

Rhetorical Devices

Euphemism: A neutral or positive expression used instead of one that carries negative associations.

-“The government faces resistance from an organized group of freedom fighters.”

Dysphemism: A negative expression used instead of one that carries positive associations.

-“The government is valiantly combating resistance from terrorists.”

Innuendo: A claim that makes an *implicit* suggestion.

-“Since you’re debating whether to vote for me or Snodgrass, you may want to know that *I* have never cheated on my taxes.”

Loaded Question: A question that rests on unwarranted or unjustified assumptions.

-“Have you always been impolite?”

Stereotype: A thought or image about a group of people based on little or no evidence.

-“I wouldn’t expect anything different from a philosopher.”

Rhetorical analogy: Comparing one thing to another in order to convey a particular feeling (either negative or positive).

-This often comes in the form of a simile or metaphor.

-“Joe is a robust stallion of a man.”

-“Theresa’s sense of humor is as dry as the Sahara.”

Rhetorical explanation: An explanation that conveys a strong attitude or feeling because of the diction used.

-“Notre Dame lost to USC this weekend because they played like my little brother’s peewee team.”

Weaseler: A qualifying term used to provide the speaker with a “way out” of objections.

-“Using our hair treatment may leave your hair healthier and shinier!”

Downplayer: A word used to make someone or something look less significant.

-“**Scare quotes**” can sometimes turn words into downplayers.

-“I wouldn’t invite Jimmy to drum for the band—he’s barely been playing for two years.”

-“I suppose Jimmy is a ‘drummer’, but we can do better than that.”

Horse laugh/Sarcasm: The use of ridicule to make a claim or person seem objectionable.

-“Sure, Nascar is a real sport—anything that inspires that much Budweiser consumption must be a feat of athletic prowess!”

Hyperbole: An extravagant overstatement used to convey a particular attitude.

-“The new Radiohead record is the most amazing album ever made.”

-Note: Other rhetorical devices (dysphemism, sarcasm, etc.) may make use of hyperbole.

Proof Surrogate: An expression used to suggest that there is evidence for a claim without actually citing any evidence.

-“Scientists have known that aliens exist for years now.”

-“Everyone knows that bottled water is better for you than tap water.”