# Rhetorical Techniques Worksheet

**(Notes: most of this is adapted from the website ThoughtCo. Also, there are far more rhetorical techniques than what is included in this worksheet, which is only meant to give you some of the more well-known ones, in addition to the commonly cited ethos-pathos-logos appeals that are so prevalent in writing courses)**

**Anaphora**

Repetition of the same word or phrase at the beginning of successive clauses or sentences.

This technique appears throughout Dr. Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream” speech (repeating the title, which he actually does at the end of sentences too, which is called “epiphora” and is another entry in this worksheet).

Early in World War II, Winston Churchill relied on anaphora to inspire the British people: “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.”

**Commoratio**

Repetition of an idea several times using different words. In the television show Monty Python's Flying Circus, comedian John Cleese used commoratio in the “Dead Parrot” sketch: “He’s passed on! This parrot is no more! He has ceased to be! He’s expired and gone to meet his maker! He’s a stiff! Bereft of life, he rests in peace! If you hadn’t nailed him to the perch he’d be pushing up the daisies! His metabolic processes are now history! He’s off the twig! He’s kicked the bucket, he’s shuffled off his mortal coil, run down the curtain and joined the bleedin’ choir invisible! THIS IS AN EX-PARROT!”

**Diacope**

Repetition that is broken up by one or more words in a text. Shel Silverstein used diacope in the poem “Dreadful”:

“Someone ate the baby,

It’s rather sad to say.

Someone ate the baby

So she won’t be out to play.

We’ll never hear her whiny cry

Or have to feel if she is dry.

We’ll never hear her asking, ‘Why?’

Someone ate the baby.”

**Dissoi Logoi**

The concept of addressing opposing arguments, a cornerstone of Sophistic ideology and method. Also known as “antilogike.”

**Elenchus**

Questioning someone to test the credibility of what they’ve said. Another term is “interrogation.”

**Epimone**

Frequent repetition of a phrase or question; dwelling on a point. One of the best-known examples of epimone is Travis Bickle’s self-interrogation in the film Taxi Driver. While looking at himself in a mirror and holding a gun, he says, “You talkin’ to me? You talkin’ to me? You talkin’ to me? Then who the hell else are you talking… you talking to me? Well, I’m the only one here. Who…do you think you’re talking to? Oh yeah? Okay.”

**Epiphora**

Repetition of a word or phrase at the end of several clauses. A week after Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast late in the summer of 2005, the president of Jefferson Parish, Aaron Broussard, employed epiphora in an interview with CBS News: “Take whatever idiot they have at the top of whatever agency and give me a better idiot. Give me a caring idiot. Give me a sensitive idiot. Just don’t give me the same idiot.”

**Epizeuxis**

Repetition of a word for emphasis (usually with no words in between).

From Ani DiFranco’s song “Back, Back, Back”:

“Back back back in the back of your mind

are you learning an angry language,

tell me boy boy boy are you tending to your joy

or are you just letting it vanquish?

Back back back in the dark of your mind

where the eyes of your demons are gleaming

are you mad mad mad

about the life you never had

even when you are dreaming?”

**Exigence and Kairos**

According to one educator, exigence is “what prompts the author to write in the first place, a sense of urgency, a problem that requires attention right now, a need that must be met, a concept that must be understood before the audience can move to a next step” (M. Jimmie Killingsworth, “Appeals in Modern Rhetoric”).

The difference between exigence and kairos is defined by another educator this way: “When discovering our exigence, we also have to consider the element of timeliness, or kairos. In addition to paying attention to a gap that urgently needs to be filled in the discourse surrounding a problem, we must ask ourselves about the window of opportunity to write or speak now” (Kate Mele, “Rhetorical Situation, Exigence, and Kairos”).

You might think of kairos as a sense of urgency that comes with a limited amount of time to address the issue.

**Polyptoton**

Repeating words but altering their formation. Robert Frost employed polyptoton in a poem: “Love,” he wrote, “is an irresistible desire to be irresistibly desired.”

**Stasis**

The process of first identifying the central issues in a situation, and next ways to address those issues. The Greek rhetorician Hermagoras of Temnos identified four types:

**Coniectura**

Speculating about whether or not something had been done: Did X actually kill Y?

**Definitiva**

Defining an action: Was the admitted killing of Y by X *murder* or *homicide*?

**Generalis or Qualitas**

Determining the nature of the action, especially the reasons it occurred: Was the murder of Y by X in some way justified by the circumstances?

**Translatio**

The procedure of formally, or “officially,” judging the action: Can this court try X for a crime when X has been given immunity from prosecution? Should it be tried in another county or state?

* **Identify a text that uses one of these techniques. How is it used? Why does it make the text effective?**
* **In a 4-5 sentence free write, *use* one of these techniques. You might consider a response to a current event, a text we have been reading, or an issue that has occurred in your own life or the life of someone you know**
* **Find additional 2-3 rhetorical techniques not on this list (besides ethos-pathos-logos). What are they? Did you find examples of how they are used?**