



[All of these individuals are known for their power to persuade through the art of rhetoric.](#)

Source: *Time Magazine* 10 greatest speakers of all time

1. [Socrates](#)
2. [Patrick Henry](#)
3. [Frederick Douglass](#)
4. [Abraham Lincoln](#)
5. [Susan B. Anthony](#)
6. [Winston Churchill](#)
7. [John F. Kennedy](#)
8. [Martin Luther King, Jr.](#)
9. [Lyndon B. Johnson](#)
10. [Ronald Reagan](#)

**“Words—so innocent and powerless as they are, as standing in a dictionary, how potent for good and evil they become in the hands of one who knows how to combine them.”**

**-Nathaniel Hawthorne**

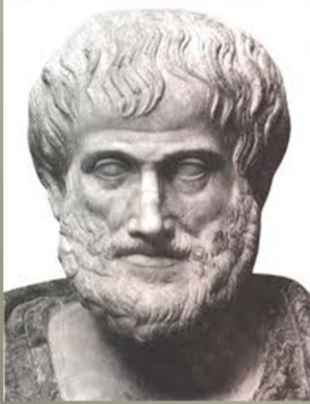
**rhet·o·ric**

[ret-er-ik]

The art of using language to *argue* effectively.

- Rhetoric and propaganda are not the same thing.
- To many, the word *rhetoric* signals that trickery or deception is afoot
- “Empty rhetoric!” is a common criticism—and at times an indictment
- Greek philosopher Aristotle defined *rhetoric* as “the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion.”
- In its simplest form, rhetoric is a thoughtful, reflective activity leading to effective communication, including the rational exchange of opposing viewpoints.
- In Aristotle’s day and in ours, those who understand and can use the available means to appeal to an audience of one or many find themselves in a position of strength
- They have the tools to resolve conflicts without confrontation, to persuade readers to support their position, or to move others to take action
- It is part of our job as informed citizens and consumers to understand how rhetoric works so that we can be wary of manipulation or deceit, while appreciating effective and civil communication.

# The History of Rhetoric



- One of the oldest fields of study
- Formulated by the Greeks and Romans
- According to Aristotle, when speakers and writers communicate with others, they draw on three general appeals

- Rhetoric is one of the oldest fields of study in Western culture. Formulated by Greeks and Romans, it was developed to meet needs of speakers. Later these skills were applied to meet needs of writers.
- 2500 years ago, Aristotle identified 3 key ways that writers could appeal to their audiences in arguments
- He labeled these appeals *pathos*, *ethos*, and *logos*
- These general appeals are as effective today as they were in Aristotle's time, though we usually think of them in slightly different terms

# **RHETORICAL APPEALS**

# Rhetorical Appeals: Appeal to Ethics *or* Ethos



**Ethos (believability of the speaker; credibility and trustworthiness)**

**When analyzing rhetoric,**

- Note how the author establishes a **persona** (the adopted perspective/character a speaker or author uses to deliver an argument)
- Note how the author establishes credibility (not only in what he/she says, but also how he/she says it)
- Note any revelation of the author's credentials or personal history

- Greek for “character”
- Establishing ethos = establishing the credibility of the speaker or writer
  - Does s(he) have the authority to speak on the issue?
  - Does the person have good motives for addressing the subject?
  - Should I listen to or pay attention to this individual?
- Establishing a good image that makes you trustworthy is important
- Trying to convince teens not to drink? Who will they listen to—a recovering alcoholic or a concerned parent?
- Appeals to Ethos emphasize shared values
- Sometimes the speaker's reputation can automatically establish ethos—a scholar, a “dog whisperer,” the President
- When writers seem trustworthy, audiences are more likely to listen to their arguments and accept them
- The writer's presentation of self as trustworthy through sharing his or her expertise, knowledge, experience, sincerity, common purpose
  - Knows what s(he) is talking about
  - Shares values with audience
  - Is evenhanded or balanced
  - Respects audience and opponent

## Rhetorical Appeals: Appeal to Emotion *or* Pathos



**Pathos (designed to stir emotions; diction engages audience & makes them more receptive)**

**When analyzing rhetoric,**

- Note the primary audience of the text
- Note the emotional appeals the author makes
- Note the author's expectations of the audience

- The appeal to emotion, values, desires, hopes, and beliefs **or** to fears, prejudices
- Arguments that appeal exclusively to emotions are generally weak and “propagandistic”
- An effective speaker or writer understands the power of evoking an audience's emotions through figurative language, personal anecdote, and vivid imagery
- For instance, while facts and figures (logical appeals) may convince us that the ebola outbreak in West Africa is real and serious, what elicits an outpouring of support is the emotional power of televised images and newspaper accounts of suffering people
- Concrete and descriptive language paints pictures in readers' minds, thus building emotional appeal and a **bond** between the writer and the reader
- The writer generates emotion in readers to shape their responses

Anger

Fear

Jealousy

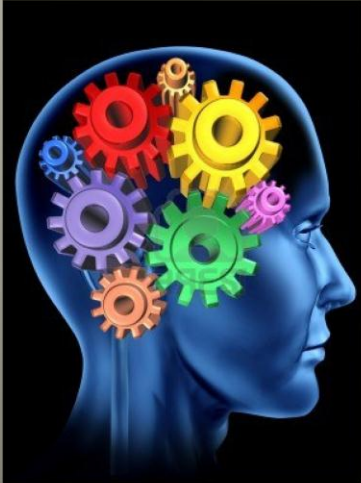
Empathy

Pity

Love



## Rhetorical Appeals: Appeal to Reason *or* Logos



**Logos (evidence based on logic, facts, and truths; truths may be universally accepted, proven facts, or ideas true to specific group)**

**When analyzing rhetoric,**

- Note the author's claims
- Note the evidence the author provides to support claims
- Note the conclusions an author draws

- The appeal to reason or logic through the use of clear, rational ideas
- Greek for “embodied thought” means thinking logically
- Audiences respond well to the use of reason and evidence
- The writer's presentation of reason and evidence to back up claims

Facts

Statistics

Trustworthy testimony

Reasonable examples

Narrative or story that embodies sound support



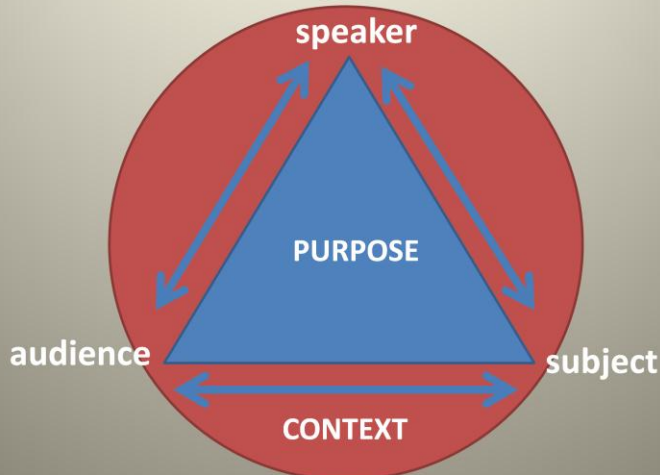
## The Situation



- All arguments exist in a particular **context** that
  - Influences how the argument can be shaped
  - Influences how others will receive the argument

# The Rhetorical Triangle

The relationship among the three elements of an argument is illustrated on the **rhetorical triangle**.



- Another important aspect of the rhetorical situation is the relationship among the speaker, audience, and subject.
- One way to conceptualize the relationship among these elements is through the *rhetorical triangle*.
- Aristotle used a triangle to illustrate how these three elements are interrelated.
- How a speaker perceives the relationships among these elements will go a long way toward determining what he or she says and how he or she says it.
  - **The Speaker:** the person/persona delivering the message or the person or group who creates the text politician, commentator, artist, company. The speaker is not just a name—think of a description of who the speaker is in the context of the text
    - ✓ this is called a persona (from the Greek for “mask” the face the speaker shows to the audience)
    - ✓ a speaker may deliberately devise a persona that is not necessarily a reflection of his or her true self
  - **The Audience:** both specific (the specific group that is listening to/reading the argument) and general (the more generalized group of people the speaker is trying to reach)
  - **Subject:** the topic. Not to be confused with the purpose, which is the goal

the speaker wants to achieve.