Title of Article: Preference for Rhetorical Questions as an Index of Textual Message Effectiveness.

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Abstract: This paper examines the rhetorical question (RQ) as a style of literary comment because the conventional essay style of writing has always been the norm in virtually all kinds of prose writing. This is connected with the fact that the latter is easier to write and also understand without the complexities of nuances, understanding satirical implications or metaphorical extensions. Thus, it is easy to conclude that readers will not be favourably disposed to any departure from the norm. But that would be a simplistic explanation. Using an Effectiveness Rating Instrument (ERI), first administered in 2004 on subjects in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 1,550 readers were presented with a text using mainly RQs and the same text using conventional prose here referred to as Alternative Stylistic Option (ASO). Responses were analyzed using cross tabs. It was found that preference for RQs was higher than that of the ASOs. Reasons given for this include the fact that RQs are more realistic and more forceful. Implications of these findings for readers and writers were highlighted.

Key Words: Rhetorical Questions, Preference, Message Effectiveness, Effectiveness Rating Instrument