

Why should we study rhetoric

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Rhetoric, which came from the Greek word "speech" or "spoken" is literally defined as the art of speaking or writing effectively. Although its critics, including ancient philosophers like Plato and Socrates, downplay its effectiveness even to the point of disregarding it even as an art, its efficacy and use as a means of effective communication merits its respect. Hence, as this essay will illustrate, rhetoric, as a means of communication, is a vital tool, which provides those who use it an effective and efficient means to persuade and be understood.

The value of rhetoric, as an effective communication tool lies in its ability to persuade effectively. There are three kinds of rhetoric - deliberative oratory, forensic oratory, and epideictic oratory - each type, or the combination of two or all types, provide individuals with a means to effectively persuade based on the type of situation a speech must deal with. Deliberative oratory, for example, proves to be an effective tool when persuading an audience to take action in the future. This category is used today in avenues of legislation such as the U. S. Senate, where lobbyists convince legislators to take action in either abolishing or creating a law. Forensic oratory, on the other hand, dealing with events that happened in the past, is an effective tool to prove or disprove events or acts that supposedly took place. Lawyers in court proceedings use this today. Lastly, Epideictic oratory, which aims to convince an audience about the pros and cons of a belief or ideology is an effective tool commonly used in most public speeches today.

Rhetoric is also an efficient means to communicate. By looking into the parts of a rhetorical speech, one can observe the efficient manner that the speech is organized. A rhetorical speech has three major subdivisions - the introduction, the body, and the conclusion. Although these parts seem too

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simple at first glance, each part provides an efficient order, which makes our speech not only palatable to an audience, but also easily understood. The introduction, which develops a rapport between the speaker and his audience, prepares an audience for the speech at hand. This makes it easier for a speaker to appeal to his audience and urge them to be more receptive of the speech later on. The middle part of the speech, which is further subdivided into a narrative, a division, and proof and refutation, allows the speaker to be more persuasive for an audience because it subdivides the speech to be easily understood. Lastly, the conclusion, which serves as an ending for the speech, allows the speaker to drive his point home by reiterating the important points of the previous material. This provides the speaker with the chance to give his last appeal to convince his audience. Although the distinction between the kinds of rhetorical speeches is not very apparent today, and while those who use it do not strictly follow the divisions of a rhetorical speech, there is no denying the use and effectiveness of rhetoric in communicating and persuading effectively. It provides individuals with a means of persuasion for every given situation - be it in the realm of legislation, in the judicial court, or any other type of public sphere. It also provides its speaker with an efficient tool, that properly organizes his thoughts and prepares an audience to be more receptive. Rhetoric is therefore an effective and efficient means to communicate and to persuade. However, as those who use rhetoric during the ancient times warn, it is important to use it correctly, and with the correct intentions because its effectiveness warrants its misuse by those with not so honorable intentions. In today's world where image and perception can overshadow truths and

facts, the ability to effectively communicate one's thoughts can be a dangerous tool if not used effectively.