

The Bias of Rhetoric

My Notes

F. Downplayers: The use of qualifier words or phrases to make someone or something look less important or significant. Words like “mere” and “only” work this way, as does the use of quotation marks, to suggest a term is ironic or misleading. For example: “She got her ‘degree’ from a correspondence school.” Often these are linked to concessions with connectors such as *nevertheless*, *however*, *still*, or *but*.

G. Hyperbole: The use of extravagant overstatement that can work to move the audience to accept the basic claim even if they reject the extremes of the word choice. Many of the other “slanters” can be hyperbolic in how they are worded; the key element is that the statement or claim is extreme. For example, in response to a dress code, a student might say “This school administration is fascist!”

H. Truth surrogates: Hinting that proof exists to support a claim without actually citing that proof. For example, ads often say “studies show” and tabloids often say things like “according to an insider” or “there’s every reason to believe that . . .” If the evidence does exist, the author is doing a poor job of citing it; meanwhile, the author has not actually identified any source—or made any claim—that can be easily disproven or challenged.

I. Ridicule/sarcasm: The use of language that suggests the subject is worthy of scorn. The language seeks to evoke a laugh or sarcastically mock the subject.

Check Your Understanding

Given one of the previous slanters, complete the following tasks in your small group and be prepared to share your findings with the class:

- Create your own paraphrased definition of the term.
- List the examples provided in the explanation and brainstorm additional examples.
- Create a brief skit for the rest of the class to illustrate the term.
- Take notes on the other groups’ presentations of their slanters.

INDEPENDENT READING LINK

Review your outside reading and find examples of at least two types of slanting techniques. For each example, provide an explanation of how it exemplifies the technique. Reflect on the effectiveness of the writer’s use of the technique.