

Rhetorical questions

A question that is asked to make a point rather than to get an answer.

If you've ever been home late, you might have been met with this rhetorical question:

"What time do you call this?"

The person asking doesn't really want an answer.

They're making a point that you've arrived home at an unacceptable time.

Rhetorical Questions can also be persuasive.

"Who wouldn't want to be a millionaire?"

This rhetorical question assumes that money is attractive and that it would be unusual not to want it.

Rhetorical questions can draw readers in, by encouraging them to think in more detail about the wider points being made by the writer.

In 'The Crucible', Arthur Miller explores the Salem witch trials where many innocent people were accused of witchcraft.

The character Proctor cries out in court:

"Is the accuser always holy now? Were they born this morning as clean as God's fingers?"

It is obvious that the accusers aren't completely holy, that they haven't just been born and they aren't completely clean and without sin.

His unanswerable questions are designed to make those listening at the trial - and the reader - question the nature of hypocrisy.

Rhetorical questions can make a point, persuade, and express disbelief.

So, why not use them yourself?