

The Art of Conversation: Rhetorical Devices

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Introduction

The magazine article "How to have a conversation" by John McDermott is a personal journey by the writer who wanted to investigate whether the art of conversation could be taught in formal settings. He joins a conversation class with the intention of becoming a great entertainer through skills learnt.

However, he soon realizes that theories and abstract ideas dominate the class. This did not obscure the important lessons he drew from the class about the purpose of conversation. Through the use of rhetorical devices, the author expresses himself vividly, effectively and interestingly.

Rhetorical devices

John McDermott relies on metaphors throughout the article to facilitate the conceptualization of his ideas, which makes his work effective and well understood. Metaphors are a brilliant way of capturing the emotional state of an experience (Ortony and Fainsilber 182). To better understand their use, one can contrast them to literal language. McDermott (12) says "none of my new friends said they wanted to be a raconteur in the Coleridge or the Hitchens mould."

In this situation, he would have described the state of being a good conversationalist and hoped that his readers could deduce what he meant by that. However, he chooses to use the metaphor "in the Hitchens mould" to capture the quality of being a good conversationalist. Instead of merely describing the conditions of his subject matter, he chose an example of a great conversationalist, like Hitchens that the world knows.

It is for this same reason that he uses the metaphor "We were Boswells, not Johnsons". He wanted to capture the simplicity and well-meaning intentions of his classmates in one word rather than in a plethora of phrases (University of British

A Rhetorical Conversation A Rhetorical Conversation

Jim A. Kuypers



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