**AP Language Rhetorical Terms: List 1**

1. **allusion** -­‐ A reference to some famous literary work, historical figure, or event. For example, to say that a friend "has the patience of Job" means that he is as enduring as the Biblical figure of that name. Allusions must be used with care lest the audience miss their meaning.
2. **argumentation** -­‐ Argumentation is the writer's attempt to convince his reader to agree with him. It is based upon appeals to reason, evidence proving the argument, and sometimes emotion to persuade. Some arguments attempt to merely prove a point, but others go beyond proving to inciting the reader to action. At the heart of all argumentation lies a debatable issue.
3. **coherence** -­‐ The principle of clarity and logical adherence to a topic that binds together all parts of a composition. A coherent essay is one whose parts-­‐-­‐sentences, paragraphs, pages-­‐-­‐are logically fused into a single whole. Its opposite is an incoherent essay-­‐-­‐one that is jumbled, illogical, and unclear.
4. **description** -­‐ A rhetorical mode used to develop an essay whose primary aim is to depict a scene, person, thing, or idea. Descriptive writing evokes the look, feel, sound, and sense of events, people, or things.
5. **diction** -­‐ word choice. Diction refers to the choice of words a writer uses in an essay or other writing. Implicit in the idea of diction is a vast vocabulary of synonyms -­‐ different words that have more or less equivalent meanings. If only one word existed for every idea or condition, diction would not exist. But since we have a choice of words with various shades of meaning, a writer can and does choose among words to express ideas. The diction of skilled writers is determined by the audience and occasion of their writing.
6. **exposition** -­‐ Writing whose chief aim is to explain. Rather than showing, as in narration, exposition tells. A majority of essays contain some exposition because they need to convey information, give background, or tell how events occurred or processes work.
7. **figurative language** -­‐ Said of a word or expression used in a nonliteral way. For example. The expression "to go the last mile" may have nothing at all to do with geographical distance, but may mean to complete an unfinished task or job.
8. **hyperbole** - A figure of speech using deliberate exaggeration or overstatement. Hyperboles often have a comic effect; however, a serious effect is also possible. Often, hyperbole produces irony at the same time.
9. **image/imagery** - An image is a phrase or expression that evokes a picture or describes a scene. An image may be either literal, in which case it is a realistic attempt to depict with words what something looks like, or figurative, in which case the expression is used that likens the thing described to something else (e.g., "My love is like a red, red rose.").
10. **irony** - The use of language in such a way that apparent meaning contrasts sharply with the real meaning. One famous example (in Shakespeare's Julius Caesar) is Antony's description of Brutus as "an honorable man." Since Brutus was one of Caesar's assassins, Antony meant just the opposite. Irony is a softer form of sarcasm and shares with it the same contrast between apparent and real meaning. In general, there are three major types of irony used in language: (1) In **verbal irony**, the words literally state the opposite of the writer's (or speaker's) true meaning. (2) In **situational irony**, events turn out the opposite of what was expected. What the characters and readers think ought to happen is what does happen. (3) In **dramatic irony**, facts or events are unknown to a character in a play or piece of fiction but known to the reader, audience, or other characters in the work. Irony is used for many reasons, but frequently, it's used to create poignancy or humor.
11. **metaphor** - A figurative image that implies the similarity between things otherwise dissimilar, as when the poet Robert Frost states "I have been acquainted with the night," meaning that he has survived despair.
12. **mood** -­‐ The pervading impression made on the feelings of the reader. For instance, Edgar Allan Poe often created a mood of horror in his short stories. A mood can be gloomy, sad, joyful, bitter, frightening, and so forth. A writer can create as many moods as his emotional range suggests.
13. **narration** - An account of events as they happen. A narrative organizes material on the basis of chronological order or pattern, stressing the sequence of events and pacing these events according to the emphasis desired. Narration is often distinguished from three other modes of writing: argumentation, description and exposition.
14. **oxymoron** - From the Greek for "pointedly foolish," an oxymoron is a figure of speech wherein the author groups apparently contradictory terms to suggest a paradox. Simple examples include "jumbo shrimp" and "cruel kindness."
15. **pacing** - The speed at which a piece of writing moves along. Pacing depends on the balance between summarizing action and representing action in detail. Syntax can also affect pacing.
16. **paradox** - a statement that appears to be self-­‐contradictory or opposed to common sense but upon closer inspection contains some degree of truth or validity. The first scene of Macbeth, for example, closes with the witches' cryptic remark "Fair is foul, and foul is fair."
17. **parallelism** - The principle of coherent writing requiring that coordinating elements be given the same grammatical form, as in Daniel Webster's dictum, "I was born an American; I will live an American; I will die an American."
18. **parody**-­‐ a work that closely imitates the style or content of another with the specific aim of comic effect and/or ridicule. As comedy, parody distorts or exaggerates distinctive features of the original. As ridicule, it mimics the work by repeating and borrowing words, phrases, or characteristics in order to illuminate weaknesses in the original. Well-­‐written parody offers enlightenment about the original, but poorly written parody offers only ineffectual imitation. Usually an audience must grasp literary allusion and understand the work being parodied in order to fully appreciate the nuances of the newer work. Occasionally, however, parodies take on a life of their own and don't require knowledge of the original.
19. **personification** -­‐ Personification-­‐ Attributing human qualities to objects, abstractions, or animals: "Tis beauty calls and glory leads the way."
20. **point of view** -­‐ The perspective from which a piece of writing is developed. In nonfiction the point of view is usually the author's. In fiction the point of view can be first-­‐ or third-­‐person point of view. In the first-­‐ person point of view, the author becomes part of the narration and refers to himself as "I." In the third-­‐ person point of view the narrator simply observes the action of the story. Third-­‐person narrative is either omniscient (when the narrator knows everything about all of the characters) or limited (when the narrator knows only those things that might be apparent to a sensitive observer.)
21. **rhetoric**-­‐ The art of using persuasive language. The art of analyzing all the choices involving language that a writer, speaker, reader, or listener might make in a situation so that the text becomes meaningful, purposeful, and effective; the specific features of texts, written or spoken, that cause them to be meaningful, purposeful, and effective for readers or listeners in a situation.
22. **rhetorical modes**-­‐ this flexible term describe the variety, the conventions, and the purposes of the major kinds of writing. The four most common rhetorical modes and their purposes are as follows: (1) The purpose of exposition (or expository writing) is to explain and analyze information by presenting an idea, relevant evidence, and appropriate discussion. The AP language exam essay questions are frequently set up as expository topics. (2) The purpose of argumentation is to prove the validity of an idea, or point of view, by presenting sound reasoning, discussion, and argument that thoroughly convince the reader. Persuasive writing is a type of argumentation having an additional aim of urging some form of action. (3) The purpose of description is to re-­‐create, invent, or visually present a person, place, event, or action so that the reader can picture that being described. Sometimes an author engages all five senses in description; good descriptive writing can be sensuous and picturesque. Descriptive writing may be straightforward and objective or highly emotional and subjective. (4) The purpose of narration is to tell a story or narrate an event or series of events. This writing mode frequently uses the tools of descriptive writing. These four writing modes are sometimes referred to as modes of discourse.
23. **simile**-­‐ A figure of speech which, like the metaphor, implies a similarity between things otherwise dissimilar. The simile, however, always uses the words like, as, or so to introduce the comparison: "As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, so is a fair woman which is without discretion."
24. **slanting** -­‐ The characteristic of selecting facts, words, or emphasis to achieve a preconceived intent: Favorable intent: "Although the Senator looks bored, when it comes time to vote he is on the right side of the issue." Unfavorable intent: "The Senator may vote on the right side of the issues, but he always looks bored."
25. **style** - The way a writer writes. The expression of an author's individuality through the use of words, sentence patterns, and selection of details Any of the choices writers make while writing-about diction, sentence length, structure, rhythm, and figures of speech-that make their work sound like them. The tone of a particular work can be due in part to a writer's style. James Baldwin is known for his distinctive style, one aspect of which is the mixing of formal, sometimes biblical, language and an everyday, conversational style, as in this sentence from "Notes of a Native Son" (p. 39 in 50 Essays): "I had declined to believe in that apocalypse which had been central to my father's vision; very well, life seemed to be saying, here is something that will certainly pass for an apocalypse until the real thing comes along." Advice to fledgling writers: Develop a style that combines sincerity with clarity.