**How to Connect Rhetorical Choices to Meaning**

**NOTE: In general, a connection of device to meaning should be 3-5 sentences long. The templates below are a starting place; you will eventually learn to vary them to suit your purposes. A connection must articulate the meaning a device *suggests* and HOW this suggestion is achieved.**

**Diction**

* Identify the grammatical unit (phrase, noun, verb, adjective, adverb, etc.) and provide the context in which it appears in the text. Consider connotation as well as denotation. Do NOT write: *The writer uses diction*. That’s like saying: *The writer uses words.*
* Connect the diction to the meaning of *this* text. Avoid generic commentary. Provide an original insight. Pay attention to *your own diction*. It enhances your analysis.

Model:

The phrase**\*** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ used to describe/identify\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ conveys \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ since / because / in that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. This is significant because \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**\*** or the noun, verb, adjective, adverb

Example:

The phrase, “a thin beard of ivy,” used to describe Jay Gatsby’s mansion conveys both intrigue and inexperience. Since the ivy is “thin,” Fitzgerald suggests a wealth without lineage, newly formed and barely veiled; yet, the ivy as a “beard” suggests a worldly desire to conceal. This is significant because through the description of his mansion, Gatsby is portrayed as both ingénue and chameleon, alerting the reader to the protagonist’s dual and perhaps contradictory nature.

**Syntax**

* Identify the syntactical choice the author has made and provide the context in which it appears in the text. Do NOT write: *The writer uses syntax.* Since syntax refers to the order and structure of words, phrases, etc, it always exists – even if you do not find it noteworthy.
* Connect the syntax to the meaning of *this* text. Avoid generic commentary. Provide an original insight. Pay attention to *your own diction*. It enhances your analysis.

Model:

The \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ function(s) to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. This structure supports the author’s purpose to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Example:

Gatsby’s interrupted sentences dramatize his nervousness and hesitation as he discusses his upcoming meeting with Daisy at Nick’s bungalow. Stuttering, “Why, I thought – why, look here, old sport, you don’t make very much money, do you,” Gatsby reveals his true vulnerability and weakness showing a stark contrast to the “greatness” that has been established in the early chapters of the novel. Fitzgerald continues to reveal chinks in Gatsby’s armor as the novel progresses preparing the reader for protagonist’s ultimate fall.

Helpful hint:

Some other examples of purposeful syntactical choices an author might make: **parallelism, anaphora, rhetorical question, appositives, polysyndeton, asyndeton, prepositional phrases**, etc. According to Jeff Sommers and Max Morenberg, authors of *The Writer’s Options*, **appositives** define, summarize, and clarify. **Prepositional phrases** may elaborate and clarify by indicating how, where, when, why.

**Imagery**

(word pictures appealing to one of the 6 senses (visual, auditory, gustatory, olfactory, tactile, kinesthetic) – if you can’t identify which one, it isn’t a valid example of imagery)

* Identify the image and provide the context in which it appears in the text.
* Connect the image to the meaning of *this* text. Avoid generic commentary. Provide an original insight. Pay attention to *your own diction*. It enhances your analysis.

Model:

The image of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ depicts a (picture, sense, state, etc.) of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ because the reader (sees, envisions, realizes) that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. This is significant because \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Example:

The image of an “argument . . . pull[ing]” Nick back to the party “as if with ropes” conveys his helpless struggle to get away from the gathering in Tom and Myrtle’s apartment at the same time that it dramatizes his fascination with the inebriated and adulterous events that are occurring. The reader can see that much as ropes confine, restrain, and render one helpless, Nick, due perhaps to a lack of experience or a flawed moral code, remains discomfited yet seems unable to confront or reject the lies and pretenses of the party guests. This is significant because the reader must question Nick’s declaration that he is tolerant and honest.

**Figurative Language: Metaphor or Simile**

* Identify the metaphor or simile and provide the context in which it appears in the text.
* Connect the metaphor or simile to the meaning of *this* text. Avoid generic commentary. Provide an original insight. Pay attention to *your own diction*. It enhances your analysis.

Model:

The subject of (x) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is compared to (y) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. This is fitting because (x) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and (y) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ share these characteristics: (a) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and (b) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. This is significant because \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.\_

Example:

In his “I Have a Dream” speech, Martin Luther King, Jr. compares the condition of poverty to a “lonely island.” This is a fitting comparison because poverty and a lonely island share these characteristics: (a)

isolation and alienation from the “vast ocean of material prosperity” which surrounds them and (b) both are small, singled out, vulnerable, and surrounded by something they don’t possess. This comparison causes the audience to consider the tangible social barriers created by an invisible financial limitation to feel sympathy for the isolated poor.

**Figurative Language: Personification**

(a figure of speech in which animals, abstract ideas, or inanimate things are referred to as if they were human)

* Identify the animal, abstract idea, or inanimate thing and provide the context in which it appears in the text. Identify the human characteristic that is ascribed to it.
* Connect the effect of the personification to the meaning of *this* text. Avoid generic commentary. Provide an original insight. Pay attention to *your own diction*. It enhances your analysis.

Model:

In \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_is personified as possessing the human

characteristic(s) of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ . The author employs

personification in order to\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Example:

"Today, we begin a new chapter in the history of Louisiana. I've said throughout the campaign that there are two entities that have the most to fear from us winning this election. One is **corruption** and the other is **incompetence**. **If you happen to see either of them, let them know the party is over**."

-- Bobby Jindal, *Louisiana Governor-Elect victory Speech (as posted on americanrhetoric.com)*

In Bobby Jindal’s victory speech, the abstract ideas of corruption and incompetence are personified as possessing human form and consciousness. The governor-elect suggests that members of his audience might encounter or “see” them and should inform them that their “party” is over. Through this characterization, Jindal simultaneously emphasizes his strength as a leader and sends a strong message, without naming specific perpetrators, that those who may possess those qualities will be driven out of the state’s government.

**Figurative Language: Hyperbole**

(deliberate exaggeration used to heighten effect or create humor – remember that this is a figure of speech not meant to be interpreted literally – e.g., I’m so hungry I could eat a horse.)

* Identify what is being exaggerated and provide the context in which it appears in the text.
* Connect the effect of the hyperbole to the meaning of *this* text. Avoid generic commentary.
* Provide an original insight. Pay attention to *your own diction*. It enhances your analysis.

Model:

The deliberate exaggeration of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ serves to express \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Through this heightened image, the reader\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Example:

From Robert Frost’s poem, “After Apple-Picking”

For I have had too much

Of apple-picking: I am overtired

Of the great harvest I myself desired.

There were ten thousand fruit to touch,

Cherish in hand, lift sown, and not let fall.

In Frost’s poem, “After Apple-Picking,” the speaker deliberately exaggerates the number of apples in order to emphasize his shift from excitement and desire to his extreme weariness during the harvest. The speaker has had “too much” as a result of the “ten thousand” fruit to touch. Through this image, the reader comes to understand that the speaker is not only weary of body, but is also “overtired” in spirit as well.

[Example taken from *A Contemporary Guide to Literary Terms* by Edwin J. Barton and Glenda A. Hudson (Houghton Mifflin, 2004)]

**Symbol**

* Identify both the concrete and abstract meanings of the symbol and provide the context in which it appears in the text.
* Connect the symbol to specific characters in this text. Avoid generic commentary. Provide an original insight. Pay attention to *your own diction*. It enhances your analysis.

Model:

The \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ symbolizes \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*concrete* *abstract*

for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ because it represents \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Through this symbol, the author \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Example:

The pearls Daisy Buchanan rescues from the trash and subsequently wears “around her neck” symbolize her ultimate choice of money over love because they represent Tom’s vast wealth (they were “valued at three hundred and fifty thousand dollars”) in contrast to Gatsby’s avowal of love, symbolized by the letter she “wouldn’t let go of.” By highlighting Daisy’s donning of the pearls, Fitzgerald comments on the shallow and misguided values of the 20th Century American, one who pursues the elusive “dream” instead of concrete relationships.

**Detail**

* Identify the detail and provide the context in which it appears in the text.
* Describe the function of the inclusion of that detail in *this* text. Avoid generic commentary. Provide an original insight. Pay attention to *your own diction*. It enhances your analysis.

Model:

The detail of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ conveys \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ since/because/in that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. The author wants the reader to see \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ because/so that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Example:

The detail of the string of polo ponies Tom Buchanan brought east with him from Chicago conveys his vast wealth and hedonism. Moving the ponies is expensive and unnecessary, suggesting that Tom does not need to concern himself with cost but does concern himself with appearing more powerful than his peers. Fitzgerald wants the reader to see Tom as spoiled and self-indulgent so that Tom will appear distasteful even before the reader learns of his current affair.

**Allusion**

* Identify the allusion (*indirect* reference by an author to another text, historical occurrence, or to myths and legends) and provide the context in which it appears in the text.
* Describe the function of the allusion in *this* text. Avoid generic commentary. Provide an original insight. Pay attention to *your own diction*. It enhances your analysis.

Model:

The author or speaker alludes to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in order to

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Through this reference, the reader connects \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and can more fully understands the author’s purpose to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Example:

“For us, they fought and died, in places like Concord and Gettysburg; Normandy and Khe Sahn.”

Barack Obama

Obama’s allusions to Concord, Gettysburg, Normandy, and Khe Sahn offer examples of struggles that Americans have faced in the past which parallel the unique struggles Americans believe they are currently facing with our economy, environment, and world conflict. Even though the references are meant to show these struggles, the president’s desired effect is to provide hope and resolve to the listener since these battles resulted in victories for America. Citizens are reminded that they can be victorious in our modern struggles.

Examples of “generic” commentary: *gets the reader’s attention, draws the reader in, etc*.