

# Lesson Skill: Recognizing ambiguity, contradiction, paradox, irony, overstatement, understatement

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**Strand** Reading — nonfiction

**SOL** 11.5

12.5

## Materials

- Computer access
- A copy of the text of Patrick Henry's *Speech to the Virginia Convention* (Do an Internet search.)
- Identification table (attached)

## Lesson

1. Students find definitions for ambiguity, contradiction, paradox, irony, overstatement (hyperbole), and understatement. Students record their answers on a paper copy of the identification table or they can link to it on the computer.
2. Use available technology or chart paper for students to display their answers. Make sure everyone has a correct definition and examples.
3. The third column in the table is for students to take notes describing how each of the literary terms can be used by authors or speakers to help them achieve their purpose.
4. Give students a copy of Patrick Henry's *Speech to the Virginia Convention* or allow them to access it on the computer. Display the text in the front of the room as well.
5. Read through the text with the students.
6. Assign students to read through it themselves looking for examples of each of literary term. Give students enough time to read through and find several examples.
7. Ask students to display their answers to make sure everyone is getting correct answers and correct information. Instruct students to make note of other examples that students have found in the speech.
8. Exit Ticket: Considering the reasons why authors use these literary strategies in their writing and speaking, which one was used the most effectively by Patrick Henry and why? Which one would you like to use in your next persuasive writing assignment? Why?

## Strategies for Differentiation

- Text to speech — Listen to speech prior to lesson to reinforce vocabulary context and understanding
- Vocabulary — use word maps in context with pictorial representation
- Include examples of each literary term/skill — include in skills notebook
- Turn Patrick Henry table into a matching game so that students match the example to the criteria in the table.

## Patrick Henry Table

Literary Term and definition	Example	Purpose of use of the strategy
<b>Ambiguity</b>	“fulfill the great responsibility which we hold to God and our country.”	The “great responsibility” could mean different things to different people...but in the end it is the same thing...to preserve their freedom. It is used for inclusiveness...to make all the audience think at the beginning that he is on their side.
<b>Contradiction</b>	“No man thinks more highly than I do....freely, and without reserve.	Henry tries to be overtly polite in his contradiction of what all the other men in the assembly have said so far, but he realizes and wants them to realize also that what he is about to say will not be polite.
<b>Paradox</b>	“Is this the part of wise men, engaged in a great...the things which so nearly concern their temporal salvation.”	The paradox Henry uses (having eyes but not seeing, having ears but not hearing) makes his audience “see” that they are engaging in false hope.
<b>Irony</b>	“No man thinks more highly than I do of the patriotism, as well as the abilities, of the very worthy gentlemen who have just addressed the House.”	He praises them at the beginning and then calls into question their loyalties and their courage. This statement is ironic because everything after it suggests the opposite opinion about these men if they do not vote to take up arms against the British.
<b>Overstatement (Hyperbole)</b>	“Give me liberty, or give me death.” “I consider it nothing less than a question of freedom or slavery.”	Henry uses overstatement for emphasis...to show his audience how important he thinks it is to support the rebellion against England.
<b>Understatement</b>	“Have we shown ourselves so unwilling to be reconciled that force must be called in to win back our love?”	The “win back our love” is really the understatement. It is used to emphasize the seriousness of the situation with the British. It really means to prevent war.

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<b>Irony</b>		
<b>Overstatement (Hyperbole)</b>		
<b>Understatement</b>		