

INTRODUCTION TO RHETORIC

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Introduction to Rhetoric by William B. Cairns

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WILLIAM B. CAIRNS

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TO RHETORIC**

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BY

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P R E F A C E.

THIS book makes no claims to originality of matter. It is not to be expected that an elementary treatise on rhetoric will announce the discovery of any new principles; and the giving of new names to old things or the use of old terms in new senses would only add to a confusion now unnecessarily great. No one authority has been followed throughout; but no new term has been suggested, or familiar word redefined, or new classification introduced, when it seemed practicable to borrow the usage of some standard work. Even where improvement might possibly be made, the author has preferred to follow a well-known usage rather than to increase the diversity in nomenclature already to be found in text-books on rhetoric.

The presentation of the subject has been shaped in accordance with some ideas regarding the teaching of English which, the author believes, are coming to be generally held. The first of these is that rhetoric must be presented as a reasonable study. The pupil is too likely to gain the idea that rhetoric consists of arbitrary precepts laid down by some unknown authority. Moreover, the so-called "rules" of the subject are often

given as if all were of equal importance; and the student, finding that some of them are not always followed by his teacher, or perhaps by the better authors that he reads, concludes that all are worthless. At best, he thinks of rhetorical cautions as something to be borne in mind only when he is writing a "composition" or preparing his graduating oration. Part I. of this book is arranged with the hope of giving less erroneous notions of the subject. Principles depending solely on usage are treated by themselves, and an attempt is made to show that much of rhetoric is but a systematic study of such arts as are unconsciously used by the girl who is a good story-teller, or the boy who wins his fellows to his way of thinking.

The second idea to which the author has attempted to adapt the treatment of his subject is, that the pupil should study style and invention together; and that every exercise that he writes should be criticised both as regards diction, sentence structure, etc., and as a whole composition. It seems absurd to ask a boy to practice style without reference to the choice and arrangement of the ideas that he attempts to express. Still more unsatisfactory is the plan of beginning with the whole composition, and letting the student's first exercises confirm him in any bad habits of style that he may have acquired.

The difficulty of writing a text-book for the parallel study of style and invention is practically that of making two subjects occupy the same space at the same time. The plan here adopted is that of an independent

treatment of each, with a series of cross references in the suggestions for exercises. If the teacher sees fit to follow these suggestions, the pupil will cover the chapters on narration and description while he is studying the subject of style, and every important composition assigned will illustrate some matters in both sections of the book. These chapters on narration and description are no more difficult than those on style, and indeed to the average student are likely to be more interesting. The brief chapters on exposition, argumentation, and persuasion are, from the nature of the subjects treated, more difficult. In connection with these three chapters the student would naturally review the subject of style.

In accordance with this idea that composition should be considered from the standpoint of both style and invention, long illustrative selections are given under each form of composition, rather than short illustrations scattered through the section on style. These selections, which make up about one-half of the bulk of Part II., should be used even more as illustrations of Part I. than in connection with the chapters that they follow.

The suggestions for exercises are, as the name states, simply *suggestions*. Any good teacher can, if he have time, prepare exercises better suited to the needs of his particular class than any that can be printed in a text-book. But in the present condition of our schools, many teachers have little time for such preparation. The specimens of poor English, especially, are intended

only for the use of overworked teachers who have not time to put before the student similar examples from his own work. The correction of the student's own faults is a valuable discipline; the usefulness of correcting the faults of others depends on the probability that the student makes similar errors.

The indebtedness of the author, both to other text-books and to his friends, is great. Probably the writers from whom he has derived most aid are Prof. Genung and Prof. A. S. Hill, whose text-books he has used in his classes for some years; but a host of other works have been constantly at hand, and have been drawn on to a considerable extent. Chief among personal obligations are those to Prof. F. G. Hubbard and Mr. Walter M. Smith, who not only have read the manuscript and proof, but have generously responded, throughout the progress of the work, to frequent calls for suggestions and criticisms. The careful, detailed suggestions of Prof. F. P. Emery, of Dartmouth College, were appreciated both for the aid they furnished and for the kindly manner in which they were made. The author wishes also to express his thanks to a large number of his friends and former pupils, now teaching English in secondary schools, who have assisted him in many ways.

W. B. C.

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN,
June 1, 1899.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	I
What Rhetoric is	1
Divisions of Rhetoric	3
PART I.—STYLE.	
What Style is	5
Kinds of Principles that underlie Style	5
CHAPTER I.—Language Determined by Usage	8
I. Spelling	8
Grammar	11
Mistakes in Number	11
Mistakes of Case	14
Mistakes of Tense	18
Mistakes of Mood	23
Mistakes of Reference	24
Mistakes in Comparison	26
Punctuation	29
Capitalization	32
II. Reputableness of Words	34
Meanings of Words	44
Idioms	46
CHAPTER II.—Language Adapted to the Needs of the Reader	49
I. The Theory of Economy	49
The Qualities of Style	50
Clearness	50
Force	51
Ease	51