On Definitions of Rhetoric
Kirstin Kiledal provides a careful analysis of what rhetoric really means.

Rhetoric as a Liberal Art
Andrew Kern describes the role of rhetoric in a liberal arts education.

Why Can’t They All Be Rhetoric Students?
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The Art of Rhetoric

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The Fourth Canon of Rhetoric: More than Memorization
Andrew L. Smith calls for careful consideration of rhetoric’s most oversimplified canon.
Creating Significance

“W hen Aeschines spoke, they said, ‘How well he speaks.’ But when Demosthenes spoke, they said, ’Let us march against Philip.’”

Aeschines was the paragon of rhetoricians, eliciting the highest admiration for his oratory skills. His words were delightful; the applause appreciative; the audience, satisfied, arose and returned home.

But when Demosthenes spoke, he galvanized men to march in war. As Kirsten Kiledal will say in her article, the “rhetor discovers premises linking his claims to audience positions. In other words, we create significance.” Marching against Philip was significant.

Reading this particular issue of the Journal is going to create significance as well. Those of you who have not yet had the opportunity to teach rhetoric to your students will long to experience in your classrooms what you read in these pages. Those currently teaching rhetoric will anticipate how useful this issue will be for each student to read in class. These are stirring articles that may well move you to incorporate suggested changes, extending the boundaries of your classical model into greater and deeper significance.

Rev. Robert Ingram
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Today we read of “empty rhetoric,” “mere rhetoric,” and even “violent rhetoric.” The term is present in our daily lives, yet only rarely it is used properly. Ask the average man on the street, or in this author’s case, the average college sophomore, to define rhetoric, and the responses provide some insight into the prevalence of the popular disposition toward the art. The sophomores write that rhetoric is “persuasion,” “empty argument,” “sophistic discourse,” or “the art of composition” if they know of it at all. While each of these so-called definitions of rhetoric holds something in common with the art, none of them engages the fullness of the art, nor its essential qualities. While the contemporary views of rhetoric expressed herein can be traced to numerous root causes including the attempt to separate invention and logic from rhetoric in the Middle Ages, the American Elocutionary Movement of the eighteenth century, the reinvention of scholastic rhetoric courses into grammar, composition, and literature courses, etc., none of these is the focus of this essay. Rather, the concern is with a reinvestment in rhetoric as an art form through a better understanding of its defining characteristics as approached through Aristotle and Quintilian’s definitions of rhetoric as a civic art as well as a more contemporary conceptualization of the term.

The seminal definition of rhetoric is that of Aristotle, written in his treatise *Rhetoric*. Aristotle writes that rhetoric is the counterpart of dialectic (*Rhetoric* I.1, 1354a1). It grows out of dialectic and the conceptualization of character (ethos and the related concept of ethics; *Rhetoric* I.2, 1356a25f), and, in fact, rhetoric and dialectic are two branches of the same tree. Dialectic deals with the concepts in the absolute and rhetoric in the contingent realm. The relationship of rhetoric to the dialectic is important as it stresses that rhetoric has import beyond practice, that it has substance or form, a necessary element to the concept of an art or technē. Aristotle asserts that rhetoric is the art of discovering all of the available means of persuasion in any given situation (*Rhetoric* I.2, 1355b26f). In order to ascertain why the simplification of this definition to “the art of persuasion” or “persuasion” is harmful, it is appropriate to examine each term of import as it arises in Aristotle’s formulation.

Rhetoric is the art...

The term art or technē implies a two-fold understanding of the subject—that of technē (form) and praxis (practice). Technē, translated from the Greek, means art or craftsmanship; it infers rational method. The concept is related to episteme, science or knowledge, but works in the realm of probability rather than in the realm of absolutes and of truth. Rhetoric must have form or technē both in and of itself. While Aristotle would agree that rhetoric is devoid of subject matter in its practice, he demonstrates that as art rhetoric has form and contains methodological subject matter. He provides further instruction in this area as he lays out his system of rhetoric within the greater schema of arts of knowledge and demonstration. In addition to form, the art must be applicable or active in practice. This element of praxis is empty if deprived of its related and underlying form. This is one of the primary problems with the public conception of rhetoric as empty or sophistic. It is further exacerbated by the recognition that rhetoric, as Aristotle conceives of it,
is ethically neutral—it is amoral, and may be used for evil or good, by the self-interested as well as the ethical, civic minded rhetorician.

... of discovering...

The concept of discovery (inventio or invention) is essential to its power as an art. The rhetor holds within himself the knowledge necessary to complete the artistic proofs of ethos (character, credibility, goodwill), logos (logic), and pathos (passions, emotions) in ways that are uniquely his own. In other words, the arguments and examples available to the rhetorician are not available equally to all rhetors but are uniquely discoverable by individual rhetors based upon knowledge, experience, etc. Only a few categories of argument are universally available. Known as the inartistic proofs, they include witnesses, evidence given under torture, written contracts, and laws. Aristotle notes that while the former are particular modes of persuasion belonging to rhetoric, the latter are not.

... all of the available means of persuasion...

In part, it makes reference back to the previous conception of the deductive and inductive arguments possible for advancement by a rhetor. Topical thinking allows the rhetor to discover premises linking his claims to audience positions. In other words, we create significance. Additionally, invention is linked to the ends of rhetoric; forensic appeals are concerned with justice and injustice, deliberative ends with expedience and inexperience or persuasion and dissuasion, and epideictic or ceremonial ends with praise or blame. By knowing one’s subject matter one has access to particulars. Concerns of invention are threaded through each of the remaining canons as the rhetor examines disposition, style, delivery, memory.

... in any given situation.

Rhetoric is concerned with the realm of human affairs rather than questions of the nature of man. It is concerned with the probable rather than the absolute. A situation is a complex collection of events, people, and objects in relation to an issue, problem, crisis, or call for action. Rhetoric itself is action and results in further actions based upon a situational definition. The situated nature of rhetoric has led many to teach that rhetoric is immoral, that higher or universal principles have no place in its practice. This is simply not the case. Universal principles are operative in the contingent world of rhetoric as are universal topics. The rhetor has the capacity to make use of these principles or not.

The Roman orator Quintilian provides a second glimpse at the complexity of the rhetorical tradition. His definition is often put forth by classical and liberal arts institutions and educators due to its connection to virtue. Quintilian defines rhetoric as the science (or art) of the good man speaking well in his work on the subject, the Institutes of Oratory. Quintilian, like Aristotle, views rhetoric as containing both form and practice; he conceives of it as a civic art. He is clear that it is irreducible to a series of rules. Further, he contends that its scope extends beyond persuasion. He continues to make full use of Aristotle’s system of rhetoric and the five Canons of Rhetoric as they were codified by Cicero, but his greatest concern is with the rhetor. For Quintilian, the ideal orator (rhetor) was a man of high moral character, learned in all subjects, and schooled finally, completely in the art of rhetoric. This definition reflects the Roman consideration of ethos as tied to the citizen directly, over time, and across situations; it relates directly to any consideration of intent. Unfortunately, it is this focus on the rhetor rather than the art that is deficient, and that undermines the force and content of Quintilian’s definition. As Quintilian himself notes, the rhetor cannot be taught virtue and character directly through the art of rhetoric. It is outside of its pur-
The art of rhetoric is inclusive of intellectual virtue, but not moral virtue. As a definition, *the art of the good man speaking well* says little of the content of the art, but much about Quintilian’s concern for the interaction of the substance of an argument with the character of the orator.

Contemporary definitions of rhetoric have further exacerbated the general perception that rhetoric is immoral, empty of substance, and ripe for abuse. In good part this is due to academic trends towards deconstructionism and the study of technique in place of art. The emergence of a solid, singular definition of the art of rhetoric has failed to take shape. A study of twentieth century rhetorical theory and public address criticism does, however, offer the teacher of rhetoric a set of core terms that allow for a renewed and contemporary understanding of the art of rhetoric in form and practice that can co-exist with more traditional definitions: *Rhetoric is intentional, situated, symbolic action.*

What does this mean? First, *rhetoric is intentional*; it is pragmatic. It seeks to influence choice. As such, it is reflective of Aristotle’s concern with the *available means of persuasion.* Second, *rhetoric is situated,* the number of situations and contexts may have grown, but the constraints upon the rhetor remain similar to those of the past. Contemporary rhetorical scholars claim access to an adapted three contexts/ends of rhetoric—informative, persuasive, and ceremonial, apply the same concepts of artistic and inartistic appeals in similar ways, and continue to examine ways to affect change in real audiences present in actual rhetorical situations. Third, *rhetoric is symbolic.* A rhetor must engage with others to generate a shared meaning that may result in a shared interpretation and/or a shared action, either real or symbolic. In order to engage with others, the rhetor must engage in the inventive nature of rhetoric, organize the message in keeping with contextual and audience expectations, and utilize appropriate style and delivery. Finally, *rhetoric is action* and results in action. It continues to be practiced in the realm of human affairs where social action is required.

The growth of rhetorical contexts beyond the classically conceived contexts of the courtroom, assembly, and public sphere has added complexity to the rhetorical realm. An understanding of Aristotle’s definition of rhetoric as dynamic, comprised of form and practice, inventive, seeking all of the means of persuasion open to the rhetor within a given situation, provides the contemporary rhetorician the tools necessary to practice the art in full. Quintilian reminds the student of rhetoric that the art is forever tied to considerations of virtue, and that it reaches its greatest potential when it is practiced by a virtuous rhetor who holds knowledge of his subject and acts, not for himself, but for the betterment of society. The unifying terms of contemporary rhetoric reify the art, grounding it for study in the classroom and the public sphere. A re-engagement with the art of rhetoric allows the student to challenge the prevalent notions that rhetoric is, and necessarily must be, empty, self-serving, or even violent, and to replace them, knowing that the best of rhetors are men of high character and knowledge engaged in rhetorical action for civic good.

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Rhetoric as a Liberal Art

by Andrew Kern

Rhetoric is a liberal art, but all three of those words have come to mean something different than they meant in the Christian classical era. Therefore, let me suggest that we explore the meaning of each word and how the change in meaning affects our approach to teaching.

In his work Sidney and Spenser: The Poet as Maker, S.K. Heninger explains that “For us in the post-Romantic era, ‘art’ most likely implies originality, imaginativeness, a heightened response to the world—something out of the ordinary. It doesn’t at all mean what its etymology suggests.” In other words, since the late 18th and early 19th centuries, we think differently about the very idea of art. In general, we have lost the meaning applied within the Christian classical tradition. Heninger continues,

Ars for the Roman meant first of all a skill that could be mastered after proper instruction and sufficient practice, so there was an *ars medica*, an *ars militaris*, and an *ars grammatica*, as well as an *ars poetica*…. [F]or the Romans, the word ‘art’ indicated a skilled discipline, such as logic or astronomy.

The Latin word *ars*, our source-word for “art,” translated the Greek word *techne*, from which we derive our word technique. We may need to make fine distinction, however, because “technique” has tended to be swallowed up in “method,” but these words are not the same. Technique or art, classically understood, is more like a way than a method - imprecise and requiring judgment. One can become a master of an art.

Method, on the other hand, seeks to eliminate judgment. One repeats the same task identically in order to eliminate variation and gain the same result. Method more nearly applies to modern science than to a liberal art. A.N. Whitehead captured *spiritus mundi* when he said,

The greatest invention of the nineteenth century was the invention of a method of invention. A new method entered into life. In order to understand our epoch, we can neglect all the details of change, such as railways, telegraphs, radios, spinning machines, synthetic dyes. We must concentrate on the method itself; that is the real novelty, which has broken up the foundations of the old civilization.

Method has replaced art in almost every domain, giving rise to scientific management, replacing the headmaster with the administrator, and reducing the classroom to drudgery without the redeeming value of knowledge. Rhetoric, however, is not a method but an art, and this matters for at least two reasons.

First, since an art cultivates judgment in the apprentice, it is taught differently than a method. A method is simply memorized and repeated. An art is practiced, adapted, and haltingly applied in various situations. An art can only be authentically learned through apprenticeship. Perhaps you can see how the conventional classroom is structured, not for art, but for method. Second, widespread mastery of the art of rhetoric is a pre-condition for a free community. So we turn to the term *liberal*.

Just as “art” has been redefined by conventional thought, so “liberal” has come untethered from reality. If redefining “art” has led to pedagogical problems, redefining “liberal” has
contributed to a cultural catastrophe. The word liberal comes from the Latin word liber, free. It gives us the word liberty. However, modern notions of liberalism and freedom are rooted in a naturalistic worldview in which man has been reduced to, at best, a highly evolved animal. The Progressive has been floundering about, trying to come up with some means by which a naturally determined animal without a will can be free.

With humanity reduced and freedom redefined, the liberal arts have been displaced as well. To the best of my knowledge, the displacement seems to have followed this sequence: First, humanity was reduced to something less than the divine image, eliminating the very possibility of freedom. Second, early in the 19th century, German educators, under Hegel’s influence, shifted the focus of the curriculum from cultivating virtue through the arts to knowing the “progress” of man through history. Next, math was made subservient to science and technology, and science itself was exalted as the only reliable means of discovering truth.

The liberal arts, having been reduced to the verbal arts of the trivium, then began to be treated as “general knowledge.” Perhaps as a consequence, rhetoric came to be a specialized study and, shortly thereafter, despised as the art of manipulation. Logic, the second of the verbal arts, was converted into a mathematical method early in the 20th century, leaving only grammar. Grammar, however, was first formalized (reduced to the study of parts of speech), then neglected, then resented.

Thus, the liberal arts, which were the essence of a pre-collegiate education for hundreds of years, are now splintered and neglected, undiscoverable even by earnest students because the curriculum has been blown to smithereens. The consequences of this explosion lie all around and within us, but can be summarized in the observation that it has produced a nation of highly dependent people who lack confidence in their reason and will, neither of which have been honored or cultivated.

In the Christian classical tradition, freedom was seen as the fruit of discipline, the reward for self-control. It was the capacity and opportunity to govern oneself. The liberal arts were means to that self-governance. But with the reduction of man, the liberal arts no longer serve a normative purpose. If we are going to recapture our freedoms, we must master the liberal arts, including and guided by rhetoric.

We must always remember that rhetoric is one of the seven liberal arts or we won’t teach it or think about it correctly. Rhetoric is not a specialized subject studied for its own sake. It is not really a subject at all. It is an art and that a liberal one. Rhetoric needs to be studied to help us realize our human potential as free people. Remembering this, we see that talk of freedom and humanity is not ideology or even idealism. It is the fruit of discipline, and it can be approached practically through this art.

Plato had his problems with rhetoric, but he also may have given us its finest definition when he called it “the art of leading the soul.” Aristotle defined rhetoric as the art of “observing in any given case the available means of persuasion.” He developed a handbook on rhetoric that is nothing short of astounding in its range and depth of insight, covering such matters as the place of rhetoric in the curriculum, its definition, its basic divisions and kinds, the subjects that come under each kind, how to measure badness, an analysis of the emotions and types of character, the forms of argument, the parts of a speech, the tools to develop each part of a speech, virtues and faults of style, how to arrange a speech, and how to develop each part.

When Quintilian, in the first century A.D., expressed the goal of his widely used curriculum he said,
My aim, then, is the education of the perfect orator. The first essential for such a one is that he should be a good man.... The man who can really play his part as a citizen and is capable of meeting the demands both of public and private business, the man who can guide a state by his counsels, give it a firm basis by his legislation and purge its vices by his decisions as a judge, is assuredly no other than the orator of our quest.

Rhetoric is not a specialized study. It is an art that serves as an organizing principle for other studies. It absorbs grammar and logic, literature and history, politics and ethics, even philosophy and theology. You might say that rhetoric serves as the formal trunk of the curriculum, containing grammar and logic in its core, then spreading out and giving life to the branches of knowledge it sustains.

Nevertheless, rhetoric is also an art with distinguishing elements. It is a verbal art that draws all knowledge and experience together to lead and persuade others. The man who masters this art has progressed on the path of wisdom.

The liberal art of rhetoric plays a crucial role both in the curriculum and in a free society. It trains us to think, to organize our thoughts, to judge rightly, to make decisions, and to communicate with others. No mere subject, it is the capstone of the arts of a free people.

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Why Can’t They All Be Rhetoric Students?

by Charles T. Evans

I am starting to feel sorry for some of the younger students in classical schools. They sit in rows, laboring through stacks of information, occasionally standing to chant or recite in chorus. They are not unhappy, but the big kids get to discuss, disagree, to show off what they are learning—they are rhetoric students. But why can’t the little ones start to learn what it takes to be taken seriously by others, to impact someone else, to impress what they know on someone their own age? In short, why can’t they all be rhetoric students?

Any consideration of teaching rhetoric to anyone can begin with the classical canons. Organized by Ciceronian era orators, the five canons comprise the essential rhetorical skills that are taught, in sequence, to formal rhetoric students.

1. Discovery—the research into and the formulation of arguments that might be used to support a thesis
2. Arrangement—the organization of arguments for greatest effect, including the anticipation of responses (refutations) against the thesis
3. Style—composition, including the basic components of the persuasive essay or speech
4. Memory—in classical times, speeches were always memorized (often with amazing speed)
5. Presentation—the basic elements of oratory, including poise, voice strength, diction, intonation, gesture, etc.

When we teach high school and college students, we ordinarily take these in their traditional sequence. For most students, the first three canons—discovery, arrangement, and style—will constitute the majority of a course. Modern rhetoric texts such as Corbett and Connors (Oxford University Press) and Crider (Intercollegiate Studies Institute) typically recommend that one-half to two-thirds of the emphasis be placed on research and the formulation of arguments. Of course, this is the element that requires the greatest amount of academic skill and training. It would be largely inappropriate to emphasize these skill areas with first graders!

So, what can we do to introduce younger students to the study and practice of rhetoric? The traditional route has been to employ the progymnasmata, an ancient series of recitation and composition exercises, creatively revived by several contemporary authors and publishers. These exercises are certainly useful and historically were designed for use with students as soon as they could read, if not before. The basic goal is to train students in the habits of effective writing through imitation and the practice of structured forms. The “progym” is a developmentally appropriate way to introduce students to the rudimentary writing skills required in effective rhetoric.

But there’s more we can do with these canons that will serve to support a whole host of other academic goals for our littlest students. If we invert the canons, reversing the sequence by which we introduce the skills, we might actually be able to start training five and six-year-old rhetoricians in earnest.

Presentation (pronuntatio in Latin) is the ability to stand before someone and to say something understandably and attractively, even entertainingly. We have all heard somewhere that most people’s number one fear is public speaking. It makes perfect sense that this is true, since very few of us were taught at a young age to do it, regularly and with formal guidelines. Imagine the difference
in the majority of our students’ abilities to converse, present, or debate if they had spent their first three or four years in school standing before classmates on a weekly basis to recite poetry or to give short speeches.

I can anticipate the objection here that it wouldn’t be fair to shy children or those with speech difficulties to put them on public display so often. It is precisely those children, however, who, if given the chance to learn a formal manner of public speaking, would benefit the most! Not to mention the gregarious kids who would learn how to respect an audience and resist the temptation to draw attention to themselves with silliness.

In classical schools, there isn’t a recovery of traditional learning more important than the emphasis on memory. In *Wisdom and Eloquence*, Robert Littlejohn and I expand substantially on the need for students to remember information and skills. Just as important, however, we stress the need to teach students how to remember things.

The fourth rhetorical canon (second in our inverted sequence) is memory. I observe that in most classical schools with which I am familiar, things are memorized primarily to be recounted in writing. This is certainly more efficient than sixteen weekly recitations, and it may be appropriate in many situations. But doesn’t it seem that we could give students more opportunities to recall what they remember orally, following the guidelines established under a rubric of “presentation,” as above?

If the goal of a classical education based in the trivium is to produce skilled rhetoricians, the earlier a start we get, the better. And the more effectively we help our students to master the classical canons, the more effective their rhetoric will eventually be.

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In my Rhetoric class, I seek to make students persuasive communicators with a high regard for truth and a desire to imitate Christ. It’s a lofty aim. More pedestrian is the purpose of the AP English Language & Composition course, which, according to the College Board, exists “to enable students to read complex texts with understanding and to write prose of sufficient richness and complexity to communicate effectively with mature readers.” While these two purposes are not identical, there is much overlap between them. Ideally, a rhetoric course acquaints students with what Aristotle called “all the available means of persuasion in any given situation.” The situations students encounter in AP English generally lead to written compositions, but the “complex texts” they learn to analyze are not limited to formal writing. Instead, they may include advertisements, political cartoons, letters, and quite often, speeches; in other words, AP English is about understanding and persuasion in a variety of rhetorical situations. Furthermore, when we delve into the course description for AP English Language & Composition (APELAC), we find numerous references to the concerns that confront any student of rhetoric: “rhetorical contexts,” “interactions among a writer’s purposes, audience expectations, and subjects,” “resources of language,” “cogent explanations,” “rhetorical strategies.” Indeed, there is so much continuity between the rhetorical tradition and the types of analysis and writing students do in AP English Language that a few years ago, the College Board released a special guide to classical rhetoric for teachers of the course.

Because of this continuity, I’d like to suggest that for some schools, offering a rhetoric course that doubles as AP English Language might be a good idea. While defending the aims of the broader AP program is beyond the scope of this short piece, and while the drawbacks do merit serious consideration, a quick response to the question, “Why AP English?” might include the facts that AP exams, materials, and requirements provide a barometer for a school, that the class pleases parents, who see AP as important in the college-admissions (and financing) game, and that it gives students access to and recognition for a depth and rigor of study that may not otherwise be available, preparing them for college and life.

I’ll discuss just two of these benefits. First, the barometer. Although some AP courses are better than others, I have found that the standards set in several, including APELAC, are reasonable and useful. By studying the objectives of the course, looking at exam questions and passages, and comparing my students’ scores to national averages, I get a good idea of how our particular classical curriculum is preparing our students for the university and the world, even if I don’t always agree 100% with what today’s English
departments value. Second, rigor. Any school can create challenging courses, and classical schools have a well-deserved reputation for stretching their students and demanding deep, critical thought, instead of loading them up with “busy work.” But having an AP option gives teachers the chance to hold students accountable to a greater degree—this is, after all, a college level course, so quit the complaining!—and to reward them with nationally recognized nomenclature testifying to their hard work and accomplishment. If your school decides it would like to have the option of offering AP English Language & Composition in tandem with Rhetoric, consider the following issues.

Content: APELAC is flexible, so teachers may tailor the course to their own preferences, without sacrificing the classical approach they treasure. Adapting a classical rhetoric syllabus to meet the demands of the AP audit may seem onerous, but it doesn’t necessarily entail significant changes to the curriculum. A syllabus organized according to the five canons of rhetoric, for example, could easily satisfy AP requirements, provided that it demonstrates exposure to a wide variety of prose styles and demands that students write for a number of different purposes and in a series of drafts. Also, AP requires no specific reading list; nor does it mandate discussion of any one author, subject, or genre. The list of “representative” authors provided by the College Board is a plethora of possibilities: In the pre-twentieth-century list of forty or so suggested authors appear Addison, Hazlitt, Frederick Douglass, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Emerson, Swift, and Samuel Johnson, while the much longer contemporary list features rhetors as dissimilar as Orwell, Woolf, Mencken, Chesterton, Wendell Berry, E. B. White, Martin Luther King, Jr., William F. Buckley, Christopher Hitchens, David Brooks, and Dave Barry! I provide this catalog only to show that the authors and themes your students will study is completely up to the instructor, as long as students get to read authors of “comparable quality and complexity.” Nevertheless, if you have no interest in your students reading any contemporary nonfiction, or in discussing the rhetoric of “visual texts” (documentaries, advertisements, etc. . . .), or in familiarizing students with documentation styles, then APELAC may not be a good choice for you.

Skills: One vital skill which may come with the addition of APELAC is that of speaking and writing in language that others understand. We should praise students for their understanding of rhetorical categories and the classical terms used to describe them, but today, even sophisticated readers are likely to be more distracted than persuaded by a sentence such as this: “Queen Elizabeth appeals to logos in her exordium in a way that is typical of epideictic discourse.” APELAC provides a testing ground for the translation of rhetorical concepts into lucid, comprehensible prose. This is just one example; most of the skills traditionally taught in rhetoric are pertinent to APELAC. Memory and oral delivery, though, may need to be given short shrift. Although reading elegant essays aloud is an excellent way of internalizing their rhythms and will serve an AP English class well, teachers may need to limit the time students spend memorizing their own original speeches and practicing movement and gestures, in order to make room for training in timed writing, synthesis of sources, and research.

Timing and sequence: At our school we offer the AP course as an option during the students’ eleventh grade Rhetoric 2 class, a class which emphasizes arrangement and style. APELAC could conceivably be taught at any
high school grade, but most schools choose to offer it after tenth grade. Offering it earlier may put students at a disadvantage on the exam and hinder class discussions, because AP English Language requires students to bring their own life experience, knowledge of current events, philosophy, American history, and general culture to bear on contemporary—and eternal—questions. For example, on the same AP exam students might need the rhetorical savvy and reading skills to appropriately interact with a speech by Lincoln, a satirical editorial published last year in *The Onion*, and a writing prompt by Milan Kundera about the decline of privacy in the modern world.

In conclusion, Rhetoric taught with AP English Language can work. I don’t suggest that it’s the best possible arrangement or even that it is a good one for all classical schools. But it is feasible. There are drawbacks—such as the increased workload on teachers, and the potential pressure from parents to “teach to the test.” I have not elaborated on these because I feel that the classical school community is already well acquainted with them.

But there are also benefits. Virginia Woolf wrote that “the art of writing has for backbone some fierce attachment to an idea.” Rhetoric often begins for high school students in a place where they do not yet have a clear enough idea of their idea to be “attached” to it. They may find themselves in the place of Astrophel, beating himself and biting his “truant pen.” Through a process of “invention,” arrangement, and putting words to paper, and always in dialogue with others, students look into their hearts, learn what they think—or what they should think—and then gradually persuade others of the same. Rhetoric and AP English together give students a valuable toolkit for coming up with ideas, for testing and tuning them, and for expressing them in a way that credits others but still contributes to the conversation.

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Senior Thesis

by Debra Gore

On one level, Rhetoric II is a class like any other at Regents School of Austin. It meets four days a week for 55 minutes. It requires homework, participation, and demonstrated learning. It earns 1.0 credits toward a student’s graduation requirements. On his final transcript, it shows up as a single line with a number and a grade posted next to it. But every Regents School graduate knows that this description does not do this course justice whatsoever. Rhetoric II—the Senior Thesis—was always intended to be more than just the last requirement of a senior course, and it indeed is.

For the last ten years the senior thesis has been a requirement for graduation at Regents. Seniors must select a topic for their thesis that is both researchable and debatable, and faculty have the final say in approving students’ topics. Seniors must deliver their thesis in a public forum in front of a panel of judges. The students’ speeches are between 17-22 minutes in length, followed by a rigorous round of 20 minutes of Q & A. This Q & A session weighs heavily in determining the final grade. Students are only permitted two sheets of paper (8 ½ x 11, front side only) when presenting their theses.

Each student is paired with a faculty advisor who mentors the student throughout the thesis process by interacting with the student’s research and written work. The advisor also helps the student prepare for the Q & A portion of the presentation and serves on the judging panel. Each presentation is recorded on DVD and stored, along with the written text, in Regents’ library. We believe that these presentations are the culmination of each student’s education at Regents.

Students prepare an annotated bibliography early in their research, gathering reputable sources for both sides of their issue. This process prepares the students for the more rigorous research method that they will face at the collegiate level and presses them into defending their sources.

Prior to the thesis presentations, students present in class an anti-thesis. These enable the students to honestly consider the opponents’ perspectives and compel them to dig more deeply into the research. Regents gives an annual Senior Thesis Award at graduation based on evaluations from the course instructor, judges, and other faculty.

Since Regents is a Christian school, students consider the spiritual aspects of their topics. Some topics naturally lend themselves to a spiritual bent, but others do not. We challenge the students to consider how their topics have been shaped by man’s sinfulness, by man’s redemption (or lack thereof), and what scripture may relate to their topics.

Quintilian said, “A rhetor is a good man speaking well,” so we spend significant time on delivery. Our students must be able to speak well so others will want to listen. Throughout the year, students practice speaking in front of their classes, honing specific delivery skills. Every student participates, there are no exceptions. The teacher offers immediate feedback. This brief assessment should be both positive and constructive. The rhetoric teachers try to make these days fun and entertaining because mastering difficult concepts, such as movement, can be frustrating for students. By keeping the class lighthearted, students are much more willing to address these more challenging issues and begin to lose their fear of standing in front of an audience.

Students who complete a thesis at Regents know
that they have done something substantive and difficult. We believe they have begun mastering the art of persuasion, thereby preparing them for college and beyond.

Listed below are a few of the activities that we use at Regents to help our students improve their public speaking skills.

**Bad-Habits Activity** – An important first step in speaking well is identifying problems in students’ presentations. For this activity, the teacher lists specific bad habits (e.g., saying “uh”, leaning on the podium, and playing with clothing) on note cards and hands these cards out to students. Each student also receives a paper with a paragraph to read at the podium. One-by-one, the students must stand at the front of the class and read their paragraph while exhibiting the bad habit. After giving the speaker a moment to demonstrate it, members of the audience try to guess the offending trait. This fun activity permits students to look ridiculous as long as everyone looks equally ridiculous.

**Psalms Activity** – The teacher identifies various portions of the Psalms that lend themselves to passionate or angry pleas. These verses are randomly distributed to the class. Students must display the appropriate emotion in a believable manner. Some students are much more capable than others at expressing the designated emotion. We have discovered that a sincere interaction with this activity can be a beautiful demonstration of religious affections.

**Gesture Activity** – After providing basic instruction on gesturing, the teacher selects short paragraphs of great speeches from J.F. Kennedy, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr., Winston Churchill, etc. (see www.americanrhetoric.com for a collection of great speeches) and asks the students to consider how they would incorporate gestures into their speech. The students must then deliver their paragraph using the appropriate gestures. Immediate feedback is especially important to the success of this activity. An alternative gesture activity is to watch video clips of presidential debates and evaluate the various speakers’ mannerisms.

**Eye-Contact Activity** – Each student is given a clicker. These clickers make an annoying sound. The teacher asks a student to go to the front of the room and speak on a topic that he knows well and can talk about comfortably. Once the student begins, the audience members begin clicking their clickers. The speaker must make sustained eye contact with each member of the class. When the speaker accomplishes this, the person he is looking at should stop clicking. If the speaker looks up at the ceiling or down at the floor or away from the audience in some way, all clickers resume. When the speaker has made meaningful eye contact with everyone in the classroom, all clicking should have stopped and only then is the speaker finished.

**The Dreaded Cowbell Activity** – Because we want our students to avoid certain words (e.g., uh, um, well, like, you know) when answering questions from the judges, they need to be alerted when they lapse into saying them. For this activity, the teacher brings a loud cowbell to class. The students must answer classmates’ questions about their thesis. When the speaker utters any of the banned words from our list, the teacher rings the cowbell LOUDLY. Regents’ rhetoric classes do this activity near the time of the actual thesis presentation. Although students hate this day, it works wonders.

Regents’ faculty have many more activities that refine students’ presentation skills. All in all, though, whether speaking or writing, excellence is expected.

Deb Gore has taught Rhetoric at Regents School of Austin for 10 years. She runs the senior thesis program and heads up the mock trial team. Deb is married to Rex and has two sons, Nolan and Matt.
A question was once, somehow or other, started between Collins and me, of the propriety of educating the female sex in learning, and their abilities for study. He was of opinion that it was improper, and that they were naturally unequal to it. I took the contrary side, perhaps a little for dispute’s sake. He was naturally more eloquent, had a ready plenty of words; and sometimes, as I thought, bore me down more by his fluency than by the strength of his reasons. As we parted without settling the point, and were not to see one another again for some time, I sat down to put my arguments in writing, which I copied fair and sent to him. He answered, and I replied. Three or four letters of a side had passed, when my father happened to find my papers and read them. Without entering into the discussion, he took occasion to talk to me about the manner of my writing; observed that, though I had the advantage of my antagonist in correct spelling and pointing (which I ow’d to the printing house), I fell far short in elegance of expression, in method and perspicuity, of which he convinced me by several instances. I saw the justice of his remarks, and thence grew more attentive to the manner in writing, and determined to endeavor at improvement.

About this time [around 14-15?] I met with an odd volume of the Spectator. It was the third. I have never before seen any of them. I bought it, read it over and over, and was very much delighted with it. I thought the writing excellent, and wished, if possible, to imitate it. With this view I took some of the papers, and, making short hints of the sentiment in each sentence, laid them by a few days, and then, without looking at the book, try’d to compleat the papers again, by expressing each hinted sentiment at length, and as fully as it had been expressed before, in any suitable words that should come to hand.

Then I compared my Spectator with the original, discovered some of my faults, and corrected them. But I found I wanted a stock of words, or a readiness in recollecting and using them. . . . Therefore I took some of the tales [in the Spectator] and turned them into verse; and, after a time, when I had pretty well forgotten the prose, turned them back again. I also sometimes jumbled my collections of hints into confusion, and after some weeks endeavored to reduce them into the best order, before I began to form the full sentences and compleat the paper. This was to teach me method in the arrangement of thoughts. By comparing my work afterwards with the original, I discovered many faults and amended them; but I sometimes had the pleasure of fancying that, in certain particulars of small import, I had been lucky enough to improve the method or the language, and this encouraged me to think I might possibly in time come to be a tolerable English writer, of which I was extreamly ambitious.”

--Benjamin Franklin, Autobiography

Thus did Benjamin Franklin, after some hints from his father, teach himself to become one of the greatest writers in the English language. The occasion for this long quotation is the consideration of the question whether classical schools should adopt a specialized “writing program” or instead teach writing as an art that is closely allied with and emanates from the other disciplines of classical training. The temptation in schools is to opt for a “program” that can be handed to the teachers in a binder, the teachers being told, “Here, follow this.” I contend that students learn to write rather by reading good writing and by being required to write often under the tutelage of someone who has an eye for good writing and who can bring to bear all other parts of the curriculum.

‘‘A’’

The Essentials of a True Writing Program

by Terrence O. Moore

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in teaching students how to organize and express their thoughts on the blank page. That endeavor is an art, not a “process,” and not a canned “program.”

We should first be frank about what a “writing program” is. These programs, which have been “adopted” in schools throughout the country, public and private, attempt to reduce all thoughts on all occasions to a contrived, prescriptive, mind-numbing formula by means of a lot of gimmicks. These programs are all deficient in major respects, though each usually has one or two fairly obvious suggestions that might prove useful. Mostly they are deficient because they are not written by good writers nor written for good writers as a guide to teach good writing. Instead, they are made for the typical uneducated schoolteacher who has no love of nor proficiency in the English language, who cannot write well, and yet who must “teach writing” because the curriculum calls for it. With this need in mind, textbook publishers and program-makers are ready to come up with an easy-to-use method that promises higher standardized-test scores, a method, by the way, that no real writer has ever used. One wonders how Bacon and Locke and Addison and Johnson and Franklin and the Federalist authors and all the great essayists of our language, not to mention the poets and playwrights and novelists, ever learned to write a sentence without Six Traits and Step-Up to Writing. The greatest deficiency of these programs, however, is that in showing teachers and students the quick-and-easy method of getting thoughts down on paper, they never quote or make reference to those great writers in our language from whom we have the most to learn. Had Franklin learned from Six Traits rather than from Addison’s Spectator, he no doubt would have learned to slap some words down on paper but would never have fulfilled his ambition of becoming a “tolerable English writer,” certainly not a writer whom anyone wanted to read. We must begin, then, by asking, “what is good writing?”

All good writing makes a point. Without a point, writing is in vain. We have all read articles and essays, some written by children, others by older students, some by those who appear in journals and newspapers, and wondered, “What’s the point?” Professor Joe Williams, my own writing teacher and the author of the acclaimed Style, used to say, “the biggest problem with undergraduate writing is that it’s pointless.” By that he meant that immature writers often make no claim, have no thesis, do not build their writing around a central theme. Very often they have no point because they have nothing to say or do not know what is at stake on a given topic. To this end, young writers often have to be given topics. Nonetheless, even young children and adolescents have big questions on their minds. Notice that the young Franklin’s point in his first essay came from an argument he had been having with his friend Collins. (Whether girls could undergo a classical education—“learning”—in those days was still an open question.) Writers must take care not to drift away from their points as they write. Furthermore, they should avoid being wishy-washy. Too many papers of young writers take on an “it’s-sort-of-this-but-sort-of-that” quality. I tell students to write their papers as they would argue a legal case. As a prosecutor you would not make a very strong case by arguing that the defendant is “sort-of guilty.”

Once a writer has a point, he must harness the forces of knowledge, logic, and eloquence to support it clearly and convincingly. All good writers must have a thorough knowledge of their subject and of the world in general to find supporting evidence for their case. Writing without knowledge only exposes one’s ignorance. Knowledge differs from mere opinion. Opinions are people’s raw desire to express themselves without having studied an issue or given it any thought. Knowledge comes as the result of patient study combined with sound judgment.
Such knowledge is derived from many sources, but two are crucial: books and nature. With the former, only books that are themselves the result of patient research and sound judgment are worth reading. The latter can be divided into the physical and the human world. Any good writer will then be a voracious reader and a careful observer of the natural world and of the human condition. Consider Franklin’s essay. Even given the knowledge about women at the time, he could easily have argued that women could undergo a classical education. From books he would have learned about Cornelia, mother of the brothers Gracchi, who had essentially home-schooled her famous sons. He would have cited Locke, the great philosopher of the age, who had similarly observed women schooling their children. He could have referred to many young women privately educated in the home who had acquired French and Italian through their singing lessons. Finally, he could have decimated his rival’s arguments with a bit of common sense. “Learning has always centered upon the learning of Latin. Girls can learn Latin as well as boys. They merely have not done so recently because no one bothers to teach it to them. If girls cannot learn Latin, then what did women in ancient Rome speak? Surely, they did not speak a language wholly different from their fathers, brothers, and husbands. And unless my opponent wishes to argue that human nature has changed fundamentally since the times of the ancient Romans, he cannot provide a reason for thinking girls in these enlightened times are any less capable of learning that noble language.”

Good writing is also logical. In a logical essay the arguments are separate and coherent and follow a sensible order. Forming separate and distinct points to support the major one is critical to good writing. Immature writers will often make the mistake of taking up the same topic two or three times over the course of an essay rather than dealing with it all at once. At other times, the individual points seem to have no connection with each other. Redundancy and incoherence are major faults the young writer must overcome. The writer must further arrange those distinct points in the most compelling order. To teach himself logical arrangement, Franklin even jumbled up his individual “thoughts” and later put them back together as Addison had originally written them. No writing program can teach this logical order since too many variables exist for each attempt at writing: the demands of the subject, the style of the author, the nature of the audience, and the occasion for the essay. Should the most powerful piece of evidence come at the beginning or end of an essay? No writing program can answer that question.

The good writer must be both a master and a lover of the English language. The writer deploys words as an artist uses paints or a composer arranges notes: by putting words together to achieve a sublime composition. Language consists in many elements: principally grammar, vocabulary, and style.

Grammar, though to some not an alluring study, ranks as the most necessary for any writer. The English language, after all, has a structure or framework. That framework is essential to the stability of the edifice, and its integrity cannot be compromised. Had Jefferson written, “We hold that these truths is self-evident,” no one would have read what he had to say. Teachers of writing must not content themselves with correcting bad grammar, surgically, that has gone awry; they must teach good grammar prescriptively. Here is how Winston Churchill, one of the greatest writers and speakers of the English language, described his learning of English grammar:

“By being so long in the lowest form [grade] I gained an immense advantage over the cleverer boys. They all went on to learn Latin and Greek and splendid
things like that. But I was taught English. We were considered such dunces that we could learn only English. Mr. Somervell—a most delightful man, to whom my debt is great—was charged with the duty of teaching the stupidest boys the most disregarded thing—namely, to write mere English. He knew how to do it. He taught it as no one else has ever taught it. Not only did we learn English parsing thoroughly, but we also practiced continually English analysis. Mr. Somervell had a system of his own. He took a fairly long sentence and broke it up into its components by means of black, red, blue, and green inks. Subject, verb, object: Relative Clauses, Conditional Clauses, Conjunctive and Disjunctive Clauses! Each had its colour and its bracket. It was a kind of drill. We did it almost daily. As I remained in the Third Fourth three times as long as anyone else, I had three times as much of it. I learned it thoroughly. Thus I got into my bones the essential structure of the ordinary British sentence—which is a noble thing.

There is no getting around it. The English sentence is a noble thing, but not a thing that can be picked up on the fly. Grammar must be drilled into a student’s very bones.

If grammar is the framework of the language, words are the bricks and mortar. We have a great many words to choose from in English. There are a couple of hundred thousand words in a good collegiate dictionary and around a million in the OED. English is said to be the richest language for its sheer volume of words. And yet any good writer knows that at a certain moment only one word will do. It is one thing to call a girl pretty. It is quite another to call her radiant. True, one girl may be pretty and another may be radiant, but they are not the same girl. A good writer does not blast away at his target with a shotgun but uses a rifle with a scope to achieve pinpoint accuracy. To achieve such accuracy, the good writer must be a lover of words. “Lover” is no hollow metaphor and no exaggeration. Again Churchill: “I had picked up a wide vocabulary and had a liking for words and for the feeling of words fitting and falling into their places like pennies in the slot . . . I admired these words.” In the middle of World War II, Churchill visited his alma mater Harrow to listen to the boys sing the old school songs, which he loved so much. To one of the school songs the boys had added another verse: *Not less we praise in darker days/The Leader of our Nation,/And Churchill’s name shall win acclaim/ From each new generation.* Though immensely touched by the added verse, Churchill requested that the boys change “darker” to “sterner.” Though admittedly difficult and challenging, these were not dark days. What sort of man, himself at the helm, would take the trouble in the middle of the greatest war in history to change a word in a school song? Was Churchill a pedant? No, indeed. To him the difference between darker and sterner was everything.

In addition to a solid grammar and a precise vocabulary, a good writer must possess style. The chief flaw of the contrived writing programs is their total want of style. Style is the manner, the tone, the address, the quality of a person’s writing. We normally use the word style in reference to dress. The analogy is apt. We change our dress to suit the occasion. One does not wear a tux to the gym or flip-flops to a funeral. Style in writing, too, must suit the occasion. Certain moments summon energy and force while others invite a lighter touch. Style also gives texture and nuance and force to writing by the use of various literary devices such as simile, metaphor, alliteration, parallelism and
the like. When Lincoln called the nation a “house divided,” he did more than quote the Bible. He perfectly diagnosed the nation’s malady. More than suitability or literary device, style is the true signature of the writer. I remember reading somewhere that style is the image of the mind. The way one writes does, indeed, reveal qualities of mind, perhaps even of character. Consider the character that comes through in Darcy’s letter to Elizabeth in *Pride and Prejudice*. Not only does each author have a style, but we may say that each age in history writes with a particular style that reflects the society’s manners and habits of mind. In the eighteenth century, men and women dressed with elegance, spoke with elegance, and consequently wrote with elegance. Is it any wonder that we in the twenty-first century dress in jeans, speak mostly of trivial things, and therefore too often write in a sloppy and slapdash manner? In classical education, though, there may be a remedy. Having shown that the sources of good writing derive from disciplines and habits of mind that are not acquired in a “writing program,” we should be able with some force and perspicuity to demonstrate in a subsequent essay that a thorough classical education is the best means to learn and practice the art of good writing.

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The Fourth Canon of Rhetoric: More than Memorization

by Andrew L. Smith

Of the five canons of rhetoric, memory is treated by some of the most well-known modern rhetoric resources in underdeveloped and oversimplified ways, if it is considered at all. The insinuation given is that the fourth canon is simply about memorization, and the teacher of rhetoric may have little reason to investigate further or practice it any differently. Without deeper consideration of memory, though, the teacher may fail to make an important distinction between writing and speaking which will result in the students’ missing out on the fullness of the skill of rhetoric. Memory must be understood, taught, and practiced as something more than rote memorization.

Near the end of the *Phaedrus*, Socrates gives a mythological account of the genesis of writing. He tells of two Egyptian gods, Theuth, an inventor of arts, and Thamos, the king of Egypt. In displaying his arts to the king and making an appeal that they be given to all of the people, Theuth argued that written letters would be of particular benefit, acting as a “drug for memory and wisdom.” Convinced that Theuth was not being a proper judge of his own invention, Thamos responded:

“You, being the father of written letters, have on account of goodwill said the opposite of what they can do. For this will provide forgetfulness in the souls of those who have learned it, through neglect of memory, seeing that, through trust in writing, they recollect from outside with alien markings, not reminding themselves from inside, by themselves. You have therefore found a drug not for memory, but for reminding. You are supplying the opinion of wisdom to the students, not truth. For you’ll see that, having become hearers of much without teaching, they will seem to be sensible judges in much, while being for the most part senseless, and hard to be with, since they’ve become wise in their own opinion instead of wise.

Plato goes on to explain that the written speech is static, limited only to what is contained in it and, therefore, cannot defend itself or explain itself to those who would question it. The true speech, the speech on one’s soul, is different. It is “written with knowledge in the soul of him who understands, with power to defend itself, and knowing to speak and to keep silence towards those it ought.” At best, written speech is a copy of the speech on the soul, a static imitation of the dynamic reality. At worst, it is simply an assemblage of facts and ideas arranged in such a way as to give the appearance that its author has true understanding. However, the written speech itself cannot reveal the truth about its author; this can only be demonstrated through the oral speech, where one soul engages and moves the souls of others.

Obviously, writing is not a bad thing and written speech has been and will remain crucial to the classical pedagogy. The skills of rhetoric can be learned through and applied to writing in many of the same ways that they can be learned through and applied to speaking. However, there
is a difference between the two, and rhetoric is first and foremost about speaking, not writing. As Plato explains, rhetoric is the art of leading souls through words. If written speech is a static imitation of spoken speech, the speech on the soul, then which one is better suited to lead the souls of others? If rhetoric is, as Aristotle explains, the ability in any case to see the available means of persuasion, then how can written speech suffice when it is limited to the page and cannot adapt to the context of the moment or the audience? Perhaps it is clear that the art of rhetoric must give priority to spoken speech over written speech, but what has this to do with the canon of memory?

Without an understanding of the distinction between writing and speaking and, therefore, without being intentional with students about this distinction and its relationship to the canon of memory, we reduce memory to memorization. In so doing, we unknowingly teach them to prioritize the written speech over the speech on the soul. For instance, in a typical rhetoric course, the student will be required to deliver an original oration. In preparation for delivering the oration the student will first write the speech, for the purpose of developing his or her argument and also as a means of being held accountable by the teacher. Once the speech is written, checked by the teacher and (hopefully) re-written, it is ready to be delivered. All the student has to do now is commit the speech to memory and try not to get too nervous when standing up in front of the audience. What is it, though, that the student is supposed to be delivering? A paper or a speech? If the teacher has not been intentional about this point, both teacher and student will assume the former. At this point in the process, hours upon hours of class instruction and individual work have been poured into the writing of the paper. It has been the primary focus of attention. The paper contains the student’s argument and, therefore, the paper must be memorized and delivered. The student has been taught to prioritize the written, static speech over the dynamic speech that resides in the soul and moves souls.

The canon of memory must include more than simple memorization, and it ought to serve the purpose of helping the student develop and truly understand what he or she believes, i.e. the speech on his or her soul. In her comprehensive work, The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture, Mary Carruthers explains that when we think of what constitutes a brilliant mind, we typically think of intellect, creativity, imagination, and intuition. In contrast, when we think of memory, we typically consider it as a mental capacity that does not necessarily include authentic thought and learning. That is, we think of it as simple memorization and do not associate it with any of the components of brilliance. The medieval people did not share our understanding of memory.

The difference is that whereas now geniuses are said to have creative imagination which they express in intricate reasoning and original discovery, in earlier times they were said to have richly retentive memories, which they expressed in intricate reasoning and original discovery. Memory is more than memorization.

In Book X of his Confessions, St. Augustine gives a full description of the kinds of activities involved with the memory, including learning, which happens by gathering together ideas contained in the memory. He explains that there is a relation between gathering and knowing, as their Latin roots, cogo and cogito, respectively, demonstrate. The act of gathering, or collecting, cannot be separated from the act of learning and knowing. True understanding, including understanding of God and oneself, is an activity of the memory. Hugh of St. Victor turns this descriptive, philosophical notion of “gathering” into prescriptive, practical advice. “Now every
exposition has some principle upon which the entire truth of the matter and the force of its thought rest, and to this principle everything else is traced back. To look for and consider this principle is to ‘gather.’” The student should collect and become familiar with the overarching principles upon which his or her argument rests. Once these are committed to memory, are truly understood by the student, the sub-points that are contained within the larger ones will flow from them, freeing the student to contour the argument to fit any particular audience and time. This is a different process from rote memorization, and the canon of memory should be understood within this fuller context. Far from being a tool for memorizing written speech and privileging it over spoken speech, the fourth canon reinforces the first three, utilizing writing as a means of supporting and sharpening the speech on one’s soul. It is through memory that rhetoric is transformed from formulae to faculty, becoming a true skill within the soul of the student.

There are some practical ways for the teacher of rhetoric to promote the canon of memory properly. First, teach your students the difference between written speech and oral speech. Talk about the difference often, as it is counter to what they are usually taught. Use the words “written speech” and “speech on your soul,” but avoid the phrase “presenting your paper” when describing what the student will be delivering. Second, have the student practice standing up in front of the class, delivering the heart of his or her argument (statement of facts, division and proof) with no notes and then give immediate peer and teacher feedback. This gives the student a “feel” for the argument as well as practice and helps the student decide what he or she really believes and the best way to present it. Third, do not have the student’s written speech in front of you as he or she delivers the oral speech; they are different and should be treated differently. The oral speech matters more, in that context, and you want to assess the student based solely on the ability to exhibit his or her rhetorical faculty in that particular moment and place. The written paper is simply a tool for facilitating the development of the skill. The presented speech is different and should not be exactly the same as his written paper. Finally, students who write very well, especially creatively and stylistically, will struggle with this. They will want to memorize their well-written speech word for word. Or, they will want to actually present the written speech by reading it to the audience. Do not let them “hide” behind their writing. Even though it is quite good, the skill of writing well is different from the skill of speaking well.

Understanding that memory is more than memorization, the teacher must not reduce oral speech to written speech. Rather, the teacher must instruct the student to give priority to the former. What matters most is that which he or she truly understands and can explain in different ways using different words, according to the context at hand. This is what Plato refers to as the speech on the soul, and this is what the student must be able to deliver.

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