

6 Stylistic choices and the argument they carry – Part 1

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Vocabulary

Write each word three times.

English

Write it 3 times (English)

choice

Hedging

Recall

- You have written a sentence that sounded right and could not say why.
- You know repetition can be emphasis or clumsiness.
- You have noticed a writer's confidence in how they phrase a claim.

New ideas

Read these first. Each idea has a short worked example. Then do the Practice below.

■ 1 Choices, not features

A stylistic **choice** implies an alternative that was rejected. Analysing style means naming what else the writer could have written and what the actual wording gains.

Worked example. “The plan collapsed” instead of “the plan did not succeed” gains suddenness and assigns no agent.

■ 2 Repetition

Repetition emphasises when the repeated element is doing work and irritates when it is not. The test is whether the second occurrence adds something the first did not.

Worked example. Repeating a phrase at the start of three sentences builds; repeating a noun because no synonym came to mind does not.

■ 3 Hedging and confidence

Hedging - “perhaps”, “it could be argued” - lowers the strength of a claim. Used deliberately it signals appropriate caution; used from nervousness it makes an argument sound unbelievable by its own writer.

Worked example. “This may possibly suggest” concedes so much that the reader cannot tell what is being claimed.

Watch out: Precision is not the same as confidence. “Most of the increase” is precise; “perhaps some of the increase, in a sense” is neither precise nor confident.

Practice

2.1 Explain what makes something a stylistic choice rather than a feature. [2]

2.2 State the test for whether repetition is working. [2]

2.3 Define hedging. [1]

2.4 State when hedging helps and when it harms. [2]

2.5 Distinguish precision from confidence. [2]

2.6 “The plan collapsed” replaces “the plan did not succeed”. State one thing it gains. [1]
