The Art of Rhetoric:
Learning How to Use the Three Main Rhetorical Styles

*Rhetoric* (n) - the art of speaking or writing effectively. (Webster’s Dictionary)

According to Aristotle, rhetoric is "the ability, in each particular case, to see the available means of persuasion." He described three main forms of rhetoric: **Ethos**, **Logos** and **Pathos**.

In order to be a more effective and persuasive writer, you must understand these three rhetorical approaches and apply them in your writing. These approaches will also help you to be a more savvy reader/listener of news, political speeches/debates and advertising.

**Ethos**

Ethos is appeal based on character. If the author is reputable, then the idea or opinion must be reputable. If the author can link his/her stance to other admired individuals it will have a similar persuasive effect. (Commercial endorsements use ethos, for example). Similarly, to present an idea as negative, a writer might connect it with a disreputable individual.

**Logos**

Logos is appeal based on logic or reason. For example, a writer might use facts, statistics, scientific evidence and logic to persuade the reader.

Logic can be a powerful, and sometimes misleading, persuasive tool. Inductive logic uses past experience to predict future outcomes. *I have only seen white swans; therefore all swans MUST be white. However, when I see black swans in Australia, I may discover my logic lead me to a generalization based on my limited experience.*

**Pathos**

Pathos is appeal based on emotion. Anecdotal evidence is often pathos-driven. Pathos is also an effective persuasive tool in advertising.

Now try to use these three rhetorical approaches in your editorial.
RHETORICAL DEVICES FOR PERSUASIVE WRITING/SPEAKING

All of the devices below (and many more) are employed to persuade; however, some are used primarily to hide the truth or confuse the audience.

Which devices are most appropriate for a published newspaper editorial?

Which should you listen critically for in politics and advertising?

Abstract Language: Words that refer to ideas, qualities, attitudes, and conditions that cannot be perceived with the senses—for example, freedom, beauty, joy. Opposite of concrete language.

    We will pass through this time of peril and carry on the work of peace. We will defend our freedom. We will bring freedom to others and we will prevail. -George W. Bush

Alliteration: repetition of the same consonant sound beginning several words in sequence.

    Let us go forth to lead the land we love. -J. F. Kennedy, Inaugural

    Veni, vidi, vici. -Julius Caesar

Analogy: A comparison between something familiar and something unfamiliar. The things being compared are similar in some ways but not in others. Metaphor and simile are types of analogies. (False analogies compare two things that are not sufficiently alike; they are persuasive devices but not logically sound.)

    In a sense we've come to our nation's capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men, yes, black men as well as white men, would be guaranteed the "unalienable Rights" of "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note, insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check, a check which has come back marked "insufficient funds."

    But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. And so, we've come to cash this check, a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice. -Martin Luther King Jr.

Authority: an expert in a particular field. A reliable or respectable source of information used to support an argument.

Bandwagon: the tactic of inviting the audience to accept an assertion because everybody else does.

Climax: arrangement of words, phrases, or clauses in an order of ascending power. Often the last emphatic word in one phrase or clause is repeated as the first emphatic word of the next.

    One equal temper of heroic hearts, Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield. – Tennyson in Ulysses

Connotation, Euphemism and Emotive Language: using diction with strong negative, positive or neutral connotations to colour the facts.

On my orders, coalition forces have begun striking selected targets. – George W. Bush

The people of the United States and our friends and allies will not live at the mercy of an outlaw regime that threatens the peace with weapons of mass murder. – George W. Bush
Logical Fallacy/Circular Reasoning/Begging the Question: forms of poor reasoning; the faulty logic is often hidden in the language.

Why am I the boss? It's because I call the shots around here.

He had good reason, or he wouldn't have proceeded with the plan.

Our nation will prevail because God is great.

Hasty generalization: an assertion or conclusion drawn on insufficient evidence; jumping to conclusions. Stereotyping is a form of generalization.

Oversimplification: attempts to obscure or deny an argument by ignoring its complexity

Red Herring: (sometimes called Trojan Horse) a decoy argument; one that ignores the real issue while bringing up totally irrelevant issues.

How can she justify spending money to fight crime when there are children starving in Africa?

Hyperbole: exaggeration for emphasis or for rhetorical effect.

Ladies and gentlemen, I've been to Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan, and I can say without hyperbole that this is a million times worse than all of them put together. - Kent Brockman, The Simpsons

Parallelism: similarity of structure in a pair or series of related words, phrases or clauses.

He tried to make the law clear, precise and equitable.

The more we do, the more we can do. -William Hazlitt

Humanity has advanced, when it has advanced, not because it has been sober, responsible, and cautious, but because it has been playful, rebellious, and immature. -Tom Robbins

Pleonasm: use of superfluous or redundant words, often enriching the thought.

No one, rich or poor, will be excepted.

Rhetorical question: a question asked for effect, with no answer expected.

Repetition: the repeated use of a word or phrase to emphasize it.

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. – Winston Churchill

In 1931, ten years ago, Japan invaded Manchukuo -- without warning. In 1935, Italy invaded Ethiopia -- without warning. In 1938, Hitler occupied Austria -- without warning. In 1939, Hitler invaded Czechoslovakia - - without warning. Later in 1939, Hitler invaded Poland -- without warning. And now Japan has attacked Malaya and Thailand -- and the United States --without warning.- Franklin D. Roosevelt

NOW CHOOSE THREE RHETORICAL DEVICES AND USE THEM IN YOUR EDITORIAL.

On your final draft, put the name of each device at the appropriate points in the margin.