RHETORICAL DEVICES AND PERSUASIVE TECHNIQUES

Act III, Scene ii *of Julius Caesar* contains two of the most famous orations ever written for the stage. "Friends, Romans, Countrymen, lend me your ears..." declares Antony, and then he goes on with a powerfully persuasive speech to the Roman people. In order to understand why his words (indeed, Shakespeare's words) have remained in the human collective memory for so long, one must understand the use of **rhetoric** and **persuasive techniques** in the speech.

**Rhetoric is defined** as, "The art or study of using language effectively and persuasively; skill in using language effectively and persuasively" (Microsoft Bookshelf 98). Below is a list of common rhetorical devices.

\* ALLITERATION – repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of words; this catches the audience’s ear and is audibly appealing.

\*ALLUSION – a reference in a literary work to a person, place, or thing in history or another work of literature.

\*ANAPHORA – repetition of word phrase/clause at the beginning of word groups.

*Ex: For everything there is a season….a time to be born, and a time to plant, and a time to die.*

\*ANTISTROPHE – repetition of the same word/phrase at the end of successive clauses/stanzas

\* ANTITHESIS - opposition, or contrast of ideas or words in a balanced or parallel construction. Many times these statements almost seem contradictory.

*Example: I am tall; you are short.*

\* APORIA - expression of doubt (often feigned) by which a speaker appears uncertain as to what he should think, say, or do.

This can oftentimes gain sympathy from the audience as if the speaker is torn on what to do.

\*APOSIOPESIS – speaker comes to a complete stop / pause

\* APOSTROPHE - a sudden turn from the general audience to address a specific group or person or personified abstraction absent or present.

*Example: Fraility, thy name is woman.*

\*ASYNDTON – words or phrases in a series without connecting conjunction.

*Example: Veni, vidi, vici.*

\* ETHOS – building the speaker’s credibility /

\*FALLACIES -

\* HYPERBOLE - exaggeration for emphasis or for rhetorical effect

\* IRONY - expression of something that is contrary to the intended meaning; the words say one thing but mean another.

\* LOGOS – a logical approach to the argument

\* METAPHOR – a comparison not using like or as

\*METONYMY - linked but not a part. Substitution for a word or phrase to stand for a word or phrase similar in meaning.

*Example: “Crown” stands for Elizabeth I and for anti-Catholics*

\* PARADOX - an assertion seemingly opposed to common sense, but that may yet have some truth in it

\*PARALYPSIS – to draw attention to something while claiming to pass over it

\*PARALLELISM – the use of corresponding ideas

\* PATHOS – appealing to the audience’s emotions

\* PERSONIFICATION – giving human characteristics to nonhuman things.

\*POLYTOTON - repetition of words from the same root, but different endings.

*Example: strong - strength*

\* REPETITION – repeating a word or idea throughout a speech for emphasis

*Example:*

*We shall not flag or fail. We shall go on to the end. We shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills. We shall never surrender.* Churchill.

\*RHETORICAL QUESTION – must have a purpose – to cause the audience to contemplate/act.

\*SARCASM – form of verbal irony that insults with insincere praise

\* SIMILE – a comparison using like or as

\*SOPHISTRY – (sophism) the use of reason or argument that sound correct but are actually false – Fallacies.

\*SYNECDOCHE - one of its parts. Part is made to represent the whole.

*Example: Wheels for car*

\*SYLLEPSIS - (adj) One word (usually a verb) is understood differently in relation to two or more words, which it modifies.

Note: similar to zeugma.

*Example: "I finally told Ross, late in the summer, that I was losing weight, my grip, and*

*possibily my mind.”*

\* UNDERSTATEMENT- for intensification, by denying the contrary of the thing being affirmed.