

Rhetorical questions

Rhetorical questions are those questions that do not expect an answer. These are used simply as a way of drawing attention to something.

Study the following sentences:

Do you know what time it is? (Meaning: You are late.)

'I can't find my glasses.' 'What is this, then?' (Meaning: Here it is, stupid.)

A rhetorical question is sometimes used to draw attention to a negative situation.

What is the use of asking her? (Meaning: It is no use asking her.)

'I can sing better than you.' 'Who cares?' (= Nobody cares.)

'Have you lost your tongue?' (= Why don't you say anything?)

'Who do you think you are?' (= You are not as important as you think.)

Questions beginning with 'how' or 'why should' can be used to reject suggestions or requests.

'She is really upset with you?' 'Why should I care?'

'Would she help us?' 'Why should she?'

The question 'How should I know?' (In American English: 'How would I know?') can be used as an aggressive reply to a question.

'What time does the train arrive?' 'How should I know?'

Negative yes/no questions are sometimes used to draw attention to a positive situation.

'Didn't I tell you she would come?' (= I told you that she would come.)

'Haven't we had enough troubles?' (= We have had enough troubles.)