

Rhetoric and persuasion

COMMUNICATION

LEVEL
Advanced

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C1_2022X_EN

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English

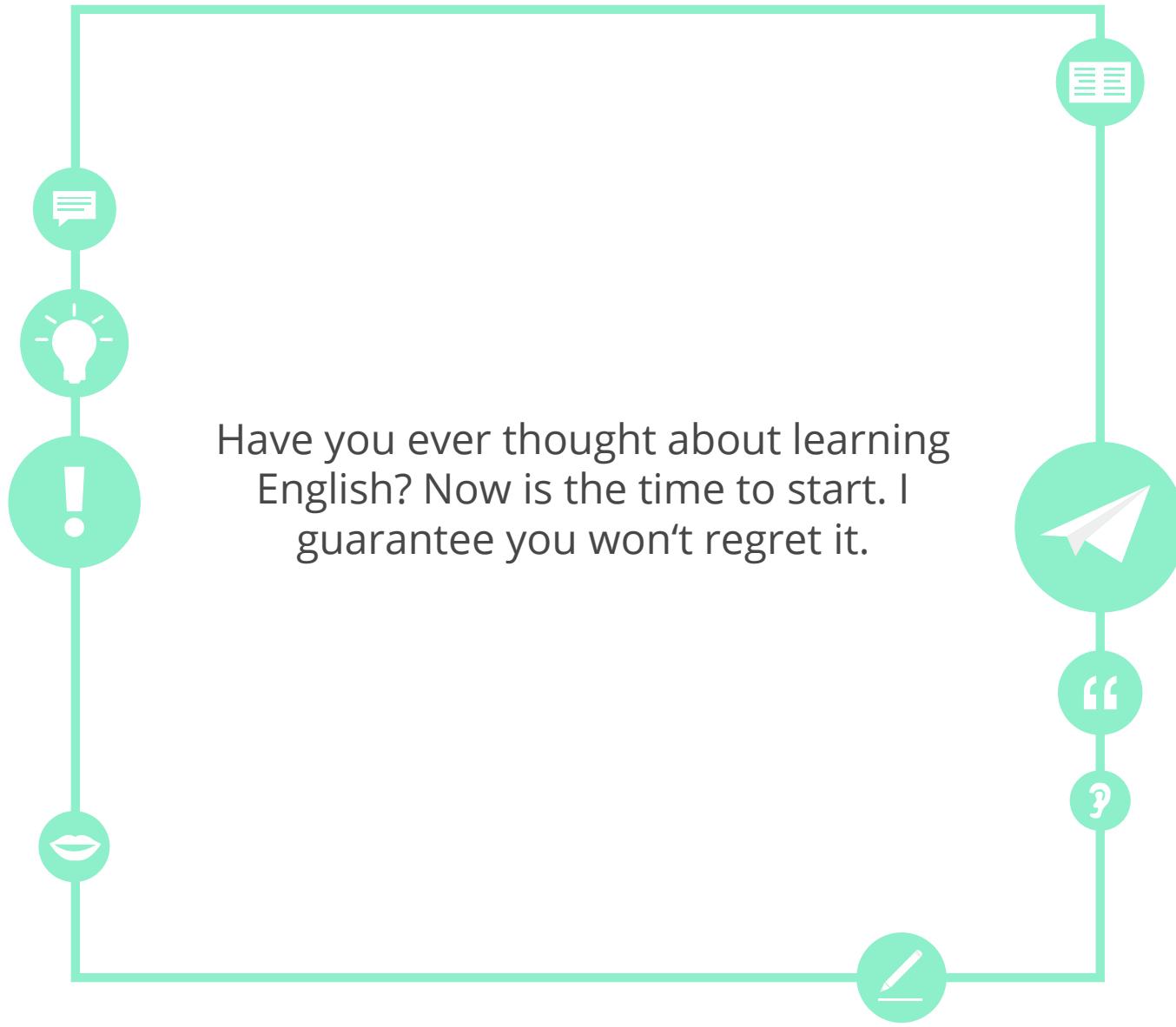




Goals

- Can recognise and explain the purpose of using rhetorical techniques in speech and advertising.
- Can use these techniques to persuade others in a variety of contexts.

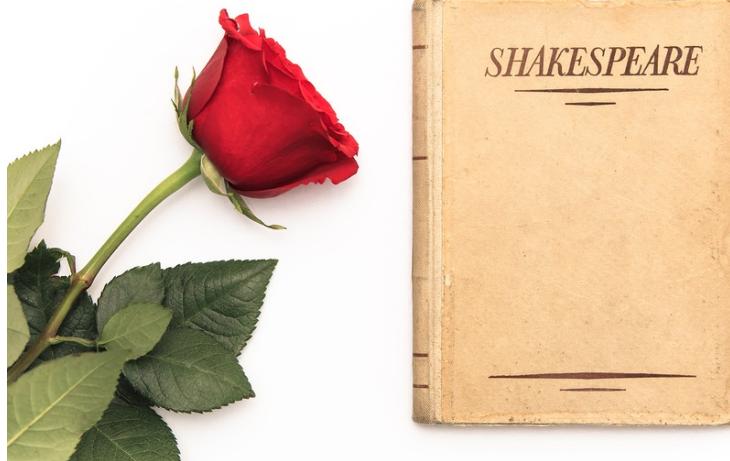






Rhetoric and persuasion

This lesson is about rhetoric and persuasion. It is about techniques we can use to convince people to agree with us, or to make them buy or do something.



What's in a name?



Persuading people

When was the last time you tried to persuade someone of something? Can you remember what you said?

your friend

a colleague

your teacher

your parents



Rhetorical questions

What are rhetorical questions? Do you know any commonly-used ones?

“

Rhetorical questions

Most of us are familiar with **rhetorical questions**. Firstly, rhetorical questions are often questions to which there is **no answer**, and certainly no answer is expected. These are often lofty or **philosophical** questions. The questions are designed to persuade, as the audience is supposed to agree with the speaker.

Rhetorical questions

Will corruption ever stop?

What does life mean?

Why do we carry on?

Who knows?

Who cares?





Rhetorical questions

The second form rhetorical questions take is that of a question to which **the answer is so obvious** that we don't need to say it.

Situation	Rhetorical question
Boss yelling at his worker	Do you want to get sacked?
Parents shouting at their child for getting bad grades	Do you want to clean floors all your life?
A parent telling their child they can't buy them a car	Do you think money grows on trees?
Asking your mum if she wants chocolate	Is the sky blue?

“

Rhetorical questions

A very famous example of the use of **rhetorical questions for persuasion** is Shylock's speech in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*. Shylock is trying to persuade another character that he is just like anybody else. The questions focus on shared human experience, and the answers are extremely obvious.

If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die? And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge?





Guess the situation in which each rhetorical question would be asked

1. You didn't think I would say yes to that, did you?



When a 12 year old wants to stay out past midnight.

2. Can we do better next time?



3. Do pigs fly?



4. Do cats meow?



5. Do you want to live with your parents for the rest of your life?





How do they feel?

These questions are all rhetorical. How do you think the speaker is feeling in each of these situations? Who are they talking to?

Do you have any idea what time it is?

Who is my favourite person in the world?

Where did I go wrong?



Using rhetorical questions

**Do you use
rhetorical
questions? In
what situations?**

making a
speech

talking to your
children

at work



Great rhetoricians

Great rhetoricians from history rely on certain techniques in order to persuade their audience. Below are some techniques that they have used.

Appealing to emotions	Connecting with the audience	Use of superlatives
I have a dream.	We shall stand together.	It is the greatest threat in history.
Do not be afraid.	Only you can defend us.	This is the most important threat we have faced.
It is every man's duty.	We choose to go to the moon.	There couldn't be a better time.

Rhetoric in advertising

Advertisements are inherently designed to persuade us to do or buy something. Advertising always employs various different techniques of rhetoric. The examples below show the use of questions as a form of persuasion in advertising. Look at how they try to pull on the emotions or conscience of the viewer. Can you identify any other rhetorical techniques?



Do you use *Splash* cleaning products? You'll be sorry to miss out on the latest in cleaning technology.



Don't you want your family to be warm this winter? Buy Cosy's socks – because we understand comfort.

“

Visual rhetoric in advertisements

Most advertisements rely on a combination of **slogans** and **visuals** to persuade their audience to buy. Visuals in advertising need to be memorable and eye-catching. They are designed so that your mind makes connections beyond the literal image.



This is an advertisement about climate change. Do you think it is powerful? Why?



Anti-smoking advertisements

What do you think of these two advertisements?





Memorable adverts

Are there any advertisements which particularly stick in your mind? Why do you think they are so memorable?





Famous rhetoricians



Can you think of any famous rhetoricians from history? What made their speeches so great?



Persuasive rhetoric

Here are some phrases that we can use when trying to persuade an audience to our point of view. These phrases are more likely to be used in formal settings, such as during a speech or a work presentation.

I am certain that...	Nobody would argue that...
I am convinced that...	It is not an opinion, it is a fact.
It is without doubt...	It is undeniable that...
It is high time...	It is an accepted fact that...
The pros outweigh the cons.	We need to acknowledge that...
It goes without saying that...	We cannot ignore...



Persuasive rhetoric

Here are some more phrases that we can use when trying to **persuade an audience** to our point of view. These phrases are more likely to be used in **informal** settings, such as when we are trying to persuade our friends to do something.

I'm sure...	Obviously...
Surely you can't think that.	If this goes ahead...
It's worth it.	It'll be great.
Give it a go.	Don't worry about it.
I'm absolutely certain.	Just try it.

“

Rhetorical devices in speech

We often use **rhetorical questions** when we are speaking in order to **persuade** someone of something. As we said above, we believe that we already know the answer to the question we ask. These questions can be asked in formal and informal situations.

Don't you want to..?

Don't you see that..?

Why don't we..?

How about we..?

Haven't you ever thought about..?

Mightn't it be better to...?



Litotes in speech

Most English speakers do this every day without realising. We use a negative word to negate a previous statement, giving emphasis to what we were saying. Look at the examples below.



It's **not** a **bad** idea.



This is **no small problem**.



Persuasive dialogue

Read through the short dialogue between two friends below. Which persuasive techniques are used?



You've never tried sushi before?



No, it looks gross.



What? Just give it a go. I'm absolutely certain you'll like it.

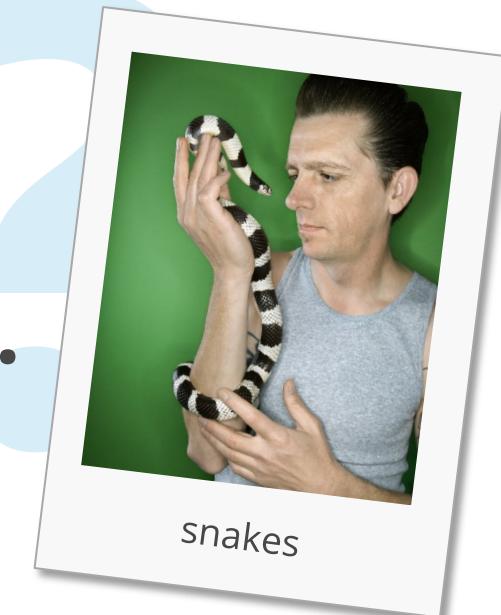


Well ok, if you say so.



Persuade your teacher

Think of something you like that other people often don't. Try to persuade your teacher to try it.





My least favourite things

Together with your teacher, think of five different things you would hate to do or try. This can be anything from waking up at 4AM to practise yoga to travelling to the moon!





My least favourite things

Take the five things you thought of in the last exercise. Think of one very persuasive sentence (or question) in favour of trying or doing each thing. Be as formal or as informal as you like. Use as many techniques you've learned in this lesson as possible!

1. I guess if you like being unhealthy, untoned and tired all the time, there's really no point in trying early morning yoga!

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____



A persuasive speech

**Read through this speech to
a professional audience, noting the
persuasive language used.**

Do you think this argument is convincing?

Ladies and gentlemen. Have you ever thought about learning Sindarin? I am absolutely convinced it is the language for you. It is without doubt that by speaking this language you will be one of the elite. Spoken by the Elvish race in Lord of the Rings, it is high time that this language spread beyond literature and into real life. It is an accepted fact that in the next twenty years, more people will be speaking Sindarin than speak Bulgarian. It's not a bad idea to learn English, but learning Sindarin is better - nobody can argue with that.



A persuasive speech

Now, prepare a short speech yourself, persuading a group of professionals to learn something new. Make it as crazy as you like – just make sure that you're convincing!



What do you think?

Answer the questions about rhetoric below.



1

Were you already aware of all of the rhetorical techniques mentioned in this lesson?

2

Do you think most people are aware of rhetoric in their everyday lives?

3

Do you think rhetoric can ever be dangerous?



Reflect on the lesson

Take a moment to review any new **vocabulary, phrases, language structures** or **grammar points** you have come across for the first time in this lesson.

Review them with your teacher one more time to make sure you don't forget!





Answer key

Exercise p. 10

Accept any correct answer.

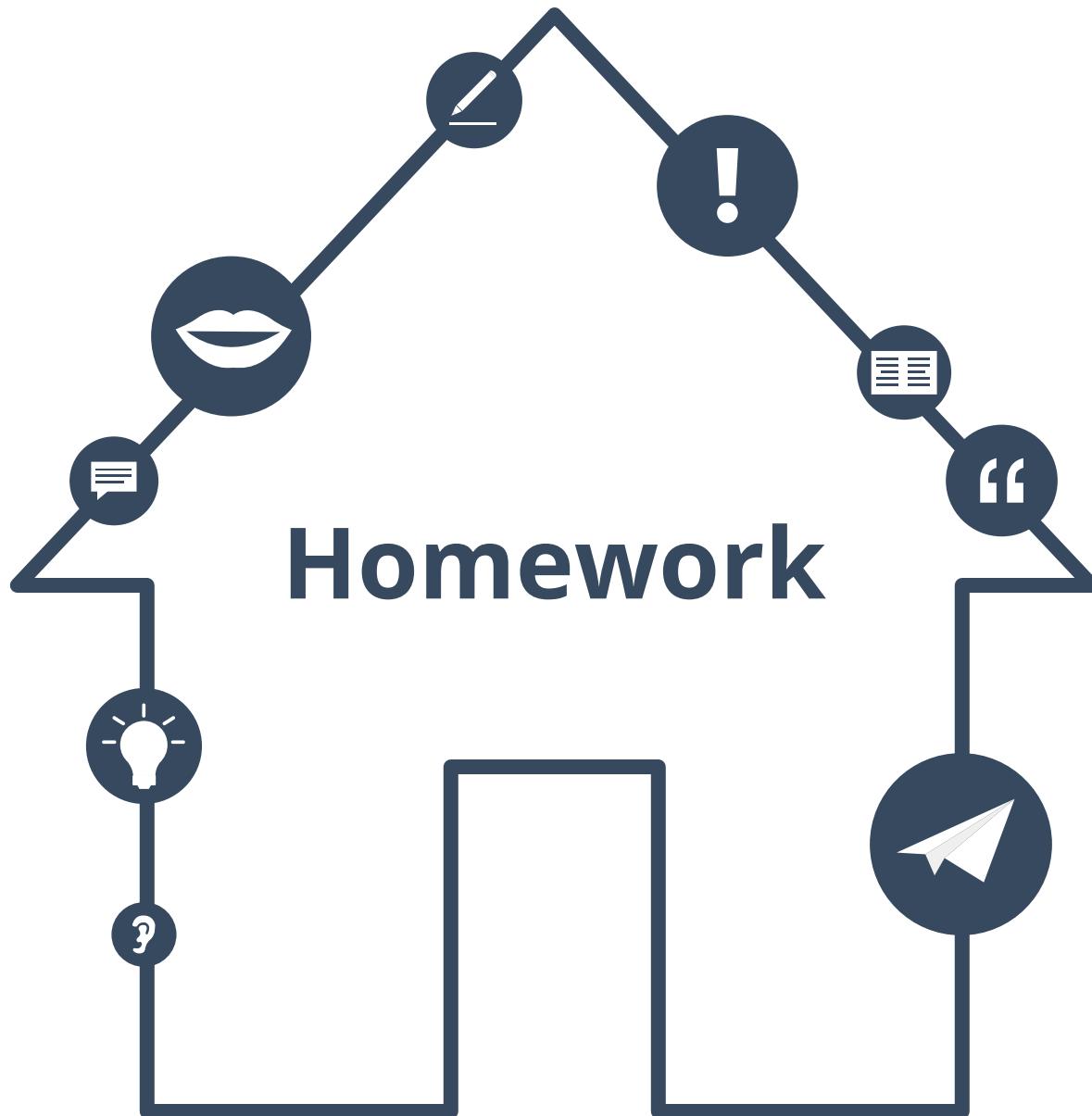
3. Should be a negative situation, similar to the example.

Accept any correct answer.

4. Should be a positive situation, e.g. When your boss asks if you want a day off on Monday.

Exercise p. 11

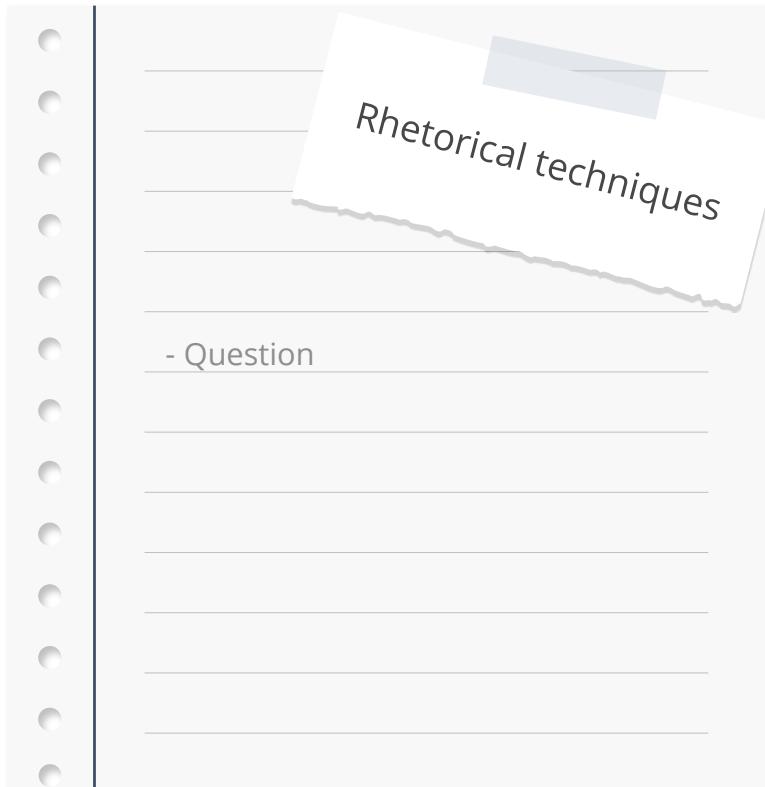
Accept any correct answer.





Rhetorical and persuasive techniques

Make a list of rhetorical and persuasive techniques mentioned in this lesson.





Make a speech

Use the techniques you remember from the previous slide to create a short speech telling your boss why you should not have to go to work next Monday.





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