare the use of metaphor in 6:32-63]
- Thus a mind that is free from passion is a very citadel; man has no stronger fortress in which to seek shelter and defy every assault. Failure to perceive this is ignorance; but to perceive it, and still not to seek its refuge, is misfortune indeed. --Marcus Aurelius
- The mind is but a barren soil; a soil which is soon exhausted and will produce no crop, or only one, unless it be continually fertilized and enriched with foreign matter. --Joshua Reynolds

Just as frequently, though, the comparison is clear enough that the *a-is-b* form is not necessary:

- The fountain of knowledge will dry up unless it is continuously replenished by streams of new learning.
- This first beam of hope that had ever darted into his mind rekindled youth in his cheeks and doubled the lustre of his eyes. --Samuel Johnson
- I wonder when motor mouth is going to run out of gas.
- When it comes to midterms, it's kill or be killed. Let's go in and slay this test.
- What sort of a monster then is man? What a novelty, what a portent, what a chaos, what a mass of contradictions, what a prodigy! Judge of all things, a ridiculous earthworm who is the repository of truth, a sink of uncertainty and error; the glory and the scum of the world. --Blaise Pascal
- The most learned philosopher knew little more. He had partially unveiled the face of Nature, but her immortal lineaments were still a wonder and a mystery. . . . I had gazed upon the fortifications and impediments that seemed to keep human beings from entering the citadel of nature, and rashly and ignorantly I had repined. --Mary Shelley
- The furnace of affliction had softened his heart and purified his soul.

Compare the different degrees of direct identification between tenor and vehicle. There is fully expressed:

- Your eye is the lamp of your body; when your eye is sound, your whole body is full of light; but when it is not sound, your body is full of darkness. --Luke 11:34 (RSV)

Here, the comparison, "the eye is a lamp," is declared directly, and the point of similarity is spelled out.

There is semi-implied:

- And he said to them, "Go and tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I finish my course.'" --Luke 13:32 (RSV)

Here, the comparison, "Herod is a fox," is not directly stated, but is understood as if it had been.

There is implied:

- . . . For thou hast been my help, and in the shadow of thy wings I sing for joy. --Psalm 63:7 (RSV)

Here, the comparison, "God is a bird [or hen]" is only implied. Stating the metaphorical equation directly would have been rhetorically ineffective or worse because of the awkward thought it creates. The classical rhetorician Demetrius tells us that when there is a great difference between the subject and the comparison, the subject should always be compared to something greater than itself, or diminishment and rhetorical failure result. You might write, "The candle was a little sun in the dark room," but you wouldn't write, "The sun was a big candle that day in the desert." In Psalm 63, however, there is nothing greater than God to compare him to, and the psalmist wants to create a sense of

tenderness and protection, drawing upon a familiar image. So, the comparison is saved by using an implied metaphor.

And there is very implied:

- For if men do these things when the tree is green what will happen when it is dry?  
--Luke 23:31 (NIV)

Here the comparison is something like "a prosperous time [or freedom from persecution] is a green [flourishing, healthy] tree." And the other half of the metaphor is that "a time of persecution or lack of prosperity is a dry [unhealthy, dead(?)] tree." So the rhetorical question is, "If men do these [bad] things during times of prosperity, what will they do when persecution or their own suffering arrives?"

Like simile and analogy, metaphor is a profoundly important and useful device. Aristotle says in his Rhetoric, "It is metaphor above all else that gives clearness, charm, and distinction to the style." And Joseph Addison says of it:

- By these allusions a truth in the understanding is as it were reflected by the imagination; we are able to see something like color and shape in a notion, and to discover a scheme of thoughts traced out upon matter. And here the mind receives a great deal of satisfaction, and has two of its faculties gratified at the same time, while the fancy is busy in copying after the understanding, and transcribing ideas out of the intellectual world into the material.

So a metaphor not only explains by making the abstract or unknown concrete and familiar, but it also enlivens by touching the reader's imagination. Further, it affirms one more interconnection in the unity of all things by showing a relationship between things seemingly alien to each other.

And the fact that two very unlike things can be equated or referred to in terms of one another comments upon them both. No metaphor is "just a metaphor." All have significant implications, and they must be chosen carefully, especially in regard to the connotations the vehicle (image) will transfer to the tenor. Consider, for example, the differences in meaning conveyed by these statements:

- That club is spreading like wildfire.
- That club is spreading like cancer.
- That club is really blossoming now.
- That club, in its amoebic motions, is engulfing the campus.

And do you see any reason that one of these metaphors was chosen over the others?

- The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. --Luke 10:2
- The pile of dirt is high, but we do not have many shovels.
- The diamonds cover the ground, but we need more people to pick them up.

So bold and striking is metaphor that it is sometimes taken literally rather than as a comparison. (Jesus' disciples sometimes failed here--see John 4:32ff and John 6:46-60; a few religious groups like the Jehovah's Witnesses interpret such passages as Psalm 75:8

and 118:15 literally and thus see God as anthropomorphic; and even today a lot of controversy surrounds the interpretation of Matthew 26:26.) Always be careful in your own writing, therefore, to avoid possible confusion between metaphor and reality. In practice this is usually not very difficult.

**28. Catachresis** is an extravagant, implied metaphor using words in an alien or unusual way. While difficult to invent, it can be wonderfully effective:

- I will speak daggers to her. --*Hamlet* [In a more futuristic metaphor, we might say, "I will laser-tongue her." Or as a more romantic student suggested, "I will speak flowers to her."]

One way to write catachresis is to substitute an associated idea for the intended one (as Hamlet did, using "daggers" instead of "angry words"):

- "It's a dentured lake," he said, pointing at the dam. "Break a tooth out of that grin and she will spit all the way to Duganville."

Sometimes you can substitute a noun for a verb or a verb for a noun, a noun for an adjective, and so on. The key is to be effective rather than abysmal. I am not sure which classification these examples fit into:

- The little old lady turtled along at ten miles per hour.
- She typed the paper machine-gunnedly, without pausing at all.
- They had expected that this news would paint an original grief, but the only result was silk-screamed platitudes.
- Give him a quart or two of self esteem and he will stop knocking himself. [This was intended to suggest motor oil; if it makes you think of cheap gin, the metaphor did not work.]

**29. Synecdoche** is a type of metaphor in which the part stands for the whole, the whole for a part, the genus for the species, the species for the genus, the material for the thing made, or in short, any portion, section, or main quality for the whole or the thing itself (or vice versa).

- Farmer Jones has two hundred head of cattle and three hired hands.

Here we recognize that Jones also owns the bodies of the cattle, and that the hired hands have bodies attached. This is a simple part-for-whole synecdoche. Here are a few more:

- If I had some wheels, I'd put on my best threads and ask for Jane's hand in marriage.
- The army included two hundred horse and three hundred foot.
- It is sure hard to earn a dollar these days.
- Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. --Genesis 2:7

And notice the other kinds of substitutions that can be made:

- Get in here this instant or I'll spank your body. [Whole for part--i.e. "body" for "rear end"]
- Put Beethoven on the turntable and turn up the volume. [Composer substituted for record]
- A few hundred pounds of twenty dollar bills ought to solve that problem nicely. [Weight for amount]
- He drew his steel from his scabbard and welcomed all comers. [Material for thing made]
- Patty's hobby is exposing film; Harold's is burning up gasoline in his dune buggy. [Part for whole]
- Okay team. Get those blades back on the ice. [Part for whole]

Take care to make your synecdoche clear by choosing an important and obvious part to represent the whole. Compare:

- His pet purr was home alone and asleep.
- His pet paws [whiskers?] was home alone and asleep.

One of the easiest kinds of synecdoche to write is the substitution of genus for species. Here you choose the class to which the idea or thing to be expressed belongs, and use that rather than the idea or thing itself:

- There sits my animal [instead of "dog"] guarding the door to the henhouse.
- He hurled the barbed weapon [instead of "harpoon"] at the whale.

A possible problem can arise with the genus-for-species substitution because the movement is from more specific to more general; this can result in vagueness and loss of information. Note that in the example above some additional contextual information will be needed to clarify that "weapon" means "harpoon" in this case, rather than, say, "dagger" or something else. The same is true for the animal-for-dog substitution.

Perhaps a better substitution is the species for the genus--a single, specific, representative item symbolic of the whole. This form of synecdoche will usually be clearer and more effective than the other:

- A major lesson Americans need to learn is that life consists of more than cars and television sets. [Two specific items substituted for the concept of material wealth]
- Give us this day our daily bread. --Matt. 6:11
- If you still do not feel well, you'd better call up a sawbones and have him examine you.
- This program is for the little old lady in Cleveland who cannot afford to pay her heating bill.

**30. Metonymy** is another form of metaphor, very similar to synecdoche (and, in fact, some rhetoricians do not distinguish between the two), in which the thing chosen for the

metaphorical image is closely associated with (but not an actual part of) the subject with which it is to be compared.

- The orders came directly from the White House.

In this example we know that the writer means the President issued the orders, because "White House" is quite closely associated with "President," even though it is not physically a part of him. Consider these substitutions, and notice that some are more obvious than others, but that in context all are clear:

- You can't fight city hall.
- This land belongs to the crown.
- In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread . . . --Genesis 3:19
- Boy, I'm dying from the heat. Just look how the mercury is rising.
- His blood be on us and on our children. --Matt. 27:25
- The checkered flag waved and victory crossed the finish line.
- Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands.

Serve the Lord with gladness: come before his presence with singing. --Psalm 100:1-2 (KJV)

The use of a particular metonymy makes a comment about the idea for which it has been substituted, and thereby helps to define that idea. Note how much more vivid "in the sweat of thy face" is in the third example above than "by labor" would have been. And in the fourth example, "mercury rising" has a more graphic, physical, and pictorial effect than would "temperature increasing." Attune yourself to such subtleties of language, and study the effects of connotation, suggestion, substitution, and metaphor.

**31. Personification** metaphorically represents an animal or inanimate object as having human attributes--attributes of form, character, feelings, behavior, and so on. Ideas and abstractions can also be personified.

- The ship began to creak and protest as it struggled against the rising sea.
- We bought this house instead of the one on Maple because this one is more friendly.
- This coffee is strong enough to get up and walk away.
- I can't get the fuel pump back on because this bolt is being uncooperative.
- Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground. --Genesis 4:10b (NIV)
- That ignorance and perverseness should always obtain what they like was never considered as the end of government; of which it is the great and standing benefit that the wise see for the simple, and the regular act for the capricious. --Samuel Johnson
- Wisdom cries aloud in the streets; in the markets she raises her voice . . . --Psalm 1:20 (RSV; and cf. 1:21-33)

While personification functions primarily as a device of art, it can often serve to make an abstraction clearer and more real to the reader by defining or explaining the concept in terms of everyday human action (as for example man's rejection of readily available wisdom is presented as a woman crying out to be heard but being ignored). Ideas can be brought to life through personification and objects can be given greater interest. But try always to be fresh: "winking stars" is worn out; "winking dewdrops" may be all right. Personification of just the natural world has its own name, *fictio*. And when this natural-world personification is limited to emotion, John Ruskin called it the *pathetic fallacy*. Ruskin considered this latter to be a vice because it was so often overdone (and let this be a caution to you). We do not receive much pleasure from an overwrought vision like this:

- The angry clouds in the hateful sky cruelly spat down on the poor man who had forgotten his umbrella.

Nevertheless, humanizing a cold abstraction or even some natural phenomenon gives us a way to understand it, one more way to arrange the world in our own terms, so that we can further comprehend it. And even the so-called pathetic fallacy can sometimes be turned to advantage, when the writer sees his own feelings in the inanimate world around him:

- After two hours of political platitudes, everyone grew bored. The delegates were bored; the guests were bored; the speaker himself was bored. Even the chairs were bored.

**32. Hyperbole**, the counterpart of understatement, deliberately exaggerates conditions for emphasis or effect. In formal writing the hyperbole must be clearly intended as an exaggeration, and should be carefully restricted. That is, do not exaggerate everything, but treat hyperbole like an exclamation point, to be used only once a year. Then it will be quite effective as a table-thumping attention getter, introductory to your essay or some section thereof:

- There are a thousand reasons why more research is needed on solar energy.

Or it can make a single point very enthusiastically:

- I said "rare," not "raw." I've seen cows hurt worse than this get up and get well.

Or you can exaggerate one thing to show how really different it is from something supposedly similar to which it is being compared:

- This stuff is used motor oil compared to the coffee you make, my love.
- If anyone comes to me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. --Luke 14:26 (NASB)

Hyperbole is the most overused and overdone rhetorical figure in the whole world (and that is no hyperbole); we are a society of excess and exaggeration. Nevertheless,

hyperbole still has a rightful and useful place in art and letters; just handle it like dynamite, and do not blow up everything you can find.

**33. Allusion** is a short, informal reference to a famous person or event:

- You must borrow me Gargantua's mouth first. 'Tis a word too great for any mouth of this age's size. --Shakespeare
- If you take his parking place, you can expect World War II all over again.
- Plan ahead: it wasn't raining when Noah built the ark. --Richard Cushing
- Our examination of the relation of the historian to the facts of history finds us, therefore, in an apparently precarious situation, navigating delicately between the Scylla of an untenable theory of history as an objective compilation of facts . . . and the Charybdis of an equally untenable theory of history as the subjective product of the mind of the historian . . . . --Edward Hallett Carr

Notice in these examples that the allusions are to very well known characters or events, not to obscure ones. (The best sources for allusions are literature, history, Greek myth, and the Bible.) Note also that the reference serves to explain or clarify or enhance whatever subject is under discussion, without sidetracking the reader.

Allusion can be wonderfully attractive in your writing because it can introduce variety and energy into an otherwise limited discussion (an exciting historical adventure rises suddenly in the middle of a discussion of chemicals or some abstract argument), and it can please the reader by reminding him of a pertinent story or figure with which he is familiar, thus helping (like analogy) to explain something difficult. The instantaneous pause and reflection on the analogy refreshes and strengthens the reader's mind.

**34. Eponym** substitutes for a particular attribute the name of a famous person recognized for that attribute. By their nature eponyms often border on the cliché, but many times they can be useful without seeming too obviously trite. Finding new or infrequently used ones is best, though hard, because the name-and-attribute relationship needs to be well established. Consider the effectiveness of these:

- Is he smart? Why, the man is an Einstein. Has he suffered? This poor Job can tell you himself.
- That little Caesar is fooling nobody. He knows he is no Patrick Henry.
- When it comes to watching girls, Fred is a regular Argus.
- You think your boyfriend is tight. I had a date with Scrooge himself last night.
- We all must realize that Uncle Sam is not supposed to be Santa Claus.
- An earthworm is the Hercules of the soil.

Some people or characters are famous for more than one attribute, so that when using them, you must somehow specify the meaning you intend:



- With a bow and arrow, Kathy is a real Diana. [Diana was goddess of the moon, of the hunt, and of chastity.]
- Those of us who cannot become a Ulysses and see the world must trust our knowledge to picture books and descriptions. [Ulysses was a hero in the Trojan War as well as a wanderer afterwards.]

In cases where the eponym might be less than clear or famous, you should add the quality to it:

- The wisdom of a Solomon was needed to figure out the actions of the appliance marketplace this quarter.

Eponym is one of those once-in-awhile devices which can give a nice touch in the right place.

**35. Oxymoron** is a paradox reduced to two words, usually in an adjective-noun ("eloquent silence") or adverb-adjective ("inertly strong") relationship, and is used for effect, complexity, emphasis, or wit:

- I do here make humbly bold to present them with a short account of themselves and their art.....--Jonathan Swift
- The bookful blockhead, ignorantly read, / With loads of learned lumber in his head . . . .--Alexander Pope
- He was now sufficiently composed to order a funeral of modest magnificence, suitable at once to the rank of a Nouradin's profession, and the reputation of his wealth. --Samuel Johnson

Oxymoron can be useful when things have gone contrary to expectation, belief, desire, or assertion, or when your position is opposite to another's which you are discussing. The figure then produces an ironic contrast which shows, in your view, how something has been misunderstood or mislabeled:

- Senator Rosebud calls this a useless plan; if so, it is the most helpful useless plan we have ever enacted.
- The cost-saving program became an expensive economy.

Other oxymorons, as more or less true paradoxes, show the complexity of a situation where two apparently opposite things are true simultaneously, either literally ("desirable calamity") or imaginatively ("love precipitates delay"). Some examples other writers have used are these: scandalously nice, sublimely bad, darkness visible, cheerful pessimist, sad joy, wise fool, tender cruelty, despairing hope, freezing fire. An oxymoron should preferably be yours uniquely; do not use another's, unless it is a relatively obvious formulation (like "expensive economy") which anyone might think of. Also, the device is most effective when the terms are not common opposites. So, instead of "a low high point," you might try "depressed apex" or something.

**36. Epithet** is an adjective or adjective phrase appropriately qualifying a subject (noun) by naming a key or important characteristic of the subject, as in "laughing happiness," "sneering contempt," "untroubled sleep," "peaceful dawn," and "lifegiving water." Sometimes a metaphorical epithet will be good to use, as in "lazy road," "tired landscape," "smirking billboards," "anxious apple." Aptness and brilliant effectiveness are the key considerations in choosing epithets. Be fresh, seek striking images, pay attention to connotative value.

A **transferred epithet** is an adjective modifying a noun which it does not normally modify, but which makes figurative sense:

- At length I heard a ragged noise and mirth of thieves and murderers . . . . --George Herbert
- Blind mouths! that scarce themselves know how to hold / A sheep hook . . . . --John Milton
- In an age of pressurized happiness, we sometimes grow insensitive to subtle joys.

The striking and unusual quality of the transferred epithet calls attention to it, and it can therefore be used to introduce emphatically an idea you plan to develop. The phrase will stay with the reader, so there is no need to repeat it, for that would make it too obviously rhetorical and even a little annoying. Thus, if you introduce the phrase, "diluted electricity," your subsequent development ought to return to more mundane synonyms, such as "low voltage," "brownouts," and so forth. It may be best to save your transferred epithet for a space near the conclusion of the discussion where it will be not only clearer (as a synonym for previously stated and clearly understandable terms) but more effective, as a kind of final, quintessential, and yet novel conceptualization of the issue. The reader will love it.

**37. Hyperbaton** includes several rhetorical devices involving departure from normal word order. One device, a form of inversion, might be called *delayed* epithet, since the adjective follows the noun. If you want to amplify the adjective, the inversion is very useful:

- From his seat on the bench he saw the girl content-content with the promise that she could ride on the train again next week.

But the delayed epithet can also be used by itself, though in only a relatively few cases:

- She had a personality indescribable.
- His was a countenance sad.

Some rhetoricians condemn delayed epithet altogether in formal writing because of its potential for abuse. Each case must be tested carefully, to make sure it does not sound too poetic:

- His was a countenance friendly.

- These are rumors strange.

And especially make sure the phrase is not affected, offensive, or even disgusting:

- Welcome to our home comfortable.
- That is a story amazing.

I cannot give you a rule (why does "countenance sad" seem okay when "countenance friendly" does not?) other than to consult your own taste or sense of what sounds all right and what does not.

A similar form of inversion we might call *divided epithets*. Here two adjectives are separated by the noun they modify, as in Milton's "with wandering steps and slow." Once again, be careful, but go ahead and try it. Some examples:

- It was a long operation but successful.
- Let's go on a cooler day and less busy.
- So many pages will require a longer staple, heavy-duty style.

Another form of hyperbaton involves the separation of words normally belonging together, done for effect or convenience:

- In this room there sit twenty (though I will not name them) distinguished people.

You can emphasize a verb by putting it at the end of the sentence:

- We will not, from this house, under any circumstances, be evicted.
- Sandy, after a long struggle, all the way across the lake, finally swam to shore.

You might want to have a friend check your excursions into hyperbatonic syntax, and if he looks at you askance and says, "My, talk funny you do," you might want to do a little rewriting. But, again, do not mark this off your list just because you might not be always successful at it.

**38. Parenthesis**, a final form of hyperbaton, consists of a word, phrase, or whole sentence inserted as an aside in the middle of another sentence:

- But the new calculations--and here we see the value of relying upon up-to-date information--showed that man-powered flight was possible with this design.
- Every time I try to think of a good rhetorical example, I rack my brains but--you guessed--nothing happens.
- As the earthy portion has its origin from earth, the watery from a different element, my breath from one source and my hot and fiery parts from another of their own elsewhere (for nothing comes from nothing, or can return to nothing), so too there must be an origin for the mind. --Marcus Aurelius
- But in whatever respect anyone else is bold (I speak in foolishness), I am just as bold myself. --2 Cor. 11:21b (NASB)

The violence involved in jumping into (or out of) the middle of your sentence to address the reader momentarily about something has a pronounced effect. Parenthesis can be circumscribed either by dashes--they are more dramatic and forceful--or by parentheses

(to make your aside less stringent). This device creates the effect of extemporaneity and immediacy: you are relating some fact when suddenly something very important arises, or else you cannot resist an instant comment, so you just stop the sentence and the thought you are on right where they are and insert the fact or comment. The parenthetical form also serves to give some statements a context (stuffed right into the middle of another sentence at the most pertinent point) which they would not have if they had to be written as complete sentences following another sentence. Note that in the first example above the bit of moralizing placed into the sentence appears to be more natural and acceptable than if it were stated separately as a kind of moral conclusion, which was not the purpose or drift of the article.

**39. Alliteration** is the recurrence of initial consonant sounds. The repetition can be juxtaposed (and then it is usually limited to two words):

- Ah, what a delicious day!
- Yes, I have read that little bundle of pernicious prose, but I have no comment to make upon it.
- Done well, alliteration is a satisfying sensation.

This two-word alliteration calls attention to the phrase and fixes it in the reader's mind, and so is useful for emphasis as well as art. Often, though, several words not next to each other are alliterated in a sentence. Here the use is more artistic. And note in the second example how wonderfully alliteration combines with antithesis:

- I shall delight to hear the ocean roar, or see the stars twinkle, in the company of men to whom Nature does not spread her volumes or utter her voice in vain. -- Samuel Johnson
- Do not let such evils overwhelm you as thousands have suffered, and thousands have surmounted; but turn your thoughts with vigor to some other plan of life, and keep always in your mind, that, with due submission to Providence, a man of genius has been seldom ruined but by himself. --Samuel Johnson
- I conceive therefore, as to the business of being profound, that it is with writers, as with wells; a person with good eyes may see to the bottom of the deepest, provided any water be there; and that often, when there is nothing in the world at the bottom, besides dryness and dirt, though it be but a yard and a half under ground, it shall pass, however, for wondrous deep, upon no wiser a reason than because it is wondrous dark. --Jonathan Swift

**40. Onomatopoeia** is the use of words whose pronunciation imitates the sound the word describes. "Buzz," for example, when spoken is intended to resemble the sound of a flying insect. Other examples include these: slam, pow, screech, whirr, crush, sizzle, crunch, wring, wrench, gouge, grind, mangle, bang, blam, pow, zap, fizz, urp, roar, growl,

blip, click, whimper, and, of course, snap, crackle, and pop. Note that the connection between sound and pronunciation is sometimes rather a product of imagination ("slam" and "wring" are not very good imitations). And note also that written language retains an aural quality, so that even unspoken your writing has a sound to it. Compare these sentences, for instance:

- Someone yelled, "Look out!" and I heard the skidding of tires and the horrible noise of bending metal and breaking glass.
- Someone yelled "Look out!" and I heard a loud screech followed by a grinding, wrenching crash.

Onomatopoeia can produce a lively sentence, adding a kind of flavoring by its sound effects:

The flies buzzing and whizzing around their ears kept them from finishing the experiment at the swamp.

- No one talks in these factories. Everyone is too busy. The only sounds are the snip, snip of scissors and the hum of sewing machines.
- But I loved that old car. I never heard the incessant rattle on a rough road, or the squeakitysqueak whenever I hit a bump; and as for the squeal of the tires around every corner--well, that was *macho*.
- If you like the plop, plop, plop of a faucet at three in the morning, you will like this record.

**41. Apostrophe** interrupts the discussion or discourse and addresses directly a person or personified thing, either present or absent. Its most common purpose in prose is to give vent to or display intense emotion, which can no longer be held back:

- O value of wisdom that fadeth not away with time, virtue ever flourishing, that cleanseth its possessor from all venom! O heavenly gift of the divine bounty, descending from the Father of lights, that thou mayest exalt the rational soul to the very heavens! Thou art the celestial nourishment of the intellect . . . . -- Richard de Bury
- O books who alone are liberal and free, who give to all who ask of you and enfranchise all who serve you faithfully! -- Richard de Bury
- O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not have it! --Luke 13:34 (NASB)

Apostrophe does not appear very often in argumentative writing because formal argument is by its nature fairly restrained and intellectual rather than emotional; but under the right circumstances an apostrophe could be useful:

- But all such reasons notwithstanding, dear reader, does not the cost in lives persuade you by itself that we must do something immediately about the situation?

**42. Enthymeme** is an informally-stated syllogism which omits either one of the premises or the conclusion. The omitted part must be clearly understood by the reader. The usual form of this logical shorthand omits the major premise:

- Since your application was submitted before April 10th, it will be considered. [Omitted premise: All applications submitted before April 10 will be considered.]
- He is an American citizen, so he is entitled to due process. [All American citizens are entitled to due process.]

An enthymeme can also be written by omitting the minor premise:

- Ed is allergic to foods containing monosodium glutamate, so he cannot eat Chinese food seasoned with it.
- A political system can be just only when those who make its laws keep well informed about the subject and effect of those laws. This is why our system is in danger of growing unjust.

It is also possible to omit the conclusion to form an enthymeme, when the two premises clearly point to it:

- If, as Anatole France said, "It is human nature to think wisely and act foolishly," then I must propose that the Board of Supervisors in this case is demonstrating human nature perfectly well.
- The Fenton Lumber Company never undertakes a clearcut until at least eighty percent of the trees are mature, and the 4800-acre stand of pine above Mill Creek will not be that mature for another fifteen years.

Whenever a premise is omitted in an enthymeme (and understood by the reader), it is assumed to be either a truism or an acceptable and non-controversial generalization. But sometimes the omitted premise is one with which the reader would not agree, and the enthymeme then becomes a logical fallacy-an unacceptable enthymeme. What are the omitted premises here, and why are they unacceptable?

- You can tell this tape recorder is a bunch of junk: it's made in Japan.
- He says he believes that Jesus was a great moral teacher, so he must be a Christian.
- Those kids are from Southern California? Then they must be either crazy or perverted.

It goes without saying that you should be careful in your own writing not to use enthymemes dishonestly--that is, not to use clearly controversial assertions for the omitted premises.

Aside from its everyday use as a logical shorthand, enthymeme finds its greatest use in writing as an instrument for slightly understating yet clearly pointing out some assertion, often in the form of omitted conclusion. By making the reader work out the syllogism for himself, you impress the conclusion upon him, yet in a way gentler than if you spelled it out in so many words:

- It is essential to anchor the dam in genuine solid rock, rather than in sandstone, and the Trapper's Bluff area provides the only solid rock for seven miles on either side of the designated optimum site.
- Yes, it is a beautiful car, but it does not have an automatic hood-ornament washer, and I just will not have a car without one.

**43. Climax** (gradatio) consists of arranging words, clauses, or sentences in the order of increasing importance, weight, or emphasis. Parallelism usually forms a part of the arrangement, because it offers a sense of continuity, order, and movement-up the ladder of importance. But if you wish to vary the amount of discussion on each point, parallelism is not essential.

- The concerto was applauded at the house of Baron von Schnooty, it was praised highly at court, it was voted best concerto of the year by the Academy, it was considered by Mozart the highlight of his career, and it has become known today as the best concerto in the world.
- At 6:20 a.m. the ground began to heave. Windows rattled; then they broke. Objects started falling from shelves. Water heaters fell from their pedestals, tearing out plumbing. Outside, the road began to break up. Water mains and gas lines were wrenched apart, causing flooding and the danger of explosion. Office buildings began cracking; soon twenty, thirty, forty stories of concrete were diving at the helpless pedestrians panicking below.
- To have faults is not good, but faults are human. Worse is to have them and not see them. Yet beyond that is to have faults, to see them, and to do nothing about them. But even that seems mild compared to him who knows his faults, and who parades them about and encourages them as though they were virtues.

In addition to arranging sentences or groups of short ideas in climactic order, you generally should also arrange the large sections of ideas in your papers, the points in your arguments, and the examples for your generalizations climactically; although in these cases, the first item should not be the very least important (because its weakness might alienate the reader). Always begin with a point or proof substantial enough to generate interest, and then continue with ideas of increasing importance. That way your argument gets stronger as it moves along, and every point hits harder than the previous one.

**44. Diacope:** repetition of a word or phrase after an intervening word or phrase as a method of emphasis:

- We will do it, I tell you; we will do it.
- We give thanks to Thee, O God, we give thanks . . . . --Psalm 75:1 (NASB)

**45. Antimetabole:** reversing the order of repeated words or phrases (a loosely chiasmic structure, AB-BA) to intensify the final formulation, to present alternatives, or to show contrast:

- All work and no play is as harmful to mental health as all play and no work.
- Ask not what you can do for rhetoric, but what rhetoric can do for you.

**46. Antiphrasis:** one word irony, established by context:

- "Come here, Tiny," he said to the fat man.
- It was a cool 115 degrees in the shade.

**47. Epizeuxis:** repetition of one word (for emphasis):

- The best way to describe this portion of South America is lush, lush, lush.
- What do you see? Wires, wires, everywhere wires.
- Polonius: "What are you reading?" Hamlet: "Words, words, words."

**48. Aposiopesis:** stopping abruptly and leaving a statement unfinished:

- If they use that section of the desert for bombing practice, the rock hunters will--.
- I've got to make the team or I'll--.

**49. Anacoluthon:** finishing a sentence with a different grammatical structure from that with which it began:

- And then the deep rumble from the explosion began to shake the very bones of--no one had ever felt anything like it.
- Be careful with these two devices because improperly used they can--well, I have cautioned you enough.

**50. Enumeratio:** detailing parts, causes, effects, or consequences to make a point more forcibly:

- I love her eyes, her hair, her nose, her cheeks, her lips [etc.].
- When the new highway opened, more than just the motels and restaurants prospered. The stores noted a substantial increase in sales, more people began moving to town, a new dairy farm was started, the old Main Street Theater doubled its showings and put up a new building . . . .



**51. Antanagoge:** placing a good point or benefit next to a fault criticism, or problem in order to reduce the impact or significance of the negative point:

- True, he always forgets my birthday, but he buys me presents all year round.
- The new anti-pollution equipment will increase the price of the product slightly, I am aware; but the effluent water from the plant will be actually cleaner than the water coming in.

**52. Parataxis:** writing successive independent clauses, with coordinating conjunctions, or no conjunctions:

- We walked to the top of the hill, and we sat down.
- In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. --Genesis 1:1-2 (KJV)
- The *Starfish* went into dry-dock, it got a barnacle treatment, it went back to work.

In this last example above, note that a string of very short sentences can be connected by commas when the elements are parallel. Longer sentences and unparallel sentence structures need at least semicolons to connect them.

**53. Hypotaxis:** using subordination to show the relationship between clauses or phrases (and hence the opposite of parataxis):

- They asked the question because they were curious.
- If a person observing an unusual or unfamiliar object concludes that it is probably a spaceship from another world, he can readily adduce that the object is reacting to his presence or actions when in reality there is absolutely no cause-effect relationship. --Philip Klass
- While I am in the world, I am the light of the world. --John 9:5

**54. Sententia:** quoting a maxim or wise saying to apply a general truth to the situation; concluding or summing foregoing material by offering a single, pithy statement of general wisdom:

- But, of course, to understand all is to forgive all.
- As the saying is, art is long and life is short.
- For as Pascal reminds us, "It is not good to have all your wants satisfied."

**55. Exemplum:** citing an example; using an illustrative story, either true or fictitious:

- Let me give you an example. In the early 1920's in Germany, the government let the printing presses turn out endless quantities of paper money, and soon, instead of 50-pfennige postage stamps, denominations up to 50 billion marks were being issued.

Examples can be introduced by the obvious choice of "For example," but there are other possibilities. For quick introductions, such as those attached to a sentence, you might use "such as," or "for instance." Examples placed into separate sentences can be introduced by "A case in point," "An instance," "A typical situation," "A common example," "To illustrate, let's consider the situation," and so forth.

**56. Pleonasm:** using more words than required to express an idea; being redundant. Normally a vice, it is done on purpose on rare occasions for emphasis:

- We heard it with our own ears.
- And lifting up their eyes, they saw no one, except Jesus Himself alone. --Matthew 17:8

**57. Assonance:** similar vowel sounds repeated in successive or proximate words containing different consonants:

- A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. --Matthew 5:14b (KJV)
- Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. --Matthew 5:16 (KJV)

**58. Dirimens Copulatio:** mentioning a balancing or opposing fact to prevent the argument from being one-sided or unqualified:

- This car is extremely sturdy and durable. It's low maintenance; things never go wrong with it. Of course, if you abuse it, it will break.
- . . . But we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. --I Cor. 1:23-24 (NASB; cf. Rom. 13:4-5)

**59. Symploce:** combining anaphora and epistrophe, so that one word or phrase is repeated at the beginning and another word or phrase is repeated at the end of successive phrases, clauses, or sentences:

- To think clearly and rationally should be a major goal for man; but to think clearly and rationally is always the greatest difficulty faced by man.

**60. Appositive:** a noun or noun substitute placed next to (in apposition to) another noun to be described or defined by the appositive. Don't think that appositives are for subjects only and that they always follow the subject. The appositive can be placed before or after any noun:

- Henry Jameson, the boss of the operation, always wore a red baseball cap. [This shows the subject (Henry Jameson) with the appositive (the boss of the operation) following the subject. This is the most commonly used variety.]

- A notorious annual feast, the picnic was well attended. [Here, the appositive (notorious annual feast) is in front of the subject (the picnic).]
- That evening we were all at the concert, a really elaborate and exciting affair. [Here the appositive (elaborate and exciting etc.) follows the noun, which is the object of a preposition (concert).]

With very short appositives, the commas setting off the second noun from the first are often omitted:

- That afternoon Kathy Todd the pianist met the poet Thompson.
- Is your friend George going to run for office?

### SELF TEST

Identify the rhetorical device or devices used in each of the following examples. Answers are at the end of the test.

1. Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things. --Philippians 4:8
2. Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity? --Job 2:10b
3. Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise) that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth. --Ephesians 6:2-3
4. Shall the potter be considered as equal with the clay, that what is made should say to its maker, "He did not make me"; or what is formed say to him who formed it, "He has no understanding"? --Isaiah. 29:16
5. ". . . For in your days, O rebellious house, I shall speak the word and perform it," declares the Lord. --Ezek. 12:25
6. I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. --Matt. 5:17b
7. . . . We have sinned, committed iniquity, acted wickedly, and rebelled, even turning aside from Thy commandments and ordinances. --Daniel 9:5
8. Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord--for we walk by faith, not by sight--we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord. --2 Corinthians 5:6-8
9. If you seek Him, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will reject you forever. --I Chron. 28:9b
10. When I was a child, I used to speak as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. --I Corinthians 13:11
11. All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not workers of miracles, are they? --I Corinthians 12:29
12. But whom you forgive anything, I forgive also . . . in order that no advantage be taken of us by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his schemes. --2 Corinthians 2:10-11
13. He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take

care of the church of God?) and not a new convert, lest he become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. --I Timothy 3:4-6

14. Moreover, we have not listened to Thy servants the prophets, who spoke in Thy name to our kings, our princes, our fathers, and all the people of the land. --Daniel 9:6

15. But if possibility of evil be to exclude good, no good ever can be done. --Samuel Johnson

16. It is in art as in morals: no character would inspire us with an enthusiastic admiration of his virtue, if that virtue consisted only in an absence of vice; something more is required; a man must do more than merely his duty to be a hero. --Joshua Reynolds

17. What, then, is the effect of imagery when it is used in oratory? Among other things, it can infuse much passion and energy into speeches, but when it is combined with the argumentative passages it not only persuades the hearer, but actually masters him. --Longinus

18. The true nature of man, his true good, true virtue, and true religion are things which cannot be known separately. --Pascal

19. Now, what advantage do we derive from hearing a man say that he has shaken off the yoke, that he does not believe that there is a God who watches over his actions, that he regards himself as sole judge of his conduct, and that he does not think of accounting for it to anyone but himself? Does he imagine that by saying this he is encouraging us to feel great confidence in him in the future and to expect comfort, advice, and help from him in the difficult situations of life? Do such men imagine that they have greatly rejoiced us by telling us that they think our soul is only a puff of wind or smoke, and still more by telling us so in an arrogant, self-satisfied tone? Is it a thing to be said cheerily? Is it not rather something to be admitted mournfully as though it were the saddest thing in the whole world? --Pascal

20. Greatness, in the works of architecture, may be considered as relating to the bulk and body of the structure. . . . Not to mention the Tower of Babel, of which an old author says there were the foundations to be seen in his time, which looked like a spacious mountain . . . . --Joseph Addison

21. . . . Let them recognize that there are only two kinds of person whom we can describe as reasonable: those who serve God with all their heart because they have found him, and those who seek him with all their heart because they have not found him. --Pascal

22. Other things may be seized by might, or purchased with money, but knowledge is to be gained only by study, and study to be prosecuted only in retirement. --Samuel Johnson

23. Man seeth the face, but God beholdeth the heart. --Thomas a Kempis

24. O soul of mine, will you never be good and sincere, all one, all open, visible to the beholder more clearly than even your encompassing body of flesh? Will you never taste the sweetness of a loving and affectionate heart? Will you never be filled full and unwanting; craving nothing, yearning for no creature or thing to minister to your pleasures, no prolongation of days to enjoy them, no place or country or pleasant clime or sweet human company? --Marcus Aurelius

25. Shame on the soul, to falter on the road of life while the body still perseveres. --Marcus Aurelius

A Handbook of Rhetorical Devices. Robert A. Harris Version Date: January 19, 2013. This book contains definitions and examples of more than sixty traditional rhetorical devices, (including rhetorical tropes and rhetorical figures) all of which can still be useful today to improve the effectiveness, clarity, and enjoyment of your writing. Note: This book was written in 1980, with some changes since. The devices presented are not in alphabetical order. To go directly to the discussion of a particular device, click on the name below. If you know these already, go directly to the Self Test. If you A Handbook of Rhetorical Devices. Robert A. Harris. A Preface of Quotations Whoever desires for his writings or himself, what none can reasonably condemn, the favor of mankind, must add grace to strength, and make his thoughts agreeable as well as useful. Many complain of neglect who never tried to attract regard. It cannot be expected that the patrons of science or virtue should be solicitous to discover excellencies which they who possess them shade and disguise.