OBJECTIVES
Students will

- identify rhetorical devices in informational text.
- analyze informational text to determine how an author uses rhetorical devices to create meaning and support his or her purpose.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS
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Analyzing Rhetorical Devices in “The Oz Diet”
Grades 9-10

ABOUT THIS LESSON
This lesson introduces students to the ways an author uses rhetorical devices to create meaning and support his or her purpose. The lesson requires students to move beyond merely identifying the rhetorical device to connecting the device to meaning, or more specifically, how the device helps the author accomplish his purpose.

Before using this lesson, provide students with copies of the Student Resource “Rhetorical Devices.”

TEXT COMPLEXITY
Passages for the National Math and Science Initiative (NMSI) English lessons are selected to challenge students, while lessons and activities make texts accessible. Guided practice with challenging texts allows students to gain the proficiency necessary to read independently at or above grade level.

Qualitative and quantitative analysis of this excerpt from “The Oz Diet” indicates that it is appropriately challenging for students in Grades 9-10.
COGNITIVE RIGOR
English lessons for NMSI are designed to guide students through a continuum of increasingly complex thinking skills, including those outlined in taxonomies such as the Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy and Webb’s Depth of Knowledge Levels. The activities in this lesson move students from the identification of rhetorical elements (DOK 1) to an analysis and evaluation of the speaker’s craft and the effect his craft has on the audience (DOK 3). The lesson engages students in all levels of Bloom’s taxonomy.

This lesson is included in Module 6: Crafting an Effective Argument.

CONNECTION TO COMMON CORE STANDARDS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS
The activities in this lesson allow teachers to address the following Common Core Standards:

Explicitly addressed in this lesson
RI.9-10.1: Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
RI.9-10.6: Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how an author uses rhetoric to advance that point of view or purpose.

Implicitly addressed in this lesson
RI.9-10.10: By the end of grade 9, read and comprehend literary nonfiction in the grades 9-10 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range. By the end of grade 10, read and comprehend literary nonfiction at the high end of the grades 9-10 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

CONNECTIONS TO AP*
Rhetorical analysis of an informational text is an important college readiness skill. Students need to recognize rhetorical devices and how they create meaning in a text. This is a foundational skill in both reading argumentative and persuasive essays and in writing their own. Recognizing and understanding rhetorical devices is vital for success on the AP Language exam.

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MATERIALS AND RESOURCES
- copies of the Student Activity

ASSESSMENTS
The following kind of formative assessment is embedded in this lesson:
- guided questions
**TEACHING SUGGESTIONS**

Before beginning Activity One, students should read the writing assignment and the excerpt from “The Oz Diet” without any prior discussion. After reading the text, have students discuss the writing prompt so they have a clear understanding of the writing task. When this prompt was used as a NMSI English posttest in 2012, many student essays reflected a misunderstanding of the writing task by writing either an expository essay on what constitutes good nutrition or an argumentative essay that took a position on an individual’s right to eat whatever he or she wanted. The majority of students did not score well because they did not analyze the text for rhetorical devices as directed in the writing prompt.

**Activity One**

Direct students to the first paragraph and facilitate a class discussion around the definition of rhetoric. Students in Grades 9 and 10 should be able to use the words *rhetoric, rhetorical,* and *rhetorician* as part of their academic vocabulary.

Ask a student to read aloud Paragraph 1. Discuss the example provided for Paragraph 1. Make sure students note that in this particular paragraph, the rhetorical device does not contribute to the author’s purpose of explaining “the confusion consumers experience in understanding what constitutes good nutrition.” Students need to understand that merely identifying rhetorical devices in their essays is not providing analytical commentary. Make sure they practice linking devices to meaning. Guide them through the process of identifying additional rhetorical devices in Paragraph 1. Select one additional device and model the completion of steps a-d with the whole class. Students should work through the remaining paragraphs in collaborative groups or with a partner.

**Activity Two**

This activity uses paragraphs from an actual student essay to provide a model of analytical writing.

This essay effectively communicates the way the author uses rhetorical devices to show the confusion consumers experience over good nutrition. While the purpose of this lesson is to focus on explaining how rhetorical devices accomplish the author’s purpose, you may wish to extend the lesson by discussing with students how the rhetorical devices create emotional, logical, or ethical appeals to influence the readers and change their behavior concerning their nutritional choices. A PowerPoint® titled “Rhetorical Analysis” is available on the NMSI website under English >Teacher Training Materials and Resources>PowerPoints.

**ANSWERS**

Answers to the activities in this lesson will vary.
Activity One: Understanding Rhetorical Devices

Before you can rhetorically analyze text, it is important that you realize that rhetoric is all around you: in the conversations that you have with each other, the movies and songs you watch and listen to, the books and advertisements you read. Once you become conscious of how rhetoric works, it can change the way you speak, read, and write, making you a more successful communicator and reader.

Rhetoric is sometimes defined as “the language of persuasion.” An effective writer or speaker uses devices of language or rhetorical devices to accomplish a specific purpose.

Read Paragraph 1 from “The Oz Diet” and identify the rhetorical devices and determine how these devices support the author’s purpose. An example from the first paragraph has been done for you.

Paragraph 1:

The first time I looked into an open chest cavity at a heart muscle working to pump blood through the body, I was brought up short by the traffic graffiti of atherosclerotic plaque. This waxy goo, often found in overweight people, builds up in the vessels surrounding the organ in which, philosophers tell us, the soul lives. But I pushed any such distracting thoughts from my mind. I was learning to operate and was frankly thrilled at the prospect of harvesting a leg vein to bypass the blockage. Surgeons are trained to think that way, and rightly so. Do a good day’s work and a life is saved, a bad day’s work and a patient dies. No room there for anything but the job at hand.

a. Rhetorical device used: metaphor

b. Textual evidence: the traffic graffiti of atherosclerotic plaque.

c. The effect of the rhetorical device used: By comparing plaque to graffiti, Oz creates an image that the plaque in the patient’s body has vandalized his or her arteries like a person who vandalizes a building or train car by drawing graffiti where it doesn’t belong.

d. How does the rhetorical device help the author explain the confusion consumers experience over what constitutes good nutrition? The rhetorical devices in this paragraph do not help explain the consumer’s confusion concerning good nutrition. In this paragraph the metaphor shows the effects of poor nutrition on a person’s body and piques the reader’s interest in the information to follow.
Other rhetorical devices used in Paragraph 1 are **connotative diction, detail, and parallelism**. Select one of these devices and complete the questions below:

a. Rhetorical device used:

b. Textual evidence:

c. The effect of the rhetorical device used:


d. How does the rhetorical device help the author explain the confusion consumers experience over what constitutes good nutrition?

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Paragraph 2 contains **connotative diction, imagery, and juxtaposition**. Select one of these rhetorical devices and complete the questions that follow.

**Paragraph 2:**

My objective was to heal with steel. That, in some ways, was the easy part. What confounded my colleagues and me was how and why our patients landed in our care in the first place—lying on a gurney, about to have their chest opened with a band saw. The biggest reason was often the simplest one: the food they ate.

a. Rhetorical device used:

b. Textual evidence:

c. The effect of the rhetorical device used:


d. How does the rhetorical device help the author explain the confusion consumers experience over what constitutes good nutrition?


Paragraph 3 contains antithesis, connotative diction, and parallelism. Select one of these rhetorical devices and complete the questions that follow.

**Paragraph 3:**

Our natural history as a species is a vast canvas of events whose peaks and valleys, successes and tragedies were often determined by the availability or scarcity of food—that is, until the 20th century. While famine remains a terrible reality in some parts of the world, most of us have almost unrestricted access to food. We produce a safe and abundant supply of fruits, vegetables, meats, and dairy; we seal it, freeze it and protect it from spoilage and contamination. We even fortify it with vitamins and other healthy additives.

a. Rhetorical device used: ____________________________

b. Textual evidence: ____________________________

c. The effect of the rhetorical device used: ____________________________


d. How does the rhetorical device help the author explain the confusion consumers experience over what constitutes good nutrition? ____________________________

Paragraph 4:

This was the kind of bounty early civilizations could only dream of. But our triumph of nutritional ingenuity has had an unfortunate inverse effect. A dietary free-for-all, in the U.S. and elsewhere, is producing not the healthiest generation in history but one in steady decline, with epidemics of obesity, cardiovascular disease and diabetes. More than two-thirds of U.S. adults, and more than a third of kids, are overweight or obese.

a. Rhetorical device used: ____________________________

b. Textual evidence: ____________________________

c. The effect of the rhetorical device used: ____________________________


d. How does the rhetorical device help the author explain the confusion consumers experience in understanding what constitutes good nutrition? ____________________________

_____________________________
Read the remaining paragraphs. Identify a rhetorical device in one of the paragraphs and complete the questions that follow.

**Paragraph 5:**

The problem isn’t that people don’t want to eat well and be well. Trust me, no one who’s ever been wheeled into my operating room is happy to be there. And the problem, believe it or not, isn’t that they doubt the wisdom of a healthy diet. More often than you’d think, the problem is that a lot of folks just don’t know what a healthy diet looks like—and why should they, since the rules keep changing?

**Paragraph 6:**

Time was, red meat was healthful, and pasta was bad; then pasta was great, and red meat was terrible, all of which lasted until the Atkins craze came along and the rules flipped again. There were the Mediterranean diet and the South Beach diet and the low-fat diet and the grapefruit diet and, yes, the cabbage-soup diet, and all of them promised great things. Red wine is the newest route to health, unless of course it’s dark chocolate—or unless it turns out to be neither. With every cure, it seems, comes a problem; every new truth somehow turns out to be part myth.

**Paragraph 7:**

The good news is that we now know so much more than we ever did about how food reacts in our bodies—how specific molecules affect specific functions of specific cells. And with that comes new insight into healthy eating that is more than just conventional wisdom or gimmickry.

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a. **Rhetorical device used:**

b. **Textual evidence:**

   - Paragraph 5: The problem isn’t that people don’t want to eat well and be well. Trust me, no one who’s ever been wheeled into my operating room is happy to be there. And the problem, believe it or not, isn’t that they doubt the wisdom of a healthy diet.
   - Paragraph 6: Time was, red meat was healthful, and pasta was bad; then pasta was great, and red meat was terrible, all of which lasted until the Atkins craze came along and the rules flipped again.
   - Paragraph 7: The good news is that we now know so much more than we ever did about how food reacts in our bodies—how specific molecules affect specific functions of specific cells.

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c. **The effect of the rhetorical device used:**

   - Paragraph 5: The rhetorical device used is an example of anaphora, where the phrase “the problem isn’t that” is repeated throughout the paragraph to emphasize the author’s point about the reasons people don’t eat healthy.
   - Paragraph 6: The rhetorical device used is an example of antithesis, where the author contrasts different diets and their outcomes to highlight the confusion and uncertainty in the realm of health and nutrition.
   - Paragraph 7: The rhetorical device used is an example of cause and effect, where the author explains that increased knowledge about food affects how we eat and the health outcomes.

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d. **How does the rhetorical device help the author explain the confusion consumers experience in understanding what constitutes good nutrition?**

   - Paragraph 5: By using the example of operating rooms, the author conveys the discomfort and unwillingness associated with the concept of healthy eating, providing a relatable context for the consumer’s confusion about diet-related rules.
   - Paragraph 6: Through the use of antithesis, the author illustrates the dynamic nature of dietary advice and the constant change in recommendations, leading to consumer confusion.
   - Paragraph 7: By explaining the impact of new knowledge on dieting, the author clarifies that understanding what constitutes good nutrition is an evolving process, helping consumers accept dynamic nutritional advice.
Activity Two: Analyzing a Rhetorical Paragraph

Read the following writing prompt.

The passage below examines the connection between health and nutrition. Read the passage carefully. Then write an essay in which you discuss the rhetorical devices the author uses to explain the confusion consumers experience in understanding what constitutes good nutrition. Consider such devices as facts, examples, and diction.

When you are asked to write a rhetorical analysis essay, you will need to explain to the reader how a writer uses rhetorical devices to achieve his or her purpose.

The following paragraph is a student sample from a rhetorical analysis essay. Read the paragraph and underline the rhetorical device the student has identified from the text and highlight the student’s commentary.

The author uses many examples of diction in the passage to heighten the meaning and emotion behind the words and argument meant to appeal to us. In the third paragraph, the author uses the words “unrestricted access” to explain how many options we as consumers have as far as food goes, and how having so many options can lead us astray from having a good diet do [sic] to confusion. In the forth [sic] paragraph the writer uses the word epidemics. This word heightens the intensity of just how deadly bad eating habits are, about how quickly they spread because of the naivety [sic] of consumers in our U.S. market.

Has this student writer demonstrated how the rhetorical device explains the confusion consumers experience in understanding what constitutes good nutrition?

YES: If yes, what specific words or phrases make the connection between the device and the “confusion” clear?

NO: If no, write a sentence that would explain the connection between the device and the confusion consumers experience.

Read the following paragraph and underline the rhetorical device the student has identified from the text and highlight the student’s commentary.
In the passage, the author provides a steady stream of facts and examples to heighten the message to the reader. In the first paragraph, the author uses their [sic] own personal experiences to grab the reader’s attention and understand what bad eating habits lead to. The author uses the example of their [sic] confounded colleagues to show that the confusion over what was happening with peoples [sic] eating habits confused even them. The author uses the fact that there is a decline in health to convey to the reader just how many people are lead [sic] astray and confused by what is good nutrition and what is not.

Has this student writer demonstrated how the rhetorical device explains the confusion consumers experience in understanding what constitutes good nutrition?

YES: If yes, what specific words or phrases make the connection between the device and the “confusion” clear?

NO: If no, write a sentence that would explain the connection between the device and the confusion consumers experience.

Activity Three: Writing Rhetorical Analysis
Select one of the rhetorical devices you identified in Activity One. Write an analytical paragraph demonstrating how the author uses a rhetorical device to explain the confusion consumers experience in understanding what constitutes good nutrition.