Persuasive Literary Techniques

1. Repetition: This technique is used for effect and emphasis. You may repeat phrases, statements, or ideas. You may develop a catchy phrase, for example, and use it periodically through your persuasive paper.

2. Rhetorical questions: These are used for effect and emphasis. A rhetorical question is a question that is asked only for effect, not for information. A rhetorical question is constructed so that only one answer is obvious. As a persuasive writer, you may choose to answer your own question for further emphasis, or you may choose to let the question stand by itself.

3. Allusion: An allusion is a reference to something well known from history, literature, science, or one’s culture in general. An effective allusion will be recognized by the reader without being identified or explained. If the reader understands the allusion, the writer’s meaning is clear without elaboration.

4. Refuting an anticipated argument: The best defense is a good offense. Decide what would be the strongest argument against the position you are defending. Introduce this argument yourself. State it clearly. Then attack this argument, doing your best to neutralize it.

5. Anecdote: An anecdote is a little story that makes a point. Anecdotes can be very effective because they are interesting and can be entertaining, as well. Anecdotes can be worked into persuasive writing at any time.

6. Analogy: An analogy is a comparison between two things that are not the same. An analogy develops these similarities to illustrate, explain, or argue a point. An analogy is a simile that is explained and developed.

7. Figurative language: Similes, metaphors, and personification add interest and style to persuasive writing. Patrick Henry, in his famous persuasive speech, spoke of “chains of slavery.” This metaphor is much more effective than “unfair laws.”