Congratulations! You have chosen to embark on a journey that will challenge, inspire, and enlighten you as to the ways language and rhetoric impacts our lives as individuals and as members of society. I commend you for your maturity and willingness to take academic risks!

The journey begins with your completion of the following Summer Assignments. This assignment is designed with three main purposes in mind:

1. it will introduce you to key rhetorical terms and ideas;
2. it will give you a flavor of the types of writing you will read and produce throughout the year;
3. it will give your instructor an understanding of your skills as new members of the class.

**Please complete each assignment prior to the start of school on August 26th.**

**Assignment #1 – Rhetorical Terms, Modes, & Tone Words**

1. Familiarize yourself with the terms and words on the following three handouts. (Don’t memorize them.)
   - Glossary of Rhetorical Devices & Strategies
   - Rhetorical Modes
   - Diction & Tone Words

2. Consider these handouts the foundation of the “rhetorical toolbox” that you will refer back to regularly throughout this course. Some of these terms are already familiar to you, but many will be new. The sooner you can begin understanding them and applying them to your reading and writing, the better.

**Assignment #2 – Thank You For Arguing**

1. Please borrow or purchase a copy of *Thank You For Arguing, Third Edition* (Three Rivers Press) and read both Prefaces and Chapters 1 through 14.
2. While reading, use the following symbols and brief notes to annotate the text (in the margins or on Post-it notes):

- ! - things you find interesting or important
- ? - things you didn’t understand or would like to challenge
- * - things you’d like to discuss with the class

3. Be prepared to discuss the reading (and your annotations) in small groups and with me during the first week of school. In addition, many of the skills and strategies discussed in this reading will prove quite useful when completing the first major writing assignment of the year.

**Assignment #3 – Rhetorical Analysis**

1. Please borrow or purchase a copy of *The Best American Essays of the Century* (Mariner Press).

2. Close read and annotate (in the margins or on Post-it notes) “Letter from Birmingham Jail” by Martin Luther King, Jr.

3. Select, close read, and annotate another two (2) texts from the collection. **Please do not select E.B. White’s “Once More to the Lake” as this text is part of the 9th and 10th grade Language Arts curriculum.**

4. Write three (3) short, but well-developed mini-essays (one for “Letter from Birmingham Jail” and one for each of your chosen texts) in which you analyze how the author’s use of rhetorical devices and strategies allows them to achieve their purpose. The suggested word count for each response is 500 words. Support your analysis with specific evidence from each text. The resources included from Assignments #1 and 3 might be helpful in completing this portion of the assignment.

5. Please print all three essays (in one document) and bring them with you to class on the first day of school.

6. By 3:00 pm on Monday, August 26th, please submit your three (3) short analytical essays (as one document) to Schoology and Turnitin.com.
General Guidelines
1. Please use the following guidelines when formatting your analytical responses (Assignment #2):
   - Use 1” margins and double-spaced 12-point Times New Roman font.
   - Put your name, date, and the teacher’s name in the upper left corner, single-spaced.
   - Please include the title and author of the essay with each response.
   - Indent the first line of each paragraph .25” (standard default tab).
   - Do not add an extra space between paragraphs.
   - Your work should be printed and stapled before class.

2. All assignments are due as per the dates and times previously listed. There are no exceptions. The expectation for the year is that you have ALL assignments completed and ready to submit at the beginning of class on the day that they are due. No late work will be accepted. Printer, computer, or other technical difficulties are not an excuse for late work.

Academic Integrity
I take academic integrity seriously. All work is to be your own. Any sources used to help you complete the project must be selected and cited appropriately according to MLA guidelines.

Students who violate WHS policy by cheating or plagiarizing will receive a zero for the assignment and their parents/guardians will be contacted.

Please feel free to message me via Schoology with questions throughout the summer. I encourage you to seek your own answers (from appropriate sources) before coming to me, but know that I am always here to help whenever and however I can.

Have a terrific summer! I look forward to meeting you in August.

Mr. Whit Yost
wyost@wsdweb.org
Glossary of Rhetorical Devices & Strategies

A **rhetorical strategy** is a technique, arrangement, approach, or other rhetorical choice that significantly aids the rhetorician in achieving a given purpose; or to put it more simply: anything a writer does to influence the audience. A writer’s rhetorical strategy is the process by which she communicates with—or appeals to—her audience. The strategy is therefore not sequential or static, but a dynamic, interwoven approach to communicating that must consider all aspects of the rhetorical situation.

Here is a (non-exhaustive) list of common rhetorical devices and strategies that will be referred to throughout this course this year. Learn them, look for them in your reading, and consider applying them in your writing. This is the beginning of your “rhetorical toolbox.”

**Allegory** - The device of using character and/or story elements symbolically to represent an abstraction in addition to the literal meaning. The allegorical meaning usually deals with a moral truth or a generalization about human existence.

   **Example**: *Animal Farm*, George Orwell

**Alliteration** - The repetition of sounds, especially initial consonants in two or more neighboring words (as in “she sells seashells by the seashore”). Although the term is not used frequently in the multiple-choice section, you can look for alliteration in any essay passage. The repetition can reinforce meaning, unify ideas, supply a musical sound, and/or echo the sense of the passage.

**Allusion** - A direct or indirect reference to something which is presumably commonly known such as an event, book, myth, place, or work of art. Allusions can be historical, literary, religious, topical, or mythical. There are many more possibilities, and a work may simultaneously use multiple layers of allusion.

**Ambiguity** (am-bi-gyoo-i-tee) - The expression of an idea in such a way that more than one meaning is suggested. Most if not all of the texts we will read this year contain some level of ambiguity. Being comfortable with ambiguity is an important skill.

**Analogy** - A similarity or comparison between two different things or the relationship between them. An analogy can explain something unfamiliar by associating it with or pointing out its similarity to something more familiar. Analogies can also make writing more vivid, imaginative, or intellectually engaging.
An analogy is comparable to metaphor and simile in that it shows how two different things are similar, but it’s a bit more complex. Rather than a figure of speech, an analogy is more of a logical argument. The presenter of an analogy will often demonstrate how two things are alike by pointing out shared characteristics, with the goal of showing that if two things are similar in some ways, they are similar in other ways as well.

**Anaphora** (uh-naf-er-uh) – One of the devices of repetition, in which the same expression (word or words) is repeated at the beginning of two or more lines, clauses, or sentences.

*Example:* “They are masters who instruct us without rod or ferule, without angry words, without clothes or money.” – Richard de Bury

**Anecdote** – A short narrative detailing particulars of an interesting episode or event. The term most frequently refers to an incident in the life of a person.

**Antecedent** (an-tuh-seed-nt) - The word, phrase, or clause referred to by a pronoun. The AP English Lang. & Comp. exam occasionally asks for the antecedent of a given pronoun in a long, complex sentence or in a group of sentences.

*Example:* “When **Kris** (antecedent) sprained his ankle, Coach Ames replaced **him** (personal pronoun) with Jasper, a much slower runner.”

**Antithesis** (an-tih-theh-sis) – A syntactic strategy in which two contrasting ideas are intentionally juxtaposed in the structure of a sentence through parallel structure; a contrasting of opposing ideas in adjacent phrases, clauses, or sentences. Antithesis creates a definite and systematic relationship between ideas.

*Example:* “That’s one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind.”

“To err is human; to forgive, divine.”

**Aphorism** – A terse statement of known authorship which expresses a general truth or a moral principle. (If the authorship is unknown, the statement is generally considered to be a folk proverb.) An aphorism can be a memorable summation of the author’s point.

**Apostrophe** – A figure of speech that directly addresses an absent or imaginary person or a personified abstraction, such as liberty or love. It is an address to someone or something that cannot answer. The effect is to display intense emotion, which can no longer be held back.

*Example:* William Wordsworth addresses John Milton as he writes, “Milton, thou shouldst be living at this hour: / England hath need of thee.”

**Asyndeton** (uh-sin-di-tuhn): consists of omitting conjunctions between words, phrases, or clauses. This can give the effect of unpremeditated multiplicity, of an extemporaneous rather than a labored account. Asyndetic lists can be more emphatic than if a final conjunction were used.
Example: On his return he received medals, honors, treasures, titles, fame. They spent the day wondering, searching, thinking, understanding.

Chiasmus (kahy-az-muhs) - From the Greek word for “criss-cross,” a designation based on the Greek letter “chi,” written “X.” Chiasmus is a figure of speech in which two successive phrases or clauses are parallel in syntax, but reverse the order of the analogous words.  

Example: “The land was ours before we were the land’s” - Robert Frost  
“Pleasure’s a sin, and sometimes sin’s a pleasure.” – Lord Byron

Clause – A grammatical unit that contains both a subject and a verb. An independent, or main, clause expresses a complete thought and can stand alone as a sentence. A dependent or subordinate clause cannot stand alone as a sentence and must be accompanied by an independent clause. The point that you want to consider is the question of what or why the author subordinates one element to the other. You should also become aware of making effective use of subordination in your own writing.

Colloquial/colloquialism (kuj-loh-kwee-uhl) - The use of slang or informalities in speech or writing. Not generally acceptable for formal writing, colloquialisms give a work a conversational, familiar tone. Colloquial expressions in writing include local or regional dialects.

Coherence - A principle demanding that the parts of any composition be arranged so that the meaning of the whole may be immediately clear and intelligible. Words, phrases, clauses within the sentence; and sentences, paragraphs, and chapters in larger pieces of writing are the unit that by their progressive and logical arrangement, make for coherence.

Connotation - The nonliteral, associative meaning of a word; the implied, suggested meaning. Connotations may involve ideas, emotions, or attitudes.

Denotation – The strict, literal, dictionary definition of a word, devoid of any emotion attitude, or color.

Diction - Related to style, diction refers to the writer’s word choices, especially with regard to their correctness, clearness, or effectiveness. For the AP exam, you should be able to describe an author’s diction (for example, formal or informal, ornate or plain) and understand the ways in which diction can complement the author’s purpose. Diction, combined with syntax, figurative language, literary devices, etc., creates an author’s style. (For a list words used to describe an author’s diction, refer to the Diction & Tone Words handout.)
Didactic (dahy-dak-tik) – Used to describe the tone or purpose of a text. From the Greek, didactic literally means “teaching.” Didactic works have the primary aim of teaching or instructing, especially the teaching of moral or ethical principles.

Ethos – Greek for “character.” Speakers appeal to ethos to demonstrate that they are credible and trustworthy to speak on a given topic. Ethos is established by both who you are and what you say.

Euphemism (yoo-fuh-miz-uhm) - From the Greek for “good speech,” euphemisms are a more agreeable or less offensive substitute for a generally unpleasant word or concept. The euphemism may be used to adhere to standards of social or political correctness or to add humor or ironic understatement.

Example: Saying “earthly remains” rather than “corpse” is an example of euphemism.

Exposition - In essays, one of the four chief types of composition, the others being argumentation, description, and narration. The purpose of exposition is to explain something. In drama, the exposition is the introductory material, which creates the tone, gives the setting, and introduces the characters and conflict.

Extended metaphor – A metaphor developed at great length, occurring frequently in or throughout the work.

Figurative language – Writing or speech that is not intended to carry literal meaning and is usually meant to be imaginative and vivid. Devices used to produce figurative language often compare dissimilar things. Figures of speech include apostrophe, hyperbole, irony, metaphor, metonymy, oxymoron, paradox, personification, simile, synecdoche, and understatement.

Genre – The major category into which a literary work fits. The basic divisions of literature are prose, poetry, and drama. However, genre is a flexible term; within these broad boundaries exist many subdivisions that are often called genres themselves. For example, prose can be divided into fiction (novels and short stories) or nonfiction (essays, biographies, autobiographies, etc). Poetry can be divided into lyric, dramatic, narrative, epic, etc. Drama can be divided into tragedy, comedy, melodrama, farce, etc. On the AP exam, expect the majority of the passages to be from the following genres: autobiography, biography, diaries, criticism, essays, and journalistic, political, scientific, and nature writing.

Hyperbole (hahy-pur-buh-lee) – A figure of speech using deliberate exaggeration or overstatement. Hyperboles often have a comic effect; however, a serious effect is also possible. Often, hyperbole produces irony.

Example: I’m so hungry I could eat a horse!
**Hypophora** – Figure of reasoning in which one or more questions is/are asked and then answered, often at length, by one and the same speaker; raising and responding to one’s own question(s). A common usage is to ask the question at the beginning of a paragraph and then use the paragraph to answer it. You can use hypophora to raise questions which you think the reader obviously has on his/her mind and would like to see formulated and answered.

**Example**: “When the enemy struck on that June day of 1950, what did America do? It did what it always has done in all its times of peril. It appealed to the heroism of its youth.” - Dwight D. Eisenhower

**Imagery** - The sensory details or figurative language used to describe, arouse emotion, or represent abstractions. On a physical level, imagery uses terms related to the five senses; we refer to visual, auditory, tactile, gustatory, or olfactory imagery. On a broader and deeper level, however, one image can represent more than one thing. For example, a rose may present visual imagery while also representing the color in a woman’s cheeks and/or symbolizing some degree of perfection. An author may use complex imagery while simultaneously employing other figures of speech, especially metaphor and simile. In addition, this term can apply to the total of all the images in a work. On the AP exam, pay attention to how an author creates imagery and the effect of this imagery.

**Inference/infer** – To draw a reasonable conclusion from the information presented. When a multiple-choice question asks for an inference to be drawn from a passage, the most direct, most reasonable inference is the safest answer choice. If an inference is implausible, it’s unlikely to be the correct answer. Note that if the answer choice is directly stated, it is not inferred and is wrong. You must be careful to note the connotation – negative or positive – of the choices.

**Irony/ironic** - The contrast between what is stated explicitly and what is really meant. The difference between what appears to be and what actually is true. In general, there are three major types of irony used in language:

- **verbal** irony - the words literally state the opposite of the writer’s (or speaker’s) true meaning
- **situational** irony - events turn out the opposite of what was expected, what the characters and the readers think ought to happen
- **dramatic** irony - facts or events are unknown to a character in a play or piece of fiction, but known to the reader, audience, or other characters in the work. Irony is used for many reasons, but frequently, it’s used to create poignancy or humor

**Juxtaposition** (juhk-stuh-puh-zish-uhn) - When two words, phrases, images, or ideas are placed close together or side by side for comparison or contrast.
**Litotes** (lahy-toh-teez) – From the Greek word “simple” or “plain.” Litotes is a figure of speech in which a point is affirmed by negating its opposite. It is a special form of understatement, where the surface denial serves, through ironic contrast, to reinforce the underlying assertion. **Example:** He’s no fool (which implies he is wise). Not uncommon (which implies that the act is frequent).

**Logos** (low-gos) – Greek for “embodied thought.” Speakers appeal to logos, or reason, by offering clear, rational ideas and using specific details, examples, facts, statistics, or expert testimony to back them up.

**Metaphor** – A metaphor is a figure of speech that uses one thing to mean another and makes a comparison between the two. The key words here are “one thing to mean another.” So, when someone says, “He’s become a shell of a man,” we know not to take this literally, even though it’s stated directly as if this person had actually lost his internal substance. Metaphorical language makes writing more vivid, imaginative, thought provoking, and meaningful.

**Metonymy** (mi-ton-uh-mee) – A term from the Greek meaning “changed label” or “substitute name.” Metonymy is a figure of speech in which the name of one object is substituted for that of another closely associated with it. A news release that claims “the White House declared” rather than “the President declared” is using metonymy. The substituted term generally carries a more potent emotional response.

**Mood** – This term has two distinct technical meanings in English writing. The first meaning is grammatical and deals with verbal units and a speaker’s attitude. The indicative mood is used only for factual sentences. For example, “Joe eats too quickly.” The subjunctive mood is used to express conditions contrary to fact. For example, “If I were you, I’d get another job.” The imperative mood is used for commands. For example, “Shut the door!” The second meaning of mood is literary, meaning the prevailing atmosphere or emotional aura of a work. Setting, tone, and events can affect the mood.

**Narrative** – The telling of a story or an account of an event or series of events.

**Onomatopoeia** (on-uh-mat-uh-pee-uh) – A figure of speech in which natural sounds are imitated in the sounds of words. Simple examples include such words as buzz, hiss, hum, crack, whinny, and murmur. If you notice examples of onomatopoeia in an essay passage, note the effect. They can add humor, excitement, action, generate interest, or give a text a poetic or almost musical quality.

**Oxymoron** – From the Greek for “pointedly foolish,” an oxymoron is a figure of speech wherein the author groups apparently contradictory terms to suggest a paradox. Simple examples include “jumbo shrimp” and “cruel kindness.” This term does not usually appear in
the multiple-choice questions, but there is a chance that you might find it in an essay. Take note of the effect that the author achieves with this term.

**Paradox** – A statement that appears to be self-contradictory or opposed to common sense but upon closer inspection contains some degree of truth or validity.

**Parallelism** – Also referred to as parallel construction or parallel structure, this term comes from Greek roots meaning “beside one another.” It refers to the grammatical or rhetorical framing of words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs to give structural similarity. This can involve, but is not limited to repetition of a grammatical element such as a preposition or verbal phrase. A famous example of parallelism begins Charles Dickens’s novel *A Tale of Two Cities*: “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity . . .” The effects of parallelism are numerous, but frequently they act as an organizing force to attract the reader’s attention, add emphasis and organization, or simply provide a musical rhythm.

**Parody** – A work that closely imitates the style or content of another with the specific aim of comic effect and/or ridicule. As comedy, parody distorts or exaggerates distinctive features of the original. As ridicule, it mimics the work by repeating and borrowing words, phrases, or characteristics in order to illuminate weaknesses in the original. Well-written parody offers enlightenment about the original, but poorly written parody offers only ineffective imitation. Usually an audience must grasp literary allusion and understand the work being parodied in order to fully appreciate the nuances of the newer work. SNL is famous for its parodies.

**Pathos** (pay-thos) – Greek for “suffering” or “experience.” Speakers appeal to pathos to emotionally motivate their audience. More specific appeals to pathos might play on the audience’s values, desires, and hopes, on the one hand, or fears and prejudices, on the other.

**Periodic sentence** – A sentence that presents its central meaning in a main clause at the end. This independent clause is preceded by a phrase or clause that cannot stand alone. The effect of a periodic sentence is to add emphasis and structural variety. It is also a much stronger sentence than the loose sentence. The periodic sentence is a suspended sentence; in other words, the reader either does not know who or what is being discussed and/or what is happening until the final word of the sentence. A well-crafted periodic sentence often holds the reader in suspense. The reader anticipates something important, but the writer holds it back, building tension, until the final moment of revelation. Notice how one can underline the first

*Example*: “Spring, with new buds popping out, flowers blooming, and mild temperatures, is my favorite season.”

**Personification** – A figure of speech in which the author presents or describes concepts, animals, or inanimate objects by endowing them with human attributes or emotions.
Personification is used to make these abstractions, animal, or objects appear more vivid to the reader.

**Polysyndeton** (polly-sin-dih-tawn) – Figure of addition and emphasis which intentionally employs a series of conjunctions (FANBOYS: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so) not normally found in successive words, phrases or clauses; the deliberate and excessive use of conjunctions in successive words or clauses. The effect is a feeling of multiplicity, energetic enumeration, and building up – a persistence or intensity.

**Example:** “They read and studied and wrote and drilled. I laughed and talked and flunked.”

**Point of view** – In literature, the perspective from which a story is told. There are two general divisions of point of view, and many subdivisions within those.

- **First-person** narrators tell the story with the first-person pronoun, “I,” and is a character in the story. This narrator can be the protagonist, a participant (character in a secondary role), or an observer (a character who merely watches the action).

- **Third-person** narrators relate the events with the third-person pronouns, “he,” “she,” and “it.” There are two main subdivisions to be aware of: omniscient and **limited omniscient**. In the “third person omniscient” point of view, the narrator, with godlike knowledge, presents the thoughts and actions of any or all characters. This all-knowing narrator can reveal what each character feels and thinks at any given moment. The “third person limited omniscient” point of view, as its name implies, presents the feelings and thoughts of only one character, presenting only the actions of all remaining characters. This definition applies in question in the multiple-choice section. However on the essay portion of the exam, the “point of view” carries an additional meaning. When you are asked to analyze the author’s point of view, the appropriate point for you to address is the author’s attitude toward their subject.

**Prose** – Ordinary writing that uses paragraphs and sentences. One of the major divisions of genre, prose refers to fiction and non-fiction, including all its forms. In prose, the printer determines the length of the line; in poetry, the poet determines the length of the line.

**Repetition** - The duplication, either exact or approximate, of any element of language, such as a sound, word, phrase, clause, sentence, or grammatical pattern. When you notice the use of repetition in a passage, note the specific effect that is created.

**Rhetorical modes** - This flexible term describes the variety, conventions, and purposes of the major kinds of writing. (For a more thorough description, refer to the Rhetorical Modes handout.)
Rhetorical Question – 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 answer would suffice. It is used for effect, emphasis, or provocation, or for drawing a concluding statement from the fact at hand.

Example: “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 the same order, and no less necessary to Nature?” – Marcus Aurelius

Sarcasm – From the Greek meaning “to tear flesh,” sarcasm involves bitter, caustic language that is meant to hurt or ridicule someone or something. It may use irony as a device, but not all ironic statements are sarcastic, that is, intended to ridicule. When well done, sarcasm can be witty and insightful; when done poorly, it’s simply cruel.

Satire – A work that targets human vices and follies or social institutions and conventions for reform or ridicule. Regardless of whether or not the work aims to reform human behavior, satire is best seen as a style of writing rather than a purpose for writing. It can be recognized by the many devices used effectively by the satirist: irony, wit, parody, caricature, hyperbole, understatement, and sarcasm. The effects of satire are varied, depending on the writer’s goal, but good satire, often humorous, is thought provoking and insightful about the human condition.

Simile - A type of metaphor that compares two different things in order to create a new meaning. In this case, we are made explicitly aware that a comparison is being made due to the use of “like” or “as.”

Example: “He’s like a shell of a man”.

Subordinate clause - A word group containing a subject and a verb (plus any accompanying phrases or modifiers), but unlike the independent clause, the subordinate clause cannot stand alone; it does not express a complete thought. Also called a dependent clause, the subordinate clause depends on a main clause, sometimes called an independent clause, to complete its meaning. Easily recognized key words and phrases usually begin these clauses, for example: although, because, unless, if even though since, as soon as, while who, when, where, how and that.

Syllogism (sil-uh-jiz-um)– From the Greek for “reckoning together,” a syllogism (or syllogistic-reasoning or syllogistic logic is a deductive system of formal logic that presents two premises (the first one called “major” and the second, “minor”) that inevitably lead to a sound conclusion. A frequently cited example proceeds as follows:
Major premise: All men are mortal.
Minor premise: Socrates is a man.
Conclusion: Therefore, Socrates is mortal.

A syllogism’s conclusion is valid only if each of the two premises is valid. Syllogisms may also present the specific idea first (“Socrates”) and the general second (“All men”). A syllogism differs from an enthymeme in that a syllogism’s major premise is stated, while an enthymeme’s major premise is unstated or assumed.

**Symbol/symbolism** – Generally, anything that represents itself and stands for something else. Usually a symbol is something concrete – such as object, action, character, or scene – that represents something more abstract.

**Synecdoche** (si-nek-duh-kee) – 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).

**Example:** Farmer Joe has two hundred head of cattle [whole cattle], and three hired hands [whole people]. If we had some wheels [whole vehicle], I’d put on my best threads [clothes] and ask for Jane’s hand [hopefully her whole person] in marriage.

**Syntax** – The way an author chooses to join words into phrases, clauses, and sentences. Syntax is similar to diction, but you can differentiate them by thinking of syntax as the groups of words, while diction refers to the individual words.

**Theme** - The central idea or message of a work, the insight it offers into life. Usually theme is unstated in fictional works, but in nonfiction, the theme may be directly stated, especially in expository or argumentative writing.

**Thesis** – In expository writing, the thesis statement is the sentence or a group of sentences that directly expresses the author’s opinion, purpose, meaning, or position. Expository writing is usually judged by analyzing how accurately, effectively, and thoroughly a writer has proved the thesis.

**Tone** – Similar to mood, tone describes the author’s attitude toward his material, the audience, or both. Tone is easier to determine in spoken language than in written language. Considering how a work would sound if it were read aloud can help in identifying an author’s tone. (For a list words used to describe the tone of a text, refer to the Diction & Tone Words handout.)

**Transition** – A word or phrase that links different ideas. Used especially, although not exclusively, in expository and argumentative writing, transitions effectively signal a shift from
one idea to another. A few commonly used transitional words or phrases are Furthermore, consequently, nevertheless, for example, in addition, likewise, similarly, and on the contrary. More sophisticated writers use more subtle means of transition.

**Understatement** – A satirical device involving the ironic minimizing of fact, or presenting something as less significant than it is. The effect can frequently be humorous and emphatic. Understatement is the opposite of hyperbole.

**Example:** “The 1906 San Francisco earthquake interrupted business somewhat in the downtown area.

**Undertone** – An attitude that may lie under the ostensible tone of the piece. Under a cheery surface, for example, a work may have threatening undertones. William Blake’s “The Chimney Sweeper” from the *Songs of Innocence* has a grim undertone.

**Wit** – In modern usage, intellectually amazing language that surprises and delights. A witty statement is humorous, while suggesting the speaker’s verbal power in creating ingenious and perceptive remarks. Wit usually uses terse language that makes a pointed statement.
Rhetorical Modes

Rhetorical mode is a term used to describe the variety, the conventions, and purposes of the major kinds of writing. The four most common rhetorical modes and their purposes are as follows:

1. **Argument**: writing that prompts readers to agree, take suggestions, or undertake action. In a sense, all writing is argument because the writer is always trying to convince readers that what he or she says deserves to be heard.

2. **Description**: writing that tells how something looks, feels, sounds, smells, or tastes. When writers describe a person, place, or thing, they indicate what it looks like and often how it feels, smells, sounds, or tastes. Describing involves showing rather than telling, imagining rather than defining, making the subject come alive rather than remaining abstract. Description requires the choice of precise verbs, specific nouns, and vivid adjectives—unless the subject is dullness itself.

As a writer, you will use description in many kinds of assignments: in profiles of people and places to provide a key to their essence, in visual analysis to reveal the crucial features of a painting or photograph, in cultural critique to highlight the features of the object or phenomenon you will analyze, and in scientific lab reports to give details of an experiment. Almost no essay can be written without at least some description, and many essays rely on this strategy as a fundamental technique.

3. **Narration**: is storytelling. It shows or tells “what happened.” Narration focuses on events, actions, adventures—and the narrator’s response. This rhetorical strategy—narrating—may be the most fundamental. We tell stories about ourselves, about our families, and about friends and neighbors. We tell stories to make a point, to illustrate an argument, to offer evidence or counter-evidence, and sometimes even to substitute for an argument. As these uses suggest, narrating appears in many genres: from memoirs and biographies, to Op-Eds, formal speeches, and parables.

As you plan a paragraph or segment of narration, think about sequence: the order in which the events occurred (chronological order) or an order in which the events might be most dramatically presented (reverse chronological order or the present moment with flashback). Often, sequential order is easier for the reader to comprehend, but sometimes beginning in medias res (at the present moment in the middle of things) and then flashing back to the past creates a more compelling story. Consider incorporating time markers—not only dates, but also sequential phrases: early one evening, later that night, the next morning. And use transitions and transitional words: first, then, meanwhile, later, finally. When you’ve finished narrating
your event or episode, re-read it and ask: What have I left out that the reader needs to know? What might I omit because the reader doesn’t need to know it?

4. Exposition: is informative writing. It informs by…

- **Cause and Effect:** Focusing on causes helps a writer think about why something happened; focusing on effects helps a writer think about what might or could happen. Cause is oriented toward the future; effect looks back to the past. But writers can use this strategy by working in either direction: from present to future, or from present to the past.

  If you were writing about global warming and intending to show its harmful effects, you might lay out your evidence in this sequence:

  This cause leads to these effects.

  If you were writing about binge drinking and trying to identify the reasons for its rise among college students, you might reverse the direction:

  These effects are the result of these causes.

Analyzing a cause (or causes) is a crucial strategy for genres such as cultural critique, Op-Ed, and historical narrative. But you can also use it in an autobiographical essay, where you might analyze the effects of a childhood trauma on your later life, or in a profile of a person, where you might seek the sources (the causes) of the person’s adult personality or achievements.

- **Classification and Division:** Classifying and dividing involves either putting things into groups or dividing up a large block into smaller units. While this strategy might seem better suited to a biology lab than to a writing class, in fact it works well for organizing facts that seem chaotic or for handling big topics that at first glance seem overwhelming. Classifying and dividing allow the writer—and the reader—to get control of a big topic and break it into smaller units of analysis. You will find that classifying and dividing is helpful in writing all genres of analysis: textual, visual, and cultural. You will also find that it can help in argumentative genres because it enables you, as a writer or speaker, to break down a complex argument into parts or to group pieces of evidence into similar categories.

- **Comparison and Contrast:** Comparisons look for similarities between things; contrasts look for differences. In most uses of this rhetorical strategy, you will want to consider both similarities and differences—that is, you will want to compare and contrast. That’s because most things worth comparing have something in common, even if they also
have significant differences. You may end up finding more similarities than differences, or vice versa, but when using this strategy, think about both.

Comparison-contrast may be used for a single paragraph or for an entire essay. It tends to be set up in one of two ways: block or point-by-point. In the block technique, the writer gives all the information about one item and then follows with all the information about the other. Think of it as giving all the As, then all the Bs. Usually, the order of the information is the same for both. In the point-by-point technique, the writer focuses on specific points of comparison, alternating A, B, A, B, A, B, and so on until the main points have been covered.

Comparing and contrasting is an excellent strategy to use in writing a report, making an argument in an Op-Ed, or giving a speech to persuade your audience to take a specific course of action. You can set forth the pros and cons of different programs, political policies, or courses of action leading up to the recommendation you endorse and believe is the more effective.

- **Definition**: Defining involves telling your reader what something means—and what it does not. It involves saying what something is—and what it is not. As a strategy, defining means making sure you—and your readers—understand what you mean by a key term. It may mean re-defining a common term to have a more precise meaning or giving nuance to a term that is commonly used too broadly. Defining and re-defining are great strategies to use in argumentative writing; they help the writer reshape the thinking of the audience and see a concept in a new light.

This rhetorical strategy is not as simple as looking up a word in a dictionary, though often that is a good place to begin. If you look up your key word in a good collegiate dictionary, you may discover that it meant something one hundred years ago that it no longer means, or that it is used in technical writing in a specific sense, or that it has a range of meanings from which you must choose to convey your intention. Citing one of these definitions can help in composing your essay. But defining as a rhetorical strategy may also include giving examples or providing descriptions.

- **Explanation (Process Analysis)**: With this rhetorical strategy, the writer explains how something is done: from everyday processes like how to write a letter, how to play basketball, or how to make French fries, to unusual or extreme processes like how to embalm a corpse or how to face death. Sometimes, writers use this strategy in historical essays to show how something was done in the past. As these examples suggest, explaining a process can be useful in a range of genres: from a narrative that explains learning to read, to a cultural analysis of the funeral industry, to a sermon or
philosophical essay that explores the meaning and purpose of death and dying.

To make a process accessible to the reader, you will need to identify the main steps or stages and then explain them in order, one after the other. Sequence matters. In preparing to write a paragraph explaining a process, it might help to list the steps as a flow chart or as a cookbook recipe—and then turn your list into a paragraph (or more) of fully elaborated prose.

- **Exemplification**: Exemplification is used to explain an abstract idea, particularly a belief or opinion, through giving examples. A writer might give several anecdotes about the topic to serve as examples. Or he/she could describe several specific instances of his/her idea. The examples will be chosen according to the shared memory of author and audience so that they are easy to recognize, effectively illustrating the author’s main idea. Exemplification can be used throughout an essay, just in a paragraph or simply in one sentence, depending on the author’s purpose.
Diction & Tone Words

**Diction** is the author’s word choice, while the **tone** of a text is the writer’s attitude toward their subject, characters, or audience. The two are often related as authors choose to use certain words in order to convey their attitude about the subject. Here is a list of words and synonyms that can be used to describe an author’s **diction** and/or **tone**:

1. **allusive** – intimate, suggest, connote
2. **angry** – mad, furious, irate
3. **bantering** – good-natured teasing, ridicule, joking
4. **benevolent** – magnanimous, generous, noble
5. **burlesque** – mockery, sham, spoof, parody
6. **candid** – clear, frank, genuine, sincere
7. **clinical** – direct, detached, scientific, impersonal
8. **colloquial** – common, ordinary, vernacular
9. **compassionate** – kindly, sympathetic, benevolent
10. **complimentary** – flattering, approving, laudatory
11. **concerned** – touched, affected, influenced
12. **condescending** – scornful, contemptuous, disdainful
13. **confident** – positive, certain, assured
14. **contemptuous** – pompous, arrogant, superior, haughty
15. **contentious** – argumentative, quarrelsome, pugnacious
16. **cynical** – adverse, suspicious, opposed, doubtful, dubious
17. **detached** – separated, severed, apathetic
18. **didactic** – instructive, edifying, moralistic, pedagogic
19. **diffident** – retiring, timid, hesitant, bashful
20. **disdainful** – haughty, arrogant, supercilious
21. **dramatic** – exciting, moving, sensational, emotional
22. **effusive** – talkative, verbose, profuse
23. **elegiac** – sad, mournful, plaintive (like an elegy)
24. **factious** – dissident, rebellious, insubordinate
25. **factual** – authentic, genuine, truthful
26. **fanciful** – capricious, extravagant, whimsical
27. **flippant** – offhand, facetious, frivolous
28. **impartial** – equitable, unbiased, dispassionate
29. incisive – cutting, biting, penetrating
30. indignant – angry, irritated, resentful
31. inflammatory – angry, arousing strong emotion
32. informative – expository, communicative, disclosing
33. insipid – flat, bland, tedious, banal (commonplace)
34. insolent – insulting, brazen, rude, contemptuous
35. ironic – contradictory, implausible, incongruous
36. irreverent – profane, impious, blasphemous, ungodly
37. learned – skilled, experienced, professional
38. lugubrious – gloomy, dismal, melancholy, somber
39. maudlin – sentimental, mushy, gushing, insipid
40. mock-heroic – mimicking courage (pretend)
41. mock-serious – mimicking solemnity (pretend)
42. moralistic – virtuous, righteous, blameless
43. objective – impartial, detached, impersonal
44. patronizing – condescending, scornful, disdainful
45. pedantic – academic, bookish, scholastic
46. petty – trivial, insignificant, narrow-minded
47. pretentious – arrogant, boastful, conceited
48. restrained – unwilling, hesitant, reluctant
49. sardonic – cutting, biting, penetrating, satirical
50. satirical – lampooning, facetious
51. scornful – bitter, caustic, acrimonious, mordant
52. sentimental – emotional, mushy, maudlin (tearful)
53. somber – serious, gloomy, dismal, shadowy
54. sympathetic – supportive, favorable, considerate
55. taunting – contemptuous, insulting, derisive
56. terse – concise, succinct, pithy, pointed
57. turgid – pompous, bloated, swollen, distended
58. urgent – compelling, demanding, imperative, pressing
59. vibrant – resonant, active, resounding
60. whimsical – flippant, frivolous, light-hearted, dainty