

RHETORIC

WHAT THE DICTIONARY SAYS

Main Entry: **rhet·o·ric** Pronunciation: ·red.ə·rik, -et.ə- Function: *noun* Inflected Form(s): -s
Etymology: Middle English *rethorik*, from Middle French *rethorique*, modification of Latin *rhetorica*, from Greek *rhētorikḗ*, from feminine of *rhētorikos* rhetorical, oratorical, from *rhētor-*, *rhētōr* orator + *-ikos* -ic — more at [WORD](#)

1 : the art of expressive speech or discourse; specifically **a** : the study of principles and rules of composition formulated by ancient critics (as Aristotle and Quintilian) and interpreted by classical scholars for application to discourse in the vernacular **b** : the art or practice of writing or speaking as means of communication or persuasion often with special concern for literary effect <freshman composition is a course in *rhetoric* — H.C.Bowersox> <the cultivation of grammar and *rhetoric* — John Dewey>

2 a : skill in the effective use of speech : **ELOQUENCE** **b** (1) : artificial elegance of language : discourse without conviction or earnest feeling (2) : inflated language : **VERBOSITY, BOMBAST** <that passage, sir, is not empty *rhetoric* — Virginia Woolf> <the enemy of *rhetoric* and every kind of artifice and virtuosity — Philip Rahv> <the mocking *rhetoric* upon a tombstone — J.C.Powys> **c** : style of language <his *rhetoric* would not have been commended at Cambridge> <large, and sometimes loose, exalted simplicities of his *rhetoric* — *Times Literary Supplement*>

3 a : verbal communication : **DISCOURSE, SPEECH** <the temptation to establish peace by *rhetoric* — W.W.Van Kirk> <a *rhetoric* of fantastic slang — Edmund Wilson> **b** : the verbal content of a composition (as a poem) or a body of literature <the deep hold that the symbols of free speech and other civil liberties have in American *rhetoric* — Max Lerner> **c** : the verbal elements employed in or characteristic of discourse relating to a particular subject or area <made effective use of the *rhetoric* of liberalism — Sidney Hook>

4 : persuasive or moving power <mastery of expressive musical *rhetoric* — Carl Parrish & J.F.Ohl> <sweet, silent *rhetoric* of persuading eyes — Samuel Daniel>

5 : a treatise on rhetoric; especially : a textbook on literary composition <the authors of freshman *rhetorics* — C.W.Shumaker>

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