What is Rhetoric?

Rhetoric – the art of persuading someone through your speech and writing. It is a discourse (form of communication) that aims to improve the capability of writers or speakers to inform, persuade, or motivate a particular audience in certain situations.

Origin – ancient Greece became the birthplace of rhetoric (effective speech/writing) in the fifth century B.C. Even Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle were arms deep in theories on the most effective means of persuasion.

Examples

- Martin Luther King, Jr. - “I Have a Dream”
- Abraham Lincoln - “Gettysburg Address”
- There are many more famous speakers who use rhetoric. Can you think of other examples?

Why is rhetoric in writing so important?

Writing more effectively saves time.

Things to Consider

- Audience - Who are you writing to?
- Purpose - Why are you writing this? What’s the point?
- Adjust your voice, tone, and persona to accommodate your communication situation.

For every writing project, you can best determine what you want to say and how you want to say it by analyzing your rhetorical situation (which is sometimes called your communication situation). Learning to think rhetorically is one of the most important benefits of education! Successful leaders and decision makers are capable of making good decisions because they have learned to examine problems from a rhetorical perspective. Successful writers have learned they can write a more effective document in less time by thinking rhetorically.

By simply thinking rhetorically, someone can utilize many mental activities - such as focusing on identifying the needs of a particular audience or situation.

Ask yourself: Who’s going to read this? In what way can I persuade my audience?