Rhetorical Grammar Review: Discussion Questions

“The grammar of a language is its structure, whereby communication is made possible; that structure exists whether or not anybody can describe it. These rules are akin to the “rules” for how our digestive system works or how our eyes work with our brains to enable us to see: They are operations that we ordinarily aren’t conscious of. For that reason, the rules of language that make communication possible might be called operational rules, and this grammar that we unconsciously use might be called *operational grammar*” (Weaver 10).

1. We’ve been working with ‘rhetorical grammar’ all quarter long—and at the same time, we’ve had many readings, discussions, and papers that focus on ‘code-switching. What similarities do you see between using grammar rhetorically and code-switching?
2. “I stepped in shit.” How can you adjust this sentence, using what you know about rhetorical grammar, for the following audiences:

--A science report
--An apology to the friend whose shoes you borrowed
--An English teacher
(Be prepared to share these answers.)
3. Adjectival phrases add detail to modify a subject. For example: ““Once upon a time there were four cats who, *because they smelled more strongly than usual on a particular day*, were killed, stuffed in a sack, and buried in a garbage can” (Grass 184). How can using adjectival phrases help you as authors? When would you want to use them?
4. Why is it important to think about when to use commas, periods, semicolons, dashes, colons, and other kinds of punctuation? You can write complete sentences without using anything but commas and periods, after all; why use anything else?
5. Parallelism (also called parallel structure or parallel construction) refers to using the same grammatical construction within a sentence/within multiple sentences. When would it be useful for you, as a writer, to use parallel structure?
6. What are some examples of ways that you can vary your sentence lengths? Sentence structures? Why is it important to do so?
7. What is the difference between active and passive voice? When is active voice useful? When is passive voice useful?
8. How can you indicate to your reader that you’ve made grammatical changes within a quotation in order to make the quote make sense within your own sentence?