**A Speaker’s Toolbox – Handy Rhetorical Devices**

**Alliteration**: the recurrence of initial consonant sounds (*bubbling brook*)

**Allusion**: a short, informal reference to a famous person (real or fictional) or event (He’s the team’s *Hercules*)

**Analogy**: a comparison between two things, similar in several respects, for the purpose of explaining or clarifying something unfamiliar or difficult by showing its similarity to something familiar; while similar to a simile, an analogy is often more concrete and practical, rather than artistic, and is more developed

**Anaphora**: repeating the same word at the beginning or end of successive sentences to create effect and/or add emphasis

**Antithesis**: establishes a clear, contrasting relationship between two ideas by joining them together or juxtaposing them, often in parallel structure

**Hyperbole**: the counterpart of understatement, deliberately exaggerates conditions for emphasis and/or effect; not to be overused, the hyperbole can effectively grab attention is used sparingly

**Irony**: the actual meaning is the opposite of the expected; the words say one thing but mean the opposite

**Metaphor**: a comparison between two unlike things, asserting that one thing is another; frequently invoking the to be verb (*you are the light of my life*)

**Onomatopoeia**: the use of words whose pronunciation imitates the sound the word describes (*buzz* imitates the sound of an insect)

**Oxymoron**: a paradox reduced to two words for effect and/or emphasis (*deafening silence; inertly strong*)

**Paradox**: a statement seemingly opposed to common sense that may have some truth in it (*poor little rich girl*)

**Parallelism**: a recurrent syntactical similarity; several parts of a sentence or several sentences are expressed to show that the ideas in the parts or sentences are equal in importance; parallelism also adds balance or rhythm as well as clarity (*the children ran, danced and laughed*)

**Personification**: giving human characteristics to inanimate objects (*the water hose danced across the lawn; the tree stretched its arms into the sky*)

**Pun**: a play on words; when a word has more than one possible meaning (A father says to a mother while at the beach with his son and daughter: *At least the sun is bright* could refer to the “sun” or the “son”)

**Rhetorical question**: since its answer is obvious or obviously desired, this form of question is not answered; used for effect, emphasis, provocation or for drawing a conclusion from the facts at hand

**Simile**: a comparison between two unlike things using like, as or than to emphasize a similarity (*her eyes shone like diamonds*)

**Understatement**: deliberately expressing an idea as less important than it actually is, either for ironic emphasis or for politeness and tact; especially useful when dealing with disagreement (with a speaker or an audience), because the statement may carry the same point with less offense