

RHETORICAL STRUCTURES

Antithesis: Compare/Contrast

Set one thing against another: "apples and oranges." It can be helpful to weigh each item in your hands.

EPIGRAMS of Oscar Wilde

There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written, or badly written. That is all. - Preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

Romance should never begin with sentiment. It should begin with science and end with a settlement.
- *An Ideal Husband*

Friendship is far more tragic than love. It lasts longer.
- *A Few Maxims for the Instruction of the Over-Educated*

The strength of women comes from the fact that psychology cannot explain us. Men can be analysed, women... merely adored. - *An Ideal Husband*

In the old days books were written by men of letters and read by the public. Nowadays books are written by the public and read by nobody. - *A Few Maxims for the Instruction of the Over-Educated*

Lists

In a list, each item must have its own value, but there must be a build to the end of the thought.

The Seagull – Anton Chekhov

NINA

In me is the spirit of the great Alexander, the spirit of Napoleon, of Caesar, of Shakespeare, and of the tiniest leech that swims.

Dylan Thomas

Poetry is what in a poem makes you laugh, cry, prickle, be silent, makes your toenails twinkle, makes you know that you want to do this or that or nothing, makes you know that you are alone in the unknown world, that your bliss and suffering is forever shared and forever all your own.

My Favorite Things - lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II

Raindrops on roses,
 And whiskers on kittens,
 Bright copper kettles
 And warm woolen mittens.
 Brown paper packages
 Tied up with string,
 These are a few of my favorite things.

Girls in white dresses with blue satin sashes,
 Snowflakes that stay on my nose and eyelashes,
 Silver white winters that melt into springs
 These are a few of my favorite things.

Cream colored ponies,
 And crisp apple strudel.
 Doorbells and sleigh bells
 And schnitzel with noodles,
 Wild geese that fly
 With the moon on their wings,
 These are a few of my favorite things.

When the dog bites,
 When the bee stings,
 When I'm feeling sad.
 I simply remember my favorite things,
 And then I don't feel so bad!

Parenthetical Phrases

A parenthetical phrase can be lifted out of the line and the thought will still be understood.

Techniques:

1. pitch match around parenthetical

_____ OR _____

2. increase (or decrease) rate of speech in parenthetical

3. use slight caesura (pause) after parenthetical

ee cummings

in spite of everything
 which breathes and moves, since Doom
 (with white longest hands
 neatening each crease)
 will smooth entirely our minds

-before leaving my room
 i turn, and (stooping
 through the morning) kiss
 this pillow, dear
 where our heads lived and were.

Under Milkwood, Dylan Thomas

Lord Cut-Glass, in his kitchen full of time, squats down alone to a dogdish, marked Fido, of peppery fish-scraps and listens to the voices of his sixty-six clocks - (one for each year of his loony age) - and watches, with love, their black-and-white moony loudlipped faces tocking the earth away....

More EPIGRAMS of Oscar Wilde

Women are pictures. Men are problems. If you want to know what a woman really means – which, by the way, is always a dangerous thing to do – look at her, don't listen to her.

- *A Woman of No Importance*

Chewy Sounds

Is a word/phrase difficult to say? Slow Down ... you were probably meant to....

“Earth's crammed with heaven, And every common bush afire with God; But only he who sees, takes off his shoes - The rest sit round it and pluck blackberries.”

Elizabeth Barrett Browning

Rhyme/Assonance/Consonance

Patsy Rodenburg, *Speaking Shakespeare*, p. 127 “Good rhyming works subliminally in our ears.”

Cat, J. R. R. Tolkien (suggested by Catherine Fitzmaurice)

The fat cat on the mat
may seem to dream
of nice mice that suffice
for him, or cream;
but he free, maybe,
walks in thought
unbowed, proud, where loud
roared and fought
his kin, lean and slim,
or deep in den
in the East feasted on beasts
and tender men.

The giant lion with iron
claw in paw,
and huge ruthless tooth
in gory jaw;
the pard dark-starred,
fleet upon feet,
that oft soft from aloft
leaps upon his meat
where woods loom in gloom --
far now they be,
fierce and free,
and tamed is he;

but fat cat on the mat
kept as a pet
he does not forget.

From Blossoms, Li-Young Lee, from *Rose* (Boa Editions).

From blossoms comes
this brown paper bag of peaches
we bought from the boy
at the bend in the road where we turned toward
signs painted Peaches....

Repetition

A repetition of a word, phrase or sound, indicates that something is being highlighted. Sometimes it is the actual word/phrase being repeated, other times it's what's being said AROUND the repetition.

Patrick Henry, March 23, 1775, Richmond, VA:
Gentlemen may cry, Peace, Peace-- but there is no peace.

The Day the Bronx Died by Michael Henry Brown

Daniel: Every time I go to one of your baseball games and you get a hit or make a great play, I see your teammates...they pat you on the butt. Mickey makes a great catch, Billy pats him on the butt. Mickey gets a hit, Billy pats him on the butt. And when you guys play football, and he's the quarterback....

Mickey: Hey, it's tradition!

Daniel: Well it's a tradition I'm totally behind.

The reason I like, David Mamet (In *Squirrels*, Methuen, 1994)

The reason I like
Edna St. Vincent Millay
Is that her name
Sounds like a basketball
Falling downstairs.
The reason I like
Walt Whitman
Is that his name
Sounds like
Edna St. Vincent Millay
Falling downstairs.

Heightened vs. Direct Language

Honor the switches between Direct (simplest way of saying something) and Heightened (metaphor, image, more interesting language).

SPAM Haiku #3 – Christopher James Hume (www.spamhaiku.com)

Pink tender morsel,
Glistening with salty gel.
What the hell is it?

Cause/Effect, If/Then

Sometimes a CAUSE leads to a specific EFFECT. It is important to vocally tell that story. Sometimes it includes an If/ Then clause. Sometimes the "if" or the "then" are not stated, only implied.

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From blossoms comes
this brown paper bag of peaches
we bought from the boy
at the bend in the road where we turned toward
signs painted Peaches.

From laden boughs, from hands,
from sweet fellowship in the bins,
comes nectar at the roadside, succulent
peaches we devour, dusty skin and all,
comes the familiar dust of summer, dust we eat....

ee cummings
 it may not always be so; and i say
 that if your lips, which i have loved, should touch
 another's, and your dear strong fingers clutch
 his heart, as mine in time not far away;
 if on another's face your sweet hair lay
 in such a silence as i know, or such
 great writhing words as, uttering overmuch,
 stand helplessly before the spirit at bay;

if this should be, i say if this should be-
 you of my heart, send me a little word;
 that i may go unto him, and take his hands,
 saying, Accept all happiness from me.
 Then shall i turn my face, and hear one bird
 sing terribly afar in the lost lands.

Wit and Wordplay/Banter

Banter involves taking a cue word/idea and spinning a new word/idea around it.

This sketch appeared in the Monty Python's Flying Circus TV Show - Episode 39.

THE PRINCE -	Terry Jones	J. M. WHISTLER -	John Cleese
OSCAR WILDE -	Graham Chapman	G. B. SHAW -	Michael Palin

LONDON 1895, THE RESIDENCE OF MR. OSCAR WILDE

Mix through to Wilde's drawing room. A crowd of suitably dressed folk are engaged in typically brilliant conversation, laughing affectedly and drinking champagne.

PRINCE

My congratulations, Wilde. Your latest play is a great success. The whole of London's talking about you.

OSCAR

There is only one thing in the world worse than being talked about, and that is not being talked about.
There follows fifteen seconds of restrained and sycophantic laughter.

PRINCE

Very, very witty ... very, very witty.

WHISTLER

There is only one thing in the world worse than being witty, and that is not being witty.
Fifteen more seconds of the same.

OSCAR

I wish I had said that.

WHISTLER

You will, Oscar, you will. *(more laughter)*

OSCAR

Your Majesty, have you met James McNeill Whistler?

PRINCE

Yes, we've played squash together.

OSCAR

There is only one thing worse than playing squash together, and that is playing it by yourself. *(silence)*
I wish I hadn't said that.

WHISTLER

You did, Oscar, you did. *(a little laughter)*

PRINCE

You really must forgive me, Wilde, I've got to get back up to the Palace.

OSCAR

Your Majesty is like a big jam doughnut with cream on the top.

PRINCE

I beg your pardon?

OSCAR

Um ... It was one of Whistler's.

WHISTLER

I never said that.

OSCAR

You did, James, you did.

The PRINCE of Wales stares expectantly at WHISTLER.

WHISTLER

... Well, Your Highness, what I meant was that, like a doughnut, um, your arrival gives us pleasure and your departure only makes us hungry for more. *(laughter)* Your Highness, you are also like a stream of bat's piss.

PRINCE

What?

WHISTLER

It was one of Wilde's. One of Wilde's.

OSCAR

It sodding was not! It was Shaw!

SHAW

I ... I merely meant, Your Majesty, that you shine out like a shaft of gold when all around is dark.

PRINCE

(accepting the compliment) Oh.

Introductions/Conclusions

Arguments often have a clear Introduction and Conclusion. Separate these out vocally.

From the comic strip *Bloom County*

L. H. Puttgrass is here to finally give his treasonous body exactly what it richly deserves...let us start off this culinary orgy with a tantalizing appetizer...greasy French fries...always good for hopelessly clogging miles of arteries with yummy fatty deposits. Moving quickly now to the *pièce de résistance*: a “double mustard maxi-burger”...flame-kissed with carcinogenic charcoal broiling...yes, dripping with fatty red meat, it shall be brimming with heavily salted pickles and nitrate-laden smoked bacon ... indeed a veritable feast of doom for my entire cardiovascular system!!! L. H. Puttgrass and his arteries thank you...if I should expire before I finish, be so kind as to alert the local medical school for the expeditious disposal of my carcass. Good day!!

Pied Beauty, Gerard Manley Hopkins

Glory be to God for dappled things-

For skies of couple-colour as a brindled cow;

For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;

Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches' wings;

Landscape plotted and pieced-fold, fallow, and plough;

And all trades, their gear and tackle and trim.

All things counter, original, spare, strange;

Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)

With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;

He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:

Praise him.

Long Thoughts

Long thoughts require effort to keep the energy going to the end.

John Northbrooke, preacher, author c. 1589:

I am persuaded that Satan hath not a more speedy way and fitter school to work and teach his desire to bring men and women into his snare of concupiscence and filthy lusts of wicked whoredom than theatres, and it is therefore necessary that those places and players should be forbidden and dissolved and put down by authority, as the brothel houses are.

Eventide, Kent Haruf, Knopf, 2004.

...they had been alone together, and they had done all the work there was to do and eaten and talked and thought out things together, and at night they had gone up to bed at the same hour and in the mornings had risen at the same time and gone out one more to the day's work, each one ever in the presence of the other, almost as if they were a long-suited married couple, or as though they were a pair of twins that could never be separated because who knew what might happen if they were.

III. PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Kristin Linklater, *Freeing Shakespeare's Voice*, p. 85:

The actor's process must be to *absorb* the experiential meaning of the words into the body, *absorb* the form and logic of the antithesis and then LISTEN for the trigger words in what the other person is saying.

Patsy Rodenburg, *Speaking Shakespeare*, p. 3:

I want them to feel the language – the words, thought structures and images – flowing in their bloodstreams, a familiar part of them rather than something baffling, strange or difficult.

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we bought from the boy
at the bend in the road where we turned toward
signs painted Peaches.

From laden boughs, from hands,
from sweet fellowship in the bins,
comes nectar at the roadside, succulent
peaches we devour, dusty skin and all,
comes the familiar dust of summer, dust we eat.

O, to take what we love inside,
to carry within us an orchard, to eat
not only the skin, but the shade,
not only the sugar, but the days, to hold
the fruit in our hands, adore it, then bite into
the round jubilation of peach.

There are days we live
as if death were nowhere
in the background; from joy
to joy to joy, from wing to wing,
from blossom to blossom to
impossible blossom, to sweet impossible blossom.

THE RIVALS - Richard Brinsley Sheridan

Act II

Absolute:

Softly, softly; for though I am convinced my little Lydia would elope with me as Ensign Beverley, yet am I by no means certain that she would take me with the impediment of our friends' consent, a regular humdrum wedding, and the reversion of a good fortune on my side: no, no; I must prepare her gradually for the discovery, and make myself necessary to her, before I risk it.

Act III

Sir Anthony Absolute:

No—I'll die sooner than forgive him. Die, did I say! I'll live these fifty years to plague him. At our last meeting, his impudence had almost put me out of temper. An obstinate, passionate, self-willed boy! Who can he take after? This is my return for getting him before all his brothers and sisters!—for putting him, at twelve years old, into a marching regiment, and allowing him fifty pounds a year, besides his pay, ever since! But I have done with him; he's anybody's son for me. I never will see him more, never—never—never.

Act V

Lydia Languish

Why, is it not provoking? when I thought we were coming to the prettiest distress imaginable, to find myself made a mere Smithfield bargain of at last! There, had I projected one of the most sentimental elopements!—so becoming a disguise!—so amiable a ladder of ropes!—Conscious moon—four horses—Scotch parson—with such surprise to Mrs. Malaprop—and such paragraphs in the newspapers!—Oh, I shall die with disappointment!

Now—sad reverse!—what have I to expect, but, after a deal of flimsy preparation, with a bishop's license, and my aunt's blessing to go simpering up to the altar; or perhaps be cried three times in a country church, and have an unmannerly fat clerk ask the consent of every butcher in the parish to join John Absolute and Lydia Languish, spinster! Oh that I should live to hear myself called spinster!