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**Кафедра англійської мови і литератури**

**Словник-довідник зі стилістики англійської мови**

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**Передмова**

«Словник-довідник зі стилістики англійської мови» (частина І, A―H), укладений Філіпп’євої Т.І. спрямований на надання допомоги викладачам та студентам при роботі з критичною літературою, а також при аналізі творів художньої літератури англійською мовою.

«Словник» адресован викладачам та студентам факультетів іноземних мов вищих навчальних. Він може використовуватися на практичних заняттях з англійської мови, при підготовці до практичних занять зі стилістики англійської мови та написанні курсових та дипломних робіт.

«Словник» призначений для використання студентами як під час навчальних занять, так і в ході самостійної роботи.

Крім того, «Словник» може буде корисним для вчителів англійської мови середніх шкіл та учнів шкіл з викладанням ряду предметів англійською мовою.

В основу побудови «Словника-довідника зі стилістики англійської мови» покладено загальноприйнята структура за принципом словникових статей.

Особливістю даної розробки є те, що дефініції стилістичних термінів пояснюються великою кількістю прикладів, що сприяє повному розумінню змісту того або іншого терміна і його засвоєнню.

Відбір термінів визначений практичним призначенням «Словника», тож автор планує продовжити і розширити роботу у цьому напрямі.

При написанні «Словника» були використані лексикографічні джерела англійською, українською та російською мовами, а також дослідження і посібники з теорії та історії літератури і стилістики. (Перелік додається).

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**Alliteration**

Alliteration is the recurrence of initial consonant sounds.One of the popular examples is the poem by Terry Sullivan about a real seashell seller named [Mary Anning](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Anning). Mary Anning (1799 – 1847) was more than a seashell seller. She collected fossils and contributed important information about prehistoric life to the scientific community. She supported herself selling fossils to geologists and to tourists.

* *She sells seashells by the seashore,*

*The shells she sells are seashells, I'm sure.*

*So if she sells seashells on the seashore,*

*Then I'm sure she sells seashore shells* .

The tongue twister

*Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled pepper.*

*A peck of pickled pepper Peter Piper picked.*

*If Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled pepper.*

*Where's the peck of pickled pepper Peter Piper picked?* is also very famous.

They are both alliterative poems. In the former, all the words start with the “*s*” sound, while in the later, the letter “*p*” takes precedence. Aside from tongue twisters, alliteration is also used in poems, song lyrics, and even store or brand names.

The repetition of initial consonant sounds can be juxtaposed and then it is usually limited to two words. This two-word alliteration calls attention to the phrase and fixes it in the reader's mind, and so is useful for emphasis as well as art.

* *Ah, what a delicious day!*
* *Done well, alliteration is a satisfying sensation.*

The best way to spot alliteration being used in a sentence is to sound out the sentence, looking for the words with the identical consonant sounds.

* *Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there wondering, fearing,*

*Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortal ever dared to dream before. ―* E.A.Poe.

Not every word must be alliterative. Prepositions and pronouns maintain the alliterative effect Alliteration does not need to be an entire sentence. Any two-word phrase can be alliterative.

* *Alice’s aunt ate apples and acorns around August.*
* *Ralph's reindeer rose rapidly and ran round the room.*
* *Walter walked wearily while wondering where Wally was.*

Today, alliteration is often used to make slogans more memorable or to make children's stories more fun to read out loud.

* *The daily diary of the American dream.* (a slogan of *The Wall Street Journal)*
* *Through three cheese trees three free fleas flew. While these fleas flew, freezy breeze blew. —* Dr. Seuss.

Companies use this alliterative effect all the time. The major reason companies use this technique is to ensure that their brand name is memorable. These are some famous and well known brands and companies that have used alliteration in their names.

* *Dunkin ’ Donuts; PayPal; Best Buy; Coca-Cola; Life Lock; Park Place; American Airlines; Chuckee Cheese’s; Krispy Kreme; The Scotch and Sirloin.*

Alliterative names can also help a person stand out in the crowd and can make him or her more memorable. For example, both fictional characters and real people may stand out in our heads as a result of the alliterative effect of their name.

* *Ronald Reagan; Jesse Jackson; Michael Moore; William Wordsworth; Mickey Mouse; Porky Pig; Lois Lane; Marilyn Monroe; Donald Duck;; Seattle Seahawks.*

Many famous phrases, quotes and saying also make use of alliteration.

* *Busy as a bee; Dead as a doornail; Get your goat; Give up the ghost; Good as gold; Home sweet home; Last laugh; Living the life; Look to your laurels; Mad as a March hare; Make a mountain out of a molehill; Method to the madness; Moaning Minnie; Not on your nelly; Out of order; Pleased as punch; Primrose path; Right as rain.*

**Allusion**

Allusion is a short, informal reference to a famous person or event. It is a literary device used to reference another object outside of the work of literature. The object can be a real or fictional person, event, quote, or other work of artistic expression. Allusions can be shorthand for adding emotion or significance to a passage by drawing on the reader’s prior associations with the object.

The word “*allusion*” comes from the Latin for “*to play with*” or “*to jest*.” Though the definition of allusion does not necessarily include humor, many jokes do indeed allude to recent events or famous people. Most allusions “*play with*” the original source material in the sense that they use the reference for new purposes.

By and large, the use of allusions enables writers or poets to simplify complex ideas and emotions. The readers comprehend the complex ideas by comparing the emotions of the writer or poet to the references given by them. Furthermore, the references to Greek Mythology give a dreamlike and magical touch to the works of art. Similarly, biblical allusions appeal to the readers with religious backgrounds.

* *Don’t act like a Romeo in front of her.* – “*Romeo*” is a reference to Shakespeare’s Romeo, a passionate lover of Juliet, in “*Romeo and Juliet*”.
* *The rise in poverty will unlock the Pandora’s box of crimes.* – This is an allusion to one of Greek Mythology’s origin myth, “*Pandora’s box*”.
* *This place is like a Garden of Eden*. – This is a biblical allusion to the “*garden of God”* in the Book of Genesis.
* *Stop acting like my ex-husband please.* – Apart from scholarly allusions we refer to common people and places in our speech.
* *You must borrow me Gargantua's mouth first. '**Tis a word too great for any mouth of this age's size.* — W.Shakespeare. Gargantua was a giant of folklore, who was apparently first famous for his enormous appetite, since the name comes from *garganta,* which is Spanish for gullet. He became best known as a character in a famous satire named for him by the French humorist Frangois Rabelais.
* *Plan ahead: it wasn't raining when Noah built the ark.* — R.Cushing. *Noah’s Ark* is the vessel in the Genesis flood narrative (Genesis chapters 6 – 9) by which the Patriarch Noah saves himself, his family, and a remnant of all the world’s animals when God decides to destroy the world because of humanity’s evil deeds. God gives Noah detailed instructions for building the ark: it is to be of gopher wood, smeared inside and out with pitch, with three decks and internal compartments; it will be 300 cubits long, 50 wide, and 30 high; it will have a roof “*finished to a cubit upward*”, and an entrance on the side*.*

In these examples the allusions are to very well known character or event, not to obscure ones. The best sources for allusions are literature, history, Greek myth, and the Bible. The reference serves to explain or clarify or enhance whatever subject is under discussion, without sidetracking the reader.

Allusion can be very attractive in writing because it can introduce variety and energy into an otherwise limited discussion. For example, an exciting historical adventure rises suddenly in the middle of a discussion of chemicals or some abstract argument, and it can please the reader by reminding him of a pertinent story or figure with which he is familiar. Thus it helps to explain something difficult. The instantaneous pause and reflection on the analogy refreshes and strengthens the reader's mind.

Some more examples of allusion in literature.

There are several ways that an allusion can help a writer. Allusions engage the reader and will often help the reader remember the message or theme of the passage.and allusions allow the writer to give an example or get a point across without going into a lengthy discourse.

* C.Marlowe’s “*Doctor Faustus*” is replete with instances of allusions.

*Learnèd Faustus, to find the secrets of astronomy*

*Graven in the book of Jove’s high firmament,*

*Did mount him up to scale Olympus’ top,*

*Where, sitting in a chariot burning bright,*

*Drawn by the strength of yokèd dragons’ necks,*

*He views the clouds, the planets, and the stars.* Jove’s high firmament refers to the outer stretches of the universe. “*Olympus’ top*” is an allusion to Greek Mythology where Mount Olympus is home of gods. Similarly, “*a chariot burning bright*” refers to a Greek Myth of “*god Apollo*” who is said to drive the sun in his chariot.

* In J.Conrad’s “*Heart of Darkness*”, “*the two knitting women*” whom Marlow sees alludes to “*Moirae*” or Fates as visualized in Greek Mythology.

*The two knitting women increase his anxiety by gazing at him and all the other sailors with knowing unconcern. Their eerie looks suggest that they know what will happen (the men dying), yet don’t care.* The thread they knit represents human life. The two women knitting black wool foreshadows Marlow’s horrific journey in the “*Dark Continent*”.

* A number of allusions in J.Keats’s “*Ode to the Grecian Urn*” can be found.

*Sylvan historian, who canst thus express*

*A flowery tale more sweetly than our* [*rhyme*](https://literarydevices.net/rhyme/)*:*

*What leaf-fringed* [*legend*](https://literarydevices.net/legend/) *haunts about thy shape*

*Of deities or mortals, or of both,*

*In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?* “*Sylvan*” is a goat-like-man deity of Greek mythology. “*Tempe*” alludes to the “*Vale of Tempe*” in Greece, a place (from Greek mythology) frequently visited by Apollo and other gods. Likewise, “*the dales of Arcady*” refers to the home of “*Pan*”, the god of rustic music.

Examples of Allusion in Common Speech

* *Big Brother.* Now a reality television show in countries across the world, the term Big Brother comes from George Orwell’s dystopian novel *1984* (he, in turn, may have taken the phrase from a WWII-era billboard). Whereas it once just described a familial relation, *“Big Brother*” is now shorthand for referring to mass surveillance and abuse of government power.
* *Watergate.* The 1972 scandal at the Watergate Hotel in Washington, D.C. led to the resignation of President Richard Nixon. Since the event, the suffix –gate has been added to many dozens of names to refer to scandals. These scandals are generally in politics, but can be in other fields as well, and can be of any proportion, from the relatively trivial “*Bendgate*” of 2014 when the iPhone 6 Plus was shown to bend under pressure, to “*Irangate”*, referring to the Iran-Contra affair of the mid-1980s during the Reagan Administration.
* *15 minutes of fame.* In 1968, artist Andy Warhol made the comment, “*In the future, everyone will be world-famous for fifteen minutes*.” The phrase “*fifteen minutes of fame*” is frequently used now, especially with the advent of reality television and social media.
* *Catch-22.* Joseph Heller’s 1961 novel *Catch-22* centers around a group of soldiers during World War II who try to keep their sanity on an Italian island. Heller describes the following problematic situation with no solution: if a soldier is deemed crazy, he can be discharged from the army. However, if he applies to be discharged this proves he is not crazy. The phrase *“Catch-22*” has entered the English language as a situation that has no good solution, and is an allusion to Heller’s novel.
* *Achilles’ Heel.* Achilles was a figure in Greek mythology who was a hero of the Trojan War and was featured in Homer’s *Iliad*. He was said to be invulnerable except for at his heel. Thus, when Paris shot Achilles in his heel the wound proved mortal. The term “*Achilles*’ *heel”* now refers to a strong person’s one point of weakness.

Because allusions make reference to something *other* than what is directly being discussed, you may miss an allusion or fail to understand it if you do not know the underlying biblical story, literary tale or other reference point. Fortunately, today it is easy to look these things up so when someone references something you do not understand, you can easily turn to the Internet to learn enough to grasp the allusion for yourself.

**Anadiplosis**

The term anadiplosis is a Greek word which means “*to reduplicate*”. The word anadiplosis comes from the Greek for “*a doubling*” or “*folding up.”* The definition of anadiplosis thus comes from this sense of repeating or doubling a term to make it more significant. It refers to the [repetition](http://literarydevices.net/repetition/) of a word or words in successive clauses in such a way that the second clause starts with the same word which marks the end of the previous clause. It repeats a word in quick succession in successive clauses in order to add emphasis to the main idea, as readers tend to focus more on the repetition of words and thereby on the idea emphasized upon. Anadiplosis also serves to decorate a piece of writing or a speech. Often, CEOs and modern executives are fond of using it to make their suggestions and commands effective.

So, anadiplosis exhibits a typical pattern of repeating a word. Anadiplosis repeats the last word of one phrase, clause, or sentence at or very near the beginning of the next. For example, the repetition of the word “*give*” in the W.Whitman’s sentence *“When I give, I give myself”* is termed anadiplosis as it occurs at the end of the first clause and marks the beginning of the following clause.

In the following example the use of anadiplosis repeats in its typical fashion the word *“reliability*” to highlight the main point of the sentence.

* *This public school has a record of extraordinary reliability, a reliability that every other school is jealous of in the city.*

Anadiplosis can be generated in series for the sake of beauty or to give a sense of logical progression.

* *Pleasure might cause her read, reading might make her know,*

*Knowledge might pity win, and pity grace obtain*. ― Ph.Sidney.

* *The land of my fathers.*

*My fathers can have it. ―* D.Thomas (on Wales.)

Most commonly anadiplosis is used for emphasis of the repeated word or idea, since repetition has a reinforcing effect.

* *Aboard my ship, excellent performance is standard. Standard performance is sub-standard. Sub-standard performance is not permitted to exist. ―* H.Wouk.
* *The laughter had to be gross or it would turn to sobs, and to sob would be to realize, and to realize would be to despair.* ― H.Griffin.

The main point of the sentence becomes immediately clear by repeating the same word twice in close succession. There can be no doubt about the focus of the thought when anadiplosis is used.

## Anadiplosis Examples in Literature

Writers employ anadiplosis in their literary texts to produce special stylistic effects such as decorating texts by means of its typical repetitive pattern and laying emphasis on an important point. The examples of anadiplosis are few in [prose](http://www.literarydevices.com/prose/). Due to the fact that it’s such a poetic technique, and relatively unnatural in regular speech, anadiplosis is easier to find in poetry and [rhetoric](http://www.literarydevices.com/rhetoric/).

* *For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime,*

*Young Lycidas and hath not left his peer.* ― from J.Milton’s Lycidas.

Here the word *“dead”* has been repeated to put emphasis on the death of Lycidas. J.Milton often used anadiplosis in his other works to convince or persuade his readers. The word “*dead*” serves the same purpose in these lines of Lycidas.

* *What I present here is what I remember of the letter,*

*and what I remember of the letter I remember*

*verbatim (including that awful French).* ― from V.Nabokov’s Lolita. The beautiful use of a phrase “*what I remember of the letter”* is an anadiplosis. The writer clearly wants his readers to focus on what he is saying and repeating in these words. The message is further enhanced by the use of the word *“verbatim*”. V.Nabokov uses anadiplosis here effectively to illustrate Humbert Humbert’s inner life, a character with a very poetic and intellectual mind.

* *The mountains look on Marathon—*

*And Marathon looks on the sea;*

*And musing there an hour alone,*

*I dream’d that Greece might still be free;*

*For standing on the Persians’ grave,*

*I could not deem myself a slave.* ― from “*The Isles of Greece”* by Lord Byron. This example of anadiplosis comes from Lord Byron’s poem, “The Isles of Greece.” In this excerpt, Lord Byron writes the line, “The mountains look on Marathon— / And Marathon looks on the sea.” This is a nice way in which Lord Byron triangulates the location of Marathon between the mountains and the sea by way of repetition.

* *I balanced all, brought all to mind,*

*The years to come seemed waste of breath,*

*A waste of breath the years behind*

*In balance with this life, this death.* ― from “*An Irish Airman Foresees His Death”* by W. B. Yeats. In his poem, W. B. Yeats imagines an Irish airman who is anticipating the very likely possibility that he will die in battle. The Irish airman explains that he is not fighting to protect the people he’s fighting for, nor does he hate the people he’s fighting. Yet, if he does not fight his years will seem a “waste of breath.” In this somber use of anadiplosis, Yeats writes that everything before and everything after this battle will not matter as much as the battle itself.

* *He retained his virtues amidst all his – misfortunes — misfortunes which no prudence could foresee or prevent.* ― F.Bacon. The writer has used “*misfortune”* twice to bring home to his readers the main idea he is discussing which is that misfortune is always unpredictable.
* *The mountains look on Marathon – And Marathon looks on the sea.* ― from The Isles of Greece by Lord Byron. Here, he has stressed Marathon and repeated it to make it significant in the poem.
* *The general who became a slave. The slave who became a gladiator. The gladiator who defied an emperor. Striking story!* This is the [dialogue](https://literarydevices.net/dialogue/) from the famous movie Gladiator (2000) in which a general is sold as a slave who then had to work as a gladiator to make himself known in the arena and then defy the emperor.

Anadiplosis is a very effective rhetorical device, and thus can be commonly found in political speeches and movies.

* *There were some in the House, and there may be some in the Senate, who argue that the (Voting Rights) Act is no longer needed. There are others who would argue that we shouldn't renew section 203's protection of language minorities. These arguments have been tied to debates over immigration and they tend to muddle a noncontroversial issue -- protecting the right to vote -- with one of today's most contentious debates. But let's remember, you can't request language assistance if you're not a voter. And you can't be a voter if you are not a citizen. And while voters, as citizens, must be proficient in English, many are simply more confident that they can cast ballots printed in their native languages without making errors. It's not an unreasonable assumption.* ― B.Obama, [Senate Floor Speech on Voting Rights Act Renewal](http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/barackobama/barackobamasenatespeechonvotingrightsactrenewal.htm).
* *Somehow, with the benefit of little formal education, my grandparents recognized the inexorable downward spiral of conduct outside the guardrails: If you lie, you will cheat; if you cheat, you will steal; if you steal, you will kill.* ― USSC J.C.Thomas, [*1993 Mercer Law School Address*](http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/clarencethomasthenewintolerance.htm).
* *The process of being turned from a creature into a son would not have been difficult or painful if the human race had not turned away from God centuries ago. They were able to do this because He gave them free will. He gave them free will because a world of mere automata could never love and therefore never know infinite happiness. ―* C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*.
* *Once you change your philosophy, you change your thought pattern. Once you change your thought pattern, you change your attitude. Once you change your attitude, it changes your behavior pattern and then you go on into some action.* ― Malcolm X,  *[The Ballot or the Bullet](http://www.americanrhetoric.com/nocirculation/Removed%20for%20Possible%20Copyright%20Infringement/malcolmxballotorbullet.htm)*.
* *And so even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.* — Martin Luther King, Jr. “*I Have a Dream”* speech.
* *Tonight, we are a country awakened to danger and called to defend freedom. Our grief has turned to anger, and anger to resolution.* — G.Bush, 2001.
* *Don’t you surrender! Suffering breeds character; character breeds faith; in the end faith will not disappoint. You must not surrender. —* J.Jackson, 1988 *Democratic National Convention.*

There are also a few folk songs and lullabies in popular culture that create a story based on anadiplosis examples.

* *Hush, little baby, don’t say a word,*

*Mama’s gonna buy you a mockingbird.*

*If that mockingbird don’t sing,*

*Mama’s gonna buy you a diamond ring*

*If that diamond ring turns brass,*

*Mama’s gonna buy you a looking glass*. – from “*Hush, Little Baby”* (Traditional lullaby).

* *Then mend it, dear Henry, dear Henry, mend it.*

*With what shall I mend it, dear Liza, dear Liza?*

*With what shall I mend it, dear Liza, with what?*

*With a straw, dear Henry, dear Henry, dear Henry,*

*With a straw, dear Henry, dear Henry, with a straw.*

*The straw is too long, dear Liza, dear Liza.* ― from Cedarmont Kids Lyrics  *“There’s a Hole in the Bucket”.*

It is important to note that anadiplosis is part of another [figure of speech](https://literarydevices.net/figure-of-speech/) [chiasmus](https://literarydevices.net/chiasmus/). However, every anadiplosis does not necessarily reverse its structure like it is done in chiasmus.

**Analogy**

Analogy compares two things, which are alike in several respects, for the purpose of explaining or clarifying some unfamiliar or difficult idea or object by showing how the idea or object is similar to some familiar one. While simile and analogy often overlap, the simile is generally a more artistic likening.

* *Office is to working as kitchen is to cooking.*
* *What a note is to a singer, a word is to a writer.*
* *Just as a caterpillar grows out of its cocoon, so must we grow out of our comfort zone.*

Analogy serves the more practical end of explaining a thought process or a line of reasoning or the abstract in terms of the concrete, and may therefore be more extended. When the matter is complex and the analogy particularly useful for explaining it, the analogy can be extended into a rather long, multiple-point comparison.

* *Pupils are more like oysters than sausages. The job of teaching is not to stuff them and then seal them up, but to help them open and reveal the riches within. There are pearls in each of us, if only we knew how to cultivate them with ardor and persistence.* ― S.J.Harris.
* *The country parson is full of all knowledge. They say, it is an ill mason that refuseth any stone: and there is no knowledge, but, in a skilful hand, serves either positively as it is, or else to illustrate some other knowledge. He condescends even to the knowledge of tillage, and pastorage, and makes great use of them in teaching, because people by what they understand are best led to what they understand not.* — G.Herbert.
* *You may abuse a tragedy, though you cannot write one. You may scold a carpenter who has made you a bad table, though you cannot make a table. It is not your trade to make tables. -*― S.Johnson.

In these examples the analogy is used to establish the pattern of reasoning by using a familiar or less abstract argument which the reader can understand easily and probably agree with.

Some analogies simply offer an explanation for clarification rather than a substitute argument.

* *I am to dancing what Roseanne is to singing and Donald Duck to motivational speeches. I am as graceful as a refrigerator falling down a flight of stairs. ―* L.Pitts, "Curse of Rhythm Impairment" Miami Herald, Sep. 28, 2009.
* *If you want my final opinion on the mystery of life and all that, I can give it to you in a nutshell. The universe is like a safe to which there is a combination. But the combination is locked up in the safe.* ― P.de Vries.

An analogy is a [comparison](http://literarydevices.net/comparison/) in which an idea or a thing is compared to another thing that is quite different from it. It aims at explaining that idea or thing by comparing it to something that is familiar. Metaphors and similes are tools used to draw an analogy. Therefore, analogy is more extensive and elaborate than either a [simile](http://literarydevices.net/simile/) or a [metaphor](http://literarydevices.net/metaphor/).

* *Structure of an atom is like a solar system. Nucleus is the sun and electrons are the planets revolving around their sun.* Here an atomic structure is compared to a solar system by using “*like”*. Therefore, it is a simile. Metaphor is used to relate the nucleus to the sun and the electrons to the planets without using words “*like*” or “*as*”. Hence, similes and metaphors are employed to develop an analogy.

Writers use analogies to link an unfamiliar or a new idea with common and familiar objects. It is easier for readers to comprehend a new idea, which may have been difficult for them to understand otherwise. Their comprehension of a new idea picks up the pace when they observe its similarity to something that is familiar to them. In addition, by employing this literary tool, writers catch the attention of their readers. Analogies help increase readers’ interest as analogies help them relate what they read to their life.

* The given lines are from A.Lowell’s poem *“*Night Clouds*”.*

*The white mares of the moon rush along the sky*

*Beating their golden hoofs upon the glass Heavens.* The poetess constructs the analogy between clouds and mares. She compares the movement of the white clouds in the sky at night with that of the white mares on the ground.

* *Read from some humbler poet,*

*Whose songs gushed from his heart,*

*As showers from the clouds of summer,*

* *Or tears from the eyelids start. ― from*  H.W.Longfellow’s “The Day Is Done”. The poet relates his poems to the summer showers and tears from the eyes. He develops the similarity to show spontaneity of art when it directly comes out from the heart of an artist.

The importance of analogy for teaching and writing cannot be overemphasized. These are some funny analogies collected by High School English Teachers:

* *The young fighter had a hungry look, the kind you get from not eating for a while.*
* *The little boat gently drifted across the pond exactly the way a bowling ball wouldn’t.*
* *They lived in a typical suburban neighborhood with picket fences that resembled Nancy Kerrigan’s teeth.*

## Common Analogies and Their Meanings.

* *The relationship between them began to thaw.* This means that the relationship was changing.
* *I feel like a fish out of water.* This implies that you are not comfortable in your surroundings.
* *She was as quiet as a mouse.* It is hard to hear a mouse, so that means she was very quiet.
* *Life is like a box of chocolates.* This has many meanings and is a great analogy for life.

**Anaphora**

Anaphora is the repetition of the same word or words at the beginning of successive phrases, clauses, or sentences, commonly in conjunction with climax and with parallelism. This technique adds emphasis and unity to the clauses. Also sometimes called epanaphora, the word *anaphora* comes from the Greek for “*carrying back*”.

* ***If only*** *I hadn’t gone to the market that day,* ***if only*** *I hadn’t dropped my bag,* ***if only*** *we hadn’t met.*

As one of the world’s oldest poetic techniques, anaphora is used in much of the world’s religious and devotional poetry, including numerous Biblical Psalms.

Anaphora, possibly the oldest literary device, has its roots in Biblical Psalms used to emphasize certain words or phrases. Gradually, Elizabethan and Romantic writers brought this device into practice.

* *O LORD, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure. Have mercy upon me, O LORD; for I am weak: O LORD, heal me; for my bones are vexed. My soul is also sore vexed: but thou, O LORD, how long?* The repetition of the phrase “*O Lord,”* attempts to create a spiritual sentiment.

Many orators and politicians use anaphora in their speeches to reinforce certain ideas and to make them stand out to the audience. One of the most famous examples of anaphora in a speech is from Martin Luther King Jr.’s address at the 1963 March on Washington. In fact, the anaphora is so famous that it has retroactively become the name of the speech: “*I have a dream*.” After a gospel singer called out *“Tell them about the dream, Martin!”,* Martin Luther King Jr. departed from his typed-up speech and began to extemporize, repeating the phrase *“I have a dream”* many times over.

Other famous anaphora examples in speeches.

* ***We shall****not flag or fail.****We shall****go on to the end.****We shall****fight in France,****we shall****fight on the seas and oceans,****we shall****fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air,****we shall****defend our island, whatever the cost may be,****we shall****fight on the beaches,****we shall****fight on the landing grounds,****we shall****fight in the fields and in the streets,****we shall****fight in the hills.****We shall****never surrender.* — W.Churchill.
* ***With****malice toward none;****with****charity for all;****with****firmness in the right* —  A.Lincoln, Second Inaugural Address.
* *To raise a happy, healthy, and hopeful child,****it takes****a family;****it takes****teachers;****it takes****clergy;****it takes****business people;****it takes****community leaders;****it takes****those who protect our health and safety.****It takes****all of us.* — H.Clinton, 1996 DNC

Anaphora also is prevalent in other forms of media, like songs, television shows and movies:

* WALTER WHITE: ***I am*** *not in danger, Skyler.* ***I am*** *the danger. A guy opens his door and gets shot and you think that of me? No.* ***I am*** *the one who knocks!* ― from “*Breaking Bad*”.
* HOMER SIMPSON*:* ***I want to****shake off the dust of this one-horse town.****I want to****explore the world.****I want to****watch TV in a different time zone.****I want to****visit strange, exotic malls. I’m sick of eating hoagies!****I want****a grinder, a sub, a foot-long hero!****I want to***live*, Marge!****Won’t you****let me live?****Won’t you****, please?*― from “*The Simpsons*”.
* SEAN: *So* ***if I asked you******about*** *art, you’d probably give me the skinny on every art book ever written….* ***If I ask you******about*** *women, you’d probably give me a syllabus about your personal favorites…. And* ***I’d ask you******about*** *war, you’d probably throw Shakespeare at me, right, “once more unto the breach dear friends.”….* ***I’d ask you about*** *love, you’d probably quote me a* [*sonnet*](http://www.literarydevices.com/sonnet/)*.*― from “Good Will Hunting”.

Anaphora is one of the oldest literary devices, and dates back to religious texts such as the Psalms of the Bible. Anaphora is most commonly found in poetry, though it can be found in [prose](http://www.literarydevices.com/prose/) as well. Since anaphora uses redundancy to dramatic effect, editors of academic writing and journalism would not approve of it. Thus, anaphora works against these more formal styles of writing and is used to create [rhythm](http://www.literarydevices.com/rhythm/) and emphasis in a poetic fashion.

* ***It was****the best of times,****it was****the worst of times,****it was****the age of wisdom,****it was****the age of foolishness,****it was****the epoch of belief,****it was****the epoch of incredulity,****it was****the season of Light,****it was****the season of Darkness,****it was****the spring of hope,****it was****the winter of despair.* ― from “A Tale of Two Cities by Ch.Dickens. This opening sentence from Charles Dickens’s A Tale of Two Cities is one of the most famous examples of anaphora in literature. In this case, the repetition of the phrase “it was” provides several examples of [contrast](http://www.literarydevices.com/contrast/). The sentence creates wonder in the reader to find out how these are both and best and worst of times, the age of wisdom and foolishness, and so on. The anaphora propels the reader forward into the [narrative](http://www.literarydevices.com/narrative/) and the world that Ch.Dickens is [setting](http://www.literarydevices.com/setting/) up.
* ***Have you*** *reckon’d a thousand acres much? have you reckon’d the earth much?*

***Have you*** *practis’d so long to learn to read?*

***Have you*** *felt so proud to get at the meaning of poems?*

*\*\*\**

*Stop this day and night with me and* ***you shall*** *possess the origin of all poems,*

***You shall*** *possess the good of the earth and sun, (there are millions of suns left,)*

***You shall*** *no longer take things at second or third hand, nor look through the eyes of the dead, nor feed on the spectres in books,*

***You shall*** *not look through my eyes either, nor take things from me,*

***You shall*** *listen to all sides and filter them from your self.* ― from “*Song of Myself”* by W.Whitman. W.Whitman’s “*Song of Myself*” contains many examples of anaphora all the way through poem. These two adjacent stanzas contain different repeating phrase: first “have you” and then “you shall.” With these two examples of anaphora, W.Whitman seems to be ascertaining the reader’s readiness for personal growth, and then making a promise to the reader that good things will come to pass.

* ***I have*** *been one acquainted with the night.*

***I have*** *walked out in rain—and back in rain.*

***I have*** *outwalked the furthest city light.*

***I have*** *looked down the saddest city lane.*

***I have*** *passed by the watchman on his beat*

*And dropped my eyes, unwilling to explain.* ―from “*Acquainted with the Night”* by R.Frost. R.Frost’s use of anaphora in his poem “*Acquainted with the Night”* adds a sense of weariness and age. The repetition of the phrase *“I have”* to begin these different lines creates the image of someone with a vast amount of life experience. The poem is dark and despairing, and this example of anaphora reinforces the desolate mood.

* ***And*** *the places on her body have no names.*

***And*** *she is what’s immense about the night.*

***And*** *their clothes on the floor are arranged*

*for forgetfulness.* ― from *“Dwelling”* by Li-Young Lee. This relatively recent poem from Li-Young Lee shows that anaphora can be as simple as the repetition of the word *“and*”. Grammaticians teach us never to begin sentences with the word *“and”,* which makes the repetition here stand out even more. There is a sense of mystery in the way the poet has grouped these three lines, with their three similar yet competing images. The anaphora encourages readers to make connections between these different images.

Some more examples of anaphora from literature.

* *Five years have passed; five summers, with the length of*

*Five long winters! and again I hear*

*These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs*

*With a sweet inland murmur.*  ― W.Wordsworth.

* *It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair. ―* Ch.Dickens.
* *In books I find the dead as if they were alive; in books I foresee things to come; in books warlike affairs are set forth; from books come forth the laws of peace. ―* R. de Bury.
* *They are the entertainment of minds unfurnished with ideas, and therefore easily susceptible of impressions; not fixed by principles, and therefore easily following the current of fancy; not informed by experience, and consequently open to every false suggestion and partial account.* — S.Johnson.

Anaphora can be used with questions, negations, hypotheses, conclusions, and subordinating conjunctions.

* *And do you now put on your best attire?*

*And do you now cull out a holiday?*

*And do you now strew flowers in his way*

*That comes in triumph over Pompey's blood? Be gone!* ― W.Shakespeare.

* *Whatever failures I have known, whatever errors I have committed, whatever follies I have witnessed in public and private life, have been the consequences of action without thought.* ― attributed to B.Baruch.
* *Will he read the book? Will he learn what it has to teach him? Will he live according to what he has learned?*

Anaphora can be used with adverbs and prepositions, too.

* *In every cry of every man,*

*In every infant's cry of fear,*

*In every voice, in every ban,*

*The mind-forged manacles I hear* ― W.Blake.

* *They are masters who instruct us without rod or ferule, without angry words, without clothes or money.* ― R. de Bury.

Apart from the function of giving prominence to ideas, the use of anaphora in literature adds rhythm to it and thus, making it more pleasurable to read and easier to remember. As a literary device, anaphora serves the purpose of furnishing artistic effect to the passages of [prose](http://literarydevices.net/prose/) and poetry.

As a rhetorical device, it is used to appeal to the emotions of the audience in order to persuade, inspire, motivate and encourage them.

Anaphora and [epiphora](http://www.literarydevices.com/epiphora/) (also known as [epistrophe](http://www.literarydevices.com/epistrophe/)) are related concepts in that they both are techniques involving [repetition](http://www.literarydevices.com/repetition/). While the definition of anaphora is that the repetition comes at the beginning of adjacent clauses, repetition in epiphora comes at the end of clauses. If these two devices are used together, the effect is called symploce. **Symploce** can add a sense of measured balance to the rhetorical effects achieved through either anaphora or epiphora. According to W. Farnsworth, symploce is useful for highlighting the contrast between correct and incorrect [claims](https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-claim-argument-1689845). The speaker changes the word choice in the smallest way that will suffice to separate the two possibilities. The result is conspicuous contrast between the small tweak in wording and the large change in substance.

* *The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes,*

*The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes*. ― from *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.* by T.S. Eliot.

* *The madman is not the man who has lost his reason. The madman is the man who has lost everything except his reason. ―* fromOrthodoxy by G.K. Chesterton.
* *In the years after World War I my mother had put pennies for Grace [Cathedral] in her mite box but Grace would never be finished. In the years after World War II I would put pennies for Grace in my mite box but Grace would never be finished.* ― from *California Republic by* Joan Didion.
* *For want of a nail the shoe was lost.*

*For want of a shoe the horse was lost.*

*For want of a horse the rider was lost.*

*For want of a rider the battle was lost.*

*For want of a battle the kingdom was lost.*

*And all for the want of a horseshoe nail. ―* attributed to Benjamin Franklin.

* ***Bartholomew Griffin's Perfect Symploce***

*Most true that I must fair Fidessa love.*

*Most true that I fair Fidessa cannot love.*

*Most true that I do feel the pains of love.*

*Most true that I am captive unto love.*

*Most true that I deluded am with love.*

*Most true that I do find the sleights of love.*

*Most true that nothing can procure her love.*

*Most true that I must perish in my love.*

*Most true that She contemns the God of love.*

*Most true that he is snarèd with her love.*

*Most true that She would have me cease to love.*

*Most true that She herself alone is Love.*

*Most true that though She hated, I would love!*

*Most true that dearest life shall end with love. ― from Sonnet* LXII, Fidessa, More Chaste Than Kinde by Bartholomew Griffin.

**The Lighter Side of Symploce.**

Alfred Doolittle: *I'll tell you, Governor, if you'll only let me get a word in. I'm willing to tell you. I'm wanting to tell you. I'm waiting to tell you.*

Henry Higgins: *Pickering, this chap has a certain natural gift of* [*rhetoric*](https://www.thoughtco.com/rhetoric-definition-1692058)*. Observe the rhythm of his native woodnotes wild. 'I'm willing to tell you. I'm wanting to tell you. I'm waiting to tell you.' Sentimental rhetoric! That's the Welsh strain in him. It also accounts for his mendacity and dishonesty. ―* from Pygmalion by George Bernard Shaw.

**Anticlimax**

By definition, anticlimax terms/phrases are figures of speech in which statements or ideas descend according to their importance. To put it in simpler words, a serial arrangement of phrases, words or clauses in an order of higher to lower priority. It is usually exciting to find sentences with an anticlimax but they have a negative effect and are a let-down. This occurs when the audience expects a climax that is more entertaining or thrilling. Even in spoken language, you might have often encountered people who speak in a meaningless manner that is contrary to their conclusion and buildup. It leaves you wondering whether the words were intentional or happened by mistake. Sometimes, anticlimax can be used for a satirical or a jocular purpose. In literature, anticlimax features a sudden transformation from an important idea to a comparatively less significant or a trivial observation or expression.

* 'The Rape of the Lock' by A.Pope, liberally uses anticlimax in the following verses: *Here thou, great Anna, whom three realms obey, Dost sometimes counsel take, and sometimes tea.*
* *The holy passion of Friendship is of so sweet and steady and loyal and enduring a nature that it will last through a whole lifetime, if not asked to lend money.* ― M.Twain.
* *And as I'm sinkin'. The last thing that I think Is, did I pay my rent?* ― J.O'Rourke.
* *Jones was having his first date with Miss Smith and was utterly captivated by her. She was beautiful and intelligent as well, and as dinner proceeded, he was further impressed by her faultless taste.* ― Isaac Asimov.
* *In moments of crisis I size up the situation in a flash, set my teeth, contract my muscles, take a firm grip on myself and without a tremor, always do the wrong thing.* ― G.B.Shaw.
* *"Oh, poor Mr. Jones," mourned Mrs. Smith, "Did you hear what happened to him? He tripped at the top of the stairs, fell down the whole flight, banged his head, and died." ― "Died?" said Mrs. Robinson, shocked. "Died!" repeated Mrs. Smith with emphasis. "Broke his glasses, too."* ― I.Asimov.

Not all anticlimaxes are intentional, though. Oftentimes, they are caused when the story writes itself into a comer. Other times, it's caused when the writer realizes that their planned solution just wouldn't make sense compared to the logical one. Sometimes, it's caused when there are teams of writers that don't communicate very well. Sometimes, in the case of film and television, it's caused by budget constraints or unexpected cancellation. It's rather rare for unintentional anticlimaxes to show up in single works, usually popping up in long serials where there isn't a chance to unobtrusively go back and rewrite some pivotal moments to set up the proper climax.

Generally, authors try to avoid disappointing their readers. But when there is an anticlimax example in a book it not only disappoints the reader’s expectations, it’s also a breakdown of that trust between writer and reader. However, there are a few cases in which an author may choose to use anticlimax strategically. The main reason is for comedic purposes. When the reader is expecting something big to happen and then it is trivial, this can be humorous in the right situations (i.e., a book that is already clearly [comedy](http://www.literarydevices.com/comedy/)). An author may also choose to set up one anticlimax, which then leads to the actual climax.

An anticlimax is similar to a [climax](http://www.literarydevices.com/climax/) in that it occurs at the height of tension in a narrative. However, a climax is a turning point which begins to solve the main [conflict](http://www.literarydevices.com/conflict/) in a satisfying way, whereas an anticlimax is a turning point that is unsatisfying. The word anticlimax comes from the Greek prefix anti-, meaning “against,” and the word climax, which means “ladder” or “staircase.” Thus, though the definition of anticlimax is not directly opposite that of climax, it does show that the story line does not fully reach the same heights that a well thought out climax would. The Climax is one of the oldest devices in storytelling. As a result, the *subversion* of the climax, the Anticlimax, is probably almost as old.

**Antithesis**

Antithesis, literal meaning opposite, is a rhetorical device in which two opposite ideas are put together in a sentence to achieve a contrasting effect.

Antithesis emphasizes the idea of [contrast](http://literarydevices.net/contrast/) by parallel structures of the contrasted phrases or clauses, i.e. the structures of phrases and clauses are similar in order to draw the attention of the listeners or readers. Antithesis establishes a clear, contrasting relationship between two ideas by joining them together or juxtaposing them, often in parallel structure. Human beings are inveterate systematizers and categorizers, so the mind has a natural love for antithesis, which creates a definite and systematic relationship between ideas. A literary device like antithesis uses words to convey ideas in different ways from the common words and expressions of daily life. Thus, it conveys meaning more vividly than ordinary speech. When contrasting ideas are brought together, the idea is expressed more emphatically.

As a literary device, antithesis makes contrasts in order to examine pros and cons of a subject under discussion and helps to bring forth judgment on that particular subject. However, contrasting words like *bittersweet, dark-light*, etc. aren't antithesis. To be an antithesis, a sentence should have contradicting words positioned in a balanced way in a phrase or a clause.

* *The character of Snow White and the White witch from the novel '’The Snow White' shows the opposite traits of them. Snow White - good, honest, innocent, kind, felicitous and selfless. The Wicked Witch - evil, jealous, bad, mean, cruel, miserable.*

Antithesis examples can be commonly spotted in novels, poems and quotes. In fact, you can find people often using quotes like *'to err is human, to forgive is divine'* to inculcate good acts in others, which is a very valid example of antithesis. Antithesis is normally used to give out the exact opposite meaning of something. Opposites are not always for arguing or conflicting with each other; it is just the way you use to describe two different moods.

* [*Setting*](http://literarydevices.net/setting/) *foot on the moon may be a small step for a man but a giant step for mankind*. *—* N.Armstrong. The use of contrasting ideas, “a small step” and “a giant step”, in the sentence above emphasizes the significance of one of the biggest landmarks of human history.
* *That short and easy trip made a lasting and profound change in Harold's outlook.*
* *It's never too soon*

*It's never too late*

*So I start screaming out.*

*I see your face*

*I see your hand*

*Reaching out*

*And I yell at you and say. ―* B.J.Galeotti.

Antithesis can convey some sense of complexity in a person or idea by admitting opposite or nearly opposite truths.

* *Though surprising, it is true; though frightening at first, it is really harmless.*

*If we try, we might succeed; if we do not try, we cannot succeed.*

*Success makes men proud; failure makes them wise.*

* *Rude words bring about sadness, but kind words inspire joy.*

Antithesis, because of its close juxtaposition and intentional contrast of two terms or ideas, is also very useful for making relatively fine distinctions or for clarifying differences which might be otherwise overlooked by a careless thinker or casual reader.

* *In order that all men may be taught to speak truth, it is necessary that all likewise should learn to hear it.* — Samuel Johnson.
* / *agree that it is legal; but my question was, ‘Is it moral’?*
* *The advertisement indeed says that these shoes are the best, but it means that they are equal; for in advertising "best" is a parity claim and only "better" indicates superiority.*

In literature, writers employ antithesis not only in sentences but also in characters and events. Thus, its use is extensive; below are a few examples of antithesis in literature.

* The opening lines of Ch.Dickens’ novel “A Tale of Two Cities” provides an unforgettable antithesis example. *It was the* best *of times, it was the* worst *of times, it was the age of* ***wisdom****, it was the age of* ***foolishness,*** *it was the epoch of* belief*, it was the epoch of* incredulity, *it was the season of* ***Light,*** *it was the season of* ***Darkness,*** *it was the spring of* ***hope****, it was the winter of* despair*, we had* ***everything*** *before us, we had* ***nothing*** *before us, we were all going direct to* ***Heaven****, we were all going direct* the other way*.* The contrasting ideas, set in parallel structures, markedly highlight the [conflict](http://literarydevices.net/conflict/) that existed in the time which was discussed in the novel.
* A.Pope in his “An [Essay](http://literarydevices.net/essay/) on Criticism” says: *To err is human; to forgive divine.* Fallibility is a trait of humans and God, his creator, is most forgiving. Through these antithetical ideas, A. Pope reveals the basic nature of human beings. He wants to say that God is forgiving because his creation is erring.
* There are some antithesis in J.Donne’s poem “[Community](http://literarydevices.net/community/)”.

*Good we must love, and must hate ill,*

*For ill is ill, and good good still;*

*But there are things indifferent,*

*Which we may neither hate, nor love,*

*But one, and then another prove,*

*As we shall find our fancy bent.* Two contrasting words “love” and “hate” are combined in the above lines. It emphasizes that we love good because it is always good and we hate bad because it is always bad. It is a matter of choice to love or hate things which are neither good nor bad.

Short phrases also can be made antithetical.

**Antonomasia**

Antonomasia is a kind of [metonymy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metonymy) in which an [epithet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epithet) or phrase takes the place of a proper name, such as "the little [corporal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corporal)" for [Napoleon I](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Napoleon_I). Conversely, antonomasia can also be using a proper name as an [archetypal name](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archetypal_name), to express a generic idea. The word comes from the [Greek](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_language) *antonomasia*, itself from the verb *antonomazein* 'to name differently'.

Antonomasia can provide someone with a strong [epithet](http://literaryterms.net/epithet/) which further celebrates and memorializes their great deeds. In advertising and pop culture, such wording can also further celebrate the famous, such as The Beatles as “The Fab Four.”

Uses for antonomasia vary slightly depending on the time period. In the past, antonomasia would be used to designate class members, as oftentimes people’s names were linked to their professions. Antonomasia was also used in the past to give positive names to strong warriors and negative names to weak or nasty people. A frequent instance of antonomasia in the [Late Middle Ages](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Late_Middle_Ages) and early [Renaissance](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance) was the use of the term "the Philosopher" to refer to [Aristotle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aristotle). A more recent example of the other form of antonomasia (usage of archetypes) was the use of "Solons" for "the legislators" in 1930s journalism, after the semi-legendary [Solon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Solon), lawgiver of [Athens](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Athens).

Stylistically, such epithets may be used for [elegant variation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elegant_variation) to reduce repetition of names in phrases. Oftentimes, antonomasia is used to call attention to a certain characteristic.

Examples of Antonomasia in Common Speech

* Imagine that you have a friend who is a fantastic chef, and you want to say hello. Normal sentence: *“Oh, look! Sam’s arrived!”* Sentence with Antonomasia: *“Oh, look!* ***The great chef*** *has arrived!”* Here, the use of antonomasia allows you to greet your friend with a nickname which also reveals something about his character: he’s a great chef.
* Consider that you have a grumpy teacher. Normal sentence: *“He’s grumpy, boring, doesn’t want to listen to anyone, and definitely doesn’t want to help anyone.”* Sentence with Antonomasia: *“****Mr. Grumps*** *doesn’t want to listen to anyone, and definitely doesn’t want to help anyone.”* Replacing the teacher’s actual name with his defining characteristic, grumpiness, serves to highlight just how much the mood is associated with the man.
* For a commonly use example of antonomasia, consider two women discussing men. Normal sentence: *“He’s such a good guy. I enjoy his company so much! I just hope he’s the right guy for me.”* Sentence with Antonomasia: *“He’s such a good guy. I enjoy his company so much! I just hope he’s* ***Mr. Right“.*** With the addition of antonomasia, we can emphasize the quality she hopes to find in this man. Giving a man the title “Mr. Right” is an everyday example of antonomasia in conversation.

## **Examples of Antonomasia in Literature**

Antonomasia is important in literature, as it can tell more about [characters](http://literaryterms.net/character/) just by their titles.

* One instance of antonomasia is the treatment of Voldemort in J.K.Rowling’s Harry Potter Series. Rather than calling the dangerous man by name, all must call him *“You-Know-Who”* or “*He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named*.” This usage of antonomasia emphasizes just how dangerous the man is, as most wizards and witches are too afraid to say his actual name aloud.
* Another example of antonomasia is in Mary Shelley’s Victor Frankenstein’s inability to give the monster a true name is apparent in his constant use of antonomasia:

*“I beheld the wretch—the miserable monster whom I had created”*

*“the approach of the demoniacal corpse to which I had so miserably given life”*

*“Devil, do you dare approach me?”*

*“Begone, vile insect!”*

Frankenstein’s creation is never given a name, and instead is given countless instances of antonomasia which show Frankenstein’s inability to accept his creation.

**Aposiopesis**

Aposiopesis is derived from a Greek word that means “*becoming silent*”. It is a rhetorical device that can be defined as a [figure of speech](http://literarydevices.net/figure-of-speech/) in which the [speaker](http://literarydevices.net/speaker/) or writer breaks off abruptly and leaves the statement incomplete, as if the speaker is not willing to state what is present in his mind due to being overcome by passion, excitement or fear.

The sentence or thought is unfinished and the end left to the imagination of the interlocutor or audience. This can signify a speaker’s unwillingness or inability to continue for any number of reasons. Usually these reasons have to do with an extreme emotion interfering with continuous thought processes, such as fear, anger, joy, etc.

Aposiopesis can also signal modest, an [epiphany](http://www.literarydevices.com/epiphany/), or when the speaker means to be suggestive to his or her interlocutor. Sometimes the silence that ensues from an aposiopesis example is called a “pregnant pause.”

In a piece of literature, it means to leave a sentence unfinished so that the reader could determine his own meanings.

* *If they use that section of the desert for bombing practice, the rock hunters will —*
* *I've got to make the team or I'll —.*

We all have a deep need for the comfort of certainty, which translates into completion of activities and even sentences. Completing a sentence (or anything) gives the desired comfort of closure. Hence when a person does not complete a sentence, we feel a strong compulsion first to think about what the ending might be and, if they do not speak further, to fill the silent void, most probably with our guessed completion.

The completion of the sentence may also be rhetorical, where both speaker and audience know the answer and it needs not be said, for example when a person is being suggestive.

Aposiopesis may also imply that the speaker is so overcome by emotion from passion to anger they are unable to speak further. It can also signal modesty or uncertainty.

* *I wandered lonely as a...*
* *If I gave you what you wanted, would you...*
* *This is the best since...*
* *If you touch her I’ll, I’ll...*
* *Don’t go there, or else…!*
* *If only…*
* *Why I oughta…*
* *How could you…?*

Aposiopesis is realized through incompleteness of sentence structure, though this incompleteness is of different structural and semantic nature.

The purpose of using aposiopesis is to create dramatic or comic effects. The writers or speakers use it whenever they want to express ideas which are too overwhelming to finish.

Several playwrights use this technique to make the dialogues seem sincere and realistic. But the most effective use of aposiopesis is seen when the readers successfully figure out the missing thoughts that the writer has left unfinished.

Types of Aposiopesis

The *emotive aposiopesis* is brought about by a conflict-real or represented as real-between an increasing outburst of emotion on the part of the speaker and the material or personal environment which does not react at all to the outburst of emotion. The speaker's isolation from the concrete environment, caused by the emotion, borders on the comical. In painful awareness of this situation the speaker breaks off this outburst of emotion in mid-sentence.

The *calculated aposiopesis* is based on a conflict between the content of the omitted utterance and an opposing force which rejects the content of this utterance. The utterance is therefore omitted, which is generally explicitly confirmed afterwards.

The *audience-respecting* aposiopesis comprises the omission of utterances which are disagreeable to the audience and of contents which generally offend the sense of shame.

The *transitio-aposiopesis* seeks to spare the audience from having to listen to the contents of the section of the speech that is about to end, in order to gain immediately their all the stronger interest in the new section.

The *emphatic aposiopesis* exploits the avoidance of the full utterance through aposiopesis in order to represent the object as greater, more terrible, indeed inexpressible.

There are also many examples of aposiopesis in movies, television, and famous quotes.

* *This is the worst of the worst catastrophes in the world! Oh…! Oh, the humanity, and all the passengers screaming around here. I told you…I can’t even talk to people. ―* Herbert Morrison reporting on the Hindenburg Disaster.
* *Dr. Petrov: This is most unnerving, Captain. The reason for having two missile keys is so that no one man may — Captain Ramius: May what?* — The Hunt for Red October.
* Dr. House on television is also famous for his aposiopesis examples. In almost every episode he and his team struggle with correctly diagnosing a difficult case. And in almost every episode House is having a conversation with someone that has nothing to do with the case and he suddenly breaks off, clearly with an epiphany about the correct diagnosis.

## Examples of Aposiopesis in Literature

Aposiopesis is used when speaking, and thus it’s most common to find aposiopesis examples in plays and in [dialogue](http://www.literarydevices.com/dialogue/) in novels. It’s also possible, however, to find examples of aposiopesis in a novel if the narrator is a character in the novel and feels a strong emotion about what he or she is describing and thus breaks off.

* *KING LEAR: If it be you that stir these daughters’ hearts*

*Against their father, fool me not so much*

*To bear it tamely; touch me with noble anger,*

*And let not women’s weapons, water-drops,*

*Stain my man’s cheeks! No, you unnatural hags,*

*I will have such revenges on you both,*

*That all the world shall–I will do such things,–*

*What they are, yet I know not: but they shall be*

*The terrors of the earth.* ― King Lear by W.Shakespeare.

William Shakespeare uses an example of aposiopesis in his [tragedy](http://www.literarydevices.com/tragedy/) King Lear. Lear is so overcome with anger when imagining his possible revenge that he cannot continue. He breaks off as he addresses his daughters Goneril and Regan in the line “*That all the world shall–I will do such things,—.”* Lear acknowledges that he does not yet know what revenge he will take, but that *“they shall be / The terrors of the earth.”*

* *The old lady pulled her spectacles down and looked over them about the room; then she put them up and looked out under them. She seldom or never looked THROUGH them for so small a thing as a boy; they were her state pair, the pride of her heart, and were built for “*[*style*](http://www.literarydevices.com/style/)*,” not service—she could have seen through a pair of stove-lids just as well. She looked perplexed for a moment, and then said, not fiercely, but still loud enough for the furniture to hear: “Well, I lay if I get hold of you I’ll—” She did not finish, for by this time she was bending down and punching under the bed with the broom, and so she needed breath to punctuate the punches with. She resurrected nothing but the cat.* ― Adventures of Tom Sawyer by M.Twain. Mark Twain includes an example of aposiopesis in his novel Adventures of Tom Sawyer when an old lady yells out “Well, I lay if I get hold of you I’ll—.” This example shows how people use aposiopesis in normal interactions.
* *Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that’s no matter—tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther.… And then one fine morning—*

*So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past. ―* The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald. The final paragraph of F. Scott Fitzgerald’s The Great Gatsby contains an excellent aposiopesis example. The narrator, Nick Carraway, is commenting on Gatsby’s continued belief in the American Dream and that someday he will achieve it. Fitzgerald brilliantly trails off after “one fine morning” in order to demonstrate the hope that everything will come true and be fixed sometime in the hazy future, though the characters are unclear about how to attain that future.

## Difference Between Aposiopesis, Apostrophe, and Ellipsis.

The definition of aposiopesis is very similar to the definition of [apostrophe](http://www.literarydevices.com/apostrophe/). Apostrophe, when referring to the figure of speech rather than the punctuation mark, also means breaking off in the middle of speech. However, apostrophe is used to break away from one person to address another. This could be breaking away from addressing the audience in a play to address a third person, either absent or present or even an object or intangible concept. When using the device of aposiopesis, however, a sentence that is interrupted is never finished, and the speaker simply stops speaking.

The punctuation mark of an [ellipsis](http://www.literarydevices.com/ellipsis/) is sometimes used to signal an example of aposiopesis (dashes are also commonly used for this purpose). There is also a linguistic device called ellipsis that refers to the omission of words that are unnecessary and would be redundant. Speakers might choose to use ellipsis for purposes of hesitation, confusion, or as a sort of [euphemism](http://www.literarydevices.com/euphemism/) in which they don’t want to say a word considered offensive.

Aposiopesis has a different function. Aposiopesis always occurs midway through a sentence or thought that is left unfinished. It is not always the case that the end of the sentence is mutually understood, unlike in examples of ellipsis.

**Archaism**

Archaism is the derivative of a Greek word which means beginning or ancient. It is a [figure of speech](https://literarydevices.net/figure-of-speech/) in which a used phrase or word is considered very old fashioned and outdated. It can be a word, a phrase, a group of letters, spellings and [syntax](https://literarydevices.net/syntax/)..

Archaism is the use of writing or speech which is now rarely used. It is the use of older versions of language and art. Such as in these lines, “*To thine own self be true”* (*Hamlet* by William Shakespeare). Sentences that may be considered as examples of archaism will most probably contain the words *“thine”* and *“thou”.*

Archaism is also known as the archaic [diction](https://literarydevices.net/diction/). Languages evolve over the years. The English language which Shakespeare has written and spoken is very different from the English which is used today. The use of archaic language were found in the literary works of ancient medieval ages, as well as in the Victorian, Edwardian, 19th and 20th centuries.

Many English proverbs and idioms contain archaism examples.

* *Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.* (Often called the Golden Rule, both the word “*unto*” and the grammatical constructions of starting with “*do*” and the linking “*as you would have*” are archaism examples).
* *To thine own self be true.* (Originally a William Shakespeare quote, this sentence has evolved into a common English proverb, yet retains the archaism *“thine”.*
* *Full of vim and vigor.* (“*Vim”* is now only used when in conjunction with *“vigor”.*

There are also many nursery rhymes in English which contain examples of archaism.

* *The cock doth crow*

*To let you know,*

*If you be wise,*

*Tis time to rise.*

Legal language is one form of [jargon](http://www.literarydevices.com/jargon/) that retains many archaisms.

* *The parties hereto agree as follows.*
* *This party, hereinafter referred to as wife.*
* *Wife shall have the right to retain her married name or shall also have the right to return to her maiden or former name.*

Archaism is frequently used in poetry, [prose](https://literarydevices.net/prose/), science, law, geography, ritual and technology speech and writing. It may have been used accidentally or purposefully. The role of archaism in history is to suggest a superior, but maybe mythical, ancient golden age. Also, it can be used for creating [humor](https://literarydevices.net/humor/) and [irony](https://literarydevices.net/irony/). However, the most effective use of archaism is in poetry. The sound patterns of the archaic words are helpful when it comes to [assonance](https://literarydevices.net/assonance/), [alliteration](https://literarydevices.net/alliteration/) and [rhyme](https://literarydevices.net/rhyme/) schem.

Authors often use archaism examples in their works of literature to add a sense of gravity to their words. Authors who write historical fiction particularly favor using archaism examples in order to better add to the idea that their characters are living in a different era. Some authors also use archaism examples to make the reader aware that a different language is being spoken, such as in Example #2 below, from Ernest Hemingway’s For Whom the Bell Tolls. Poets also often use archaism examples to make their lines sound more formal, and incorporate words that are not commonly used for aesthetic effect.

Archaism examples are found in the masterpieces of Shakespeare, S.T. Coleridge, Hemingway, and Keats.

* *It is an ancient Mariner,*

*And he stoppeth one of three.*

*‘By thy long grey beard and glittering eye,*

*Now wherefore stopp’st thou me?*

*He holds him with his skinny hand,*

*‘There was a ship,’ quoth he.*

*‘Hold off! unhand me, grey-beard loon!’*

*Eftsoons his hand dropt he*

*‘I fear thy skinny hand!….*

*I fear thee and thy glittering eye,*

*And thy skinny hand, so brown.’—*

*Fear not, fear not, thou Wedding-Guest!*

*This body dropt not down. ―* *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* by S.T Coleridge. In the extract, archaic words are used extensively. These words are: *stoppeth, wherefore, thy, thou, quoth, unhand* and *dropt*.

* *“Where the hell are you going? “Thy duty,” said Agustín mockingly.*

*“I besmirch the milk of thy duty. Then turning to the woman, “Where the un-nameable is this vileness that I am to guard?”*

*“In the cave,” Pilar said. “In two sacks. And I am tired of thy obscenity.”*

*“I obscenity in the milk of thy tiredness,” Agustín said.*

*“Then go and befoul thyself,” Pilar said to him without heat.*

*“Thy mother,” Agustín replied. ― For Whom the Bell Tolls* by Earnest Hemingway. Hemingway has filled this paragraph with archaism. Such as the words *“un-namable”* and *“vileness”* are old fashioned and out of use. He has, however, used them purposefully to create special mysterious effect.

* *Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?*

*Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find*

*Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,*

*Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;…..*

*Drowsed with the fume of poppies, while thy hook*

*And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep*

*Steady thy laden head across a brook;….*

*Thou watchest the last oozings, hours by hours.* ― *Ode to Autumn* by John Keats. John Keats has used archaism frequently in his poems. This example is also based on old fashioned words. Like, *“hath”* is an older version of has, thou has replaced you, “watchest” is used as the past participle of watch.

* *Then, methought, the air grew denser, perfumed from an unseen censer*

*Swung by Seraphim whose foot-falls tinkled on the tufted floor.*

*“Wretch,” I cried, “thy God hath lent thee—by these angels he hath sent thee*

*Respite—respite and nepenthe from thy memories of Lenore;*

*Quaff, oh quaff this kind nepenthe and forget this lost Lenore!”*

*Quoth the Raven “Nevermore.” ― “The Raven”* by Edgar Allen Poe. Edgar Allen Poe’s poem “The Raven” is full of archaism examples. Though it was published in 1845, and therefore Poe’s English would have contained words that are now archaic or obsolete, it is undeniable that he used words in this poem that he would never have used in common speech. In just this [stanza](http://www.literarydevices.com/stanza/) Poe uses the archaic words “methought,” “nepenthe” (an anti-depressant used in ancient Egypt and ancient Greece), “quaff,” and “quoth,” to name just a few.

* *“And do you like me too? Do I please thee? I will look better later.”*

*“Thou art very beautiful now.”*

*“Nay,” she said. “But stroke thy hand across my head.”* ― For Whom the Bell Tolls by Ernest Hemingway. Ernest Hemingway was criticized by some for the archaic language he chose to use in his novel For Whom the Bell Tolls, which is set during the Spanish Civil War. Generally, he only used these archaism examples in [dialogue](http://www.literarydevices.com/dialogue/) between the American [protagonist](http://www.literarydevices.com/protagonist/) Robert Jordan and his Spanish lover, Maria. Hemingway purposefully used these archaic constructions and words to create a [style](http://www.literarydevices.com/style/) meant to mimic the sounds of Castilian Spanish. There is more formality built into the [dialect](http://www.literarydevices.com/dialect/) of Spanish spoken in Spain, and thus Hemingway’s choice to use words like “thou,” “art” and “nay” remind the reader that a different language is being spoken by the characters.

* *I shall be telling this with a sigh*

*Somewhere ages and ages hence:*

*Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—*

*I took the one less traveled by,*

*And that has made all the difference. ― “The Road Not Taken”* by Robert Frost. While this final stanza of Robert Frost’s poem *“The Road Not Taken”* does not sound overwhelmingly old-fashioned, he does incorporate the little-used words “shall” and “hence.” The choice is stylistic, as these words add to [consonance](http://www.literarydevices.com/consonance/), [rhyme](http://www.literarydevices.com/rhyme/), and [meter](http://www.literarydevices.com/meter/). Moreover, the words add formality to his poem.

* *SUSANNA: Aye, sir, he have been searchin’ his books since he left you, sir. But he bid me tell you, that you might look to unnatural things for the cause of it.*

*PARRIS, his eyes going wide: No—no. There be no unnatural case here. Tell him I have sent for Reverend Hale of Beverly, and Mr. Hale will surely confirm that. let him look to medicine and put out all thought of unnatural causes here. There be none.* ― The Crucible by Arthur Miller. Arthur Miller chose to set a play during the Salem Witch Trials as a [parable](http://www.literarydevices.com/parable/) to show the damage of the McCarthy Era that he was living in. He didn’t try to hide this [comparison](http://www.literarydevices.com/comparison/) much, though he used many archaism examples in the the language of The Crucible to make it sound more believably old. The play was set two and a half centuries prior to its writing, and thus Miller chose words and grammatical constructions that sounded old, such as *“Aye,”* “*he bid me tell you,”* and “*there be none.”*

* *“I heard a Lannister always pays his debts.”*

*“Oh, every penny….but never a groat more. You’ll get the meal you bargained for, but it won’t be sauced with gratitude, and in the end it will not nourish you.”* ― A Dance With Dragons by George R. R. Martin. George R. R. Martin is a contemporary author whose oeuvre is supposed to exist in a medieval [fantasy](http://www.literarydevices.com/fantasy/) version of the United Kingdom. Though the time period in which the characters live never actually existed, Martin is clever to include many real archaisms that make the reader think there is some veracity to his [setting](http://www.literarydevices.com/setting/). For example, Tyrion Lannister uses the word “groat,” which was a real medieval European coin.

**Assonance**

Assonance is the repetition of similar vowel sounds in successive or proximate words containing different consonants. It is used to reinforce the meanings of words or to set the mood. Similar to any other literary device, assonance also has a very important role to play in both poetry and [prose](http://literarydevices.net/prose/). Writers use it as a tool to enhance a musical effect in the text by using it for creating internal rhyme, which consequently enhances the pleasure of reading a literary piece. In addition, it helps writers to develop a particular mood in the text that corresponds with its subject matter.

* *Poetry is old, ancient, goes back far. It is among the oldest of living things. So old it is that no man knows how and why the first poems came.*

In this example by C.Sandburg, in *Early Moon*, the long “*o*” sounds old or mysterious.

* Men s***e****ll the* w***e****dding* b***e****lls*.

The same vowel sound of the short vowel “*e”* repeats itself in almost all the words excluding the definite article. The words do share the same vowel sounds but start with different consonant sounds unlike [alliteration](http://literarydevices.net/alliteration/) that involves [repetition](http://literarydevices.net/repetition/) of the same consonant sounds.

* A few assonance examples that are more common:

*We light fire on the mountain.*

*I feel depressed and restless.*

*Go and mow the lawn.*

*Johnny went here and there and everywhere.*

*The engineer held the steering to steer the vehicle.*

Assonance examples are sometimes hard to find, because they work, subconsciously sometimes, and are subtle. The long vowel sounds will slow down the energy and make the mood more somber, while high sounds can increase the energy level of the piece.

Assonance poems are abundant in literature. Assonance is one of the more difficult techniques to master when writing poetry.

* In this excerpt from C.McCarthy's book, *Outer Dark* the mood is set by using the long “a”. *And stepping softly with her air of blooded ruin about the glade in a frail agony of grace she trailed her rags through dust and ashes, circling the dead fire, the charred billets and chalk bones, the little calcined ribcage.* The words "glade," "frail," "grace," and "trailed" help set the chilling mood of the work, and it is repeated and emphasized at the end with “ribcage.”

Assonance is primarily used in poetry in order to add [rhythm](http://literarydevices.net/rhythm/) and music, by adding an internal [rhyme](http://literarydevices.net/rhyme/) to a poem.

* D.Thomas' famous poem *"Do Not Go Gentle into the Good Night"* touches upon the subject of death and also sets the mood by using assonance as a literary tool.

*Do not go gentle into that good night,*

*Old age should burn and rave at close of day;*

*Rage, rage, against the dying of the light....*

*Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight*

*Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,*

*Rage, rage against the dying of the light.*

* W.Wordsworth employs assonance to create an [internal rhyme](http://literarydevices.net/internal-rhyme/) in his poem “Daffodils”.

*1 wandered lonely as a cloud*

*That floats on high o'er vales and hills,*

*When all at once I saw a crowd,*

*A host, of golden daffodils;*

*Beside the lake, beneath the trees,*

*Fluttering and dancing in the breeze*.

Some more examples of assonance.

* *Some say the world will end in fire,*

*Some say in ice.*

*From what I’ve tasted of desire*

*I hold with those who favor fire.*

*But if it had to perish twice,*

*I think I know enough of hate*

*To say that for destruction ice*

*Is also great*

*And would suffice.* ― R.Frost.

* *He gives his harness bells a shake*

*To ask if there is some mistake.*

*The only other sound’s the sweep*

*Of easy wind and downy flake.*

*The woods are lovely, dar and deep.*

*But I have promises to keep,*

*And miles to go before I sleep,*

*And miles to go before I sleep.* ― R.Frost.

* *Hear the mellow wedding bells.* ― Edgar Allen Poe.
* *The crumbling thunder of seas.* – Robert Louis Stevenson.
* *And murmuring of innumerable bees.* – A.Tennyson.
* *I must confess that in my quest I felt depressed and restless.* – from the song of *“Thin Lizzy”* rock group.

Assonance doesn't have to be used by serious poets only. To finish off the examples of assonance poems, consider this fun little ditty by Dr. Suess that entertains children everywhere.

*West Beast East Beast*

*Upon an island hard to reach,*

*The East Beast sits upon his beach.*

*Upon the west beach sits the West Beast.*

*Each beach beast thinks he's the best beast.*

*Which beast is best?... Well, 1 thought at first,*

*That the East was best and the West was worst.*

*Then I looked again from the west to the east*

*And I liked the beast on the east beach least. ―* Dr. Seuss.

**Asyndeton**

Asyndeton is derived from a Greek word *asyndeton* which means “unconnected”. It is a stylistic device used in literature and poetry to intentionally eliminate conjunctions between the phrases and in the sentence, yet maintain the grammatical accuracy. This literary tool helps in reducing the indirect meaning of the phrase and presents it in a concise form. It started to be seen in Greek and Latin literature.

Asyndeton helps in speeding up the rhythm of words. Mostly this technique is employed in speech but can be used in written works, too. It helps in attracting the readers to collaborate with the writers, since it suggests that words, phrases and sentences are incomplete and the readers would have to do some work to deduce meanings. This version creates immediate impact and the readers are attuned to what the author is trying to convey.

Asyndeton are applied often intentionally in order to give a unique emphasis to the text, thereby drawing the attention of readers towards a particular idea the author wants to convey. In a list of items, asyndeton gives the effect of unpremeditated multiplicity, of an extemporaneous rather than a labored account.

* *On his return he received medals, honors, treasures, titles, fame.* The lack of the "and” conjunction gives the impression that the list is perhaps not complete.

Sometimes an asyndetic list is useful for the strong and direct effect it has, much more emphatic than if a final conjunction were used.

* *She likes pickles, olives, raisins, dates, pretzels. / She likes pickles, olives, raisins, dates, and pretzels.*
* *They spent the day wondering, searching, thinking, understanding. / They spent the day wondering, searching, thinking, and understanding.*

In certain cases, the omission of a conjunction between short phrases gives the impression of synonymity to the phrases, or makes the latter phrase appear to be an afterthought or even a substitute for the former.

* *He was a winner, a hero. / He was a winner and a hero.*

The degree of spontaneity is granted in some cases by asyndetic usage. *"The moist, rich, fertile soil,"* appears more natural and spontaneous than *"the moist, rich, and fertile soil.”*

Generally, asyndeton offers the feeling of speed and concision to lists and phrases and clauses, but occasionally the effect cannot be so easily categorized.

* *We shall go on to the end, we shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our Island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender.* — W.Churchill.
* *Go, shepherd, and untie the wattled cotes!*

*No longer leave thy wistful flock unfed,*

*Nor let thy bawling fellows rack their throats,*

*Nor the cropp’d herbage shoot another head…..*

*Thou hast not lived, why should’st thou perish, so?*

*Thou hadst one aim, one business, one desire;*

*Else wert thou long since numbered with the dead! ―* M.Arnold.

In this example of asyndeton the conjunctions are missing in the sentences, such as the second and sixth lines are not connected with adjoining words, like *and, are, so* etc. However, it produces speed in the poem.

* *An empty stream, a great silence, an impenetrable forest. The air was thick, warm, heavy, sluggish.* — J.Conrad.
* *In books I find the dead as if they were alive; in books I foresee things to come; in books warlike affairs are set forth; from books come forth the laws of peace.* ― R. de Bury.
* *We certainly have within us the image of some person, to whom our love and veneration look, in whose smile we find our happiness, for whom we yearn, towards whom we direct our pleadings, in whose anger we are troubled and waste away.* — J.H.Newman.
* *She was young, she was pure, she was new, she was nice,*

*She was fair, she was sweet seventeen.*

*He was old, he was vile, and no stranger to vice,*

*He was base, he was bad, he was mean.*

*He had slyly inveigled her up to his flat*

*To view his collection of stamps. ―* from the song of “*Flanders and Swann”* duo.

Asyndeton examples may be classified into two types.

**One type of asyndeton is used between words, phrases and a sentence.**

* *Are all thy conquests, glories, triumphs, spoils, Shrunk to this little measure? ―* W.Shakespeare.

**Second type is used between sentences or clauses.**

* *Without looking, without making a sound, without talking. ―* Sophecles.

Syndeton and asyndeton are opposite to each other. Syndeton includes addition of multiple conjunctions.

* *He eats and sleeps and drinks.*

On the other hand, asyndeton is the elimination or leaving out of conjunctions.

* *He eats, sleeps, drinks.*

Both create a completely different effect. Syndeton slows down the [rhythm](http://literarydevices.net/rhythm/) of speech and makes it moderate whereas asyndeton speeds up the rhythm of the speech.

**Cacophony**

If we speak literally, cacophony points to a situation where there is a mixture of harsh and inharmonious sounds. In literature, however, the term refers to the use of words with sharp, harsh, hissing and unmelodious sounds primarily those of consonants to achieve desired results.

The word cacophony comes from the Greek word kakophonos, which means *“bad or evil* [*voice*](http://www.literarydevices.com/voice/)*.”*

In everyday life, one of the examples of cacophony would be the amalgamation of different sounds you hear in a busy city street or market. You hear sounds of vehicles, announcements on loudspeakers, music, and chatter of people or even a dog barking at the same time and without any harmony. You can rightly point to the situation as being the cacophony of a busy street or market. We can notice the manifestation of cacophony in language as well; for instance in the sentence: *“I detest war because cause of war is always trivial.”* The part “*because cause”* is cacophony as *because* is followed by a word *cause* that has a similar sound but different meaning. Generally, it sounds unpleasant as the same sound is repeated in two different words.

Sometimes we might use more cacophonous sounds if we are upset, choosing shorter words with explosive consonants to display our distress. Most swear words in English have cacophonous sounds. It’s also easy to find examples of cacophony in classic comic books, such as in superhero fight scenes. Comic book artist might use such cacophonous onomatopoeias as “*brak*,” “*koom,” “kapow*” to try to convey a sense of the discord in the scene.

Similarly, a discordant sound of a musical band, tuning up their musical instruments, is also an example of cacophony.

Cacophony is opposite to [*euphony*](https://literarydevices.net/euphony/) which is the use of words having pleasant and harmonious effects. Generally, the vowels, semi-vowels and the nasal consonants e.g. *l, m, n, r, y* are considered to be euphonious. Cacophony, on the other hand, uses consonants in combinations which requires explosive delivery e.g., *p, b, d, g, k, ch-, sh-* etc.

Writers use cacophony as a tool to describe a discordant situation using discordant words. The use of such words allows readers to picture and feel the unpleasantness of the situation the writer has described through words.

## Examples of Cacophony in Literature

In literature, the unpleasantness of cacophony is utilized by writers to present dreadful or distasteful situations, such as in battles scenes or times of emotional upheaval. The author may either use these words with discordant sounds as descriptive words, or in [dialogue](http://www.literarydevices.com/dialogue/) to display the emotional state of a character.

* *Hear the loud alarum bells ―*

*Brazen bells! What tale of terror, now, their turbulency tells!*

*In the startled ear of nigh*

*How they scream out their affright!*

*Too much horrified to speak*

*They can only shriek, shriek,*

*Out of tune, ―“The Bells”* by Edgar Allen Poe. In his famous poem, “*The Bells,”* Edgar Allen Poe describes several different types of bells. In the first [stanza](http://www.literarydevices.com/stanza/) Poe starts with happy bells, like wedding bells, and moves on to more distressing types of bells. In this excerpt from the third stanza, Poe describes the *“loud alarum bells.”* These bells are full of terror, and Poe uses many cacophony examples to portray this terror. We see words with harsh consonants such as “*scream,”* *“affright,”* and “*shriek.”* By starting off the poem with examples of euphony and moving on to examples of cacophony by the last two stanzas, Poe sonically shows the descent into terror.

* *All the war-*[*propaganda*](http://www.literarydevices.com/propaganda/)*, all the screaming and lies and hatred, comes invariably from people who are not fighting.* ― Homage to Catalonia by George Orwell. George Orwell joined a group of socialist soldiers during the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s, and wrote a [memoir](http://www.literarydevices.com/memoir/), Homage to Catalonia, to describe his experiences. He witnessed much perversion of facts and truth, which later fed into his dystopian world-view for 1984. In this excerpt, Orwell describes the cacophony of war-propaganda by using cacophonous sounds, such as “*screaming,” “hatred,”* and “*fighting.”*
* *There’s a stake in your fat black heart*

*And the villagers never liked you.*

*They are dancing and stamping on you.*

*They always*knew*it was you.*

*Daddy, daddy, you bastard, I’m through. ― “Daddy”* by Sylvia Plath. Sylvia Plath’s poem *“Daddy”* contains a large amount of vitriol and anger. The majority of the poem is written in short, clipped lines with many cacophony examples. The above excerpt is the final stanza of the poem where Plath ends with the extremely harsh proclamation, *“Daddy, Daddy, you bastard, I’m through.”* The first line of this stanza is particularly cacophonous, with the words *“stake,” “black,” “fat,”* and “*heart.”* Plath effectively uses cacophony to create a poem that is harsh both in content and in sound.

* *It is so short and jumbled and jangled, Sam, because there is nothing intelligent to say about a massacre. Everybody is supposed to be dead, to never say anything or want anything ever again. Everything is supposed to be very quiet after a massacre, and it always is, except for the birds. And what do the birds say? All there is to say about a massacre, things like “Poo-tee-weet?” ―* Slaughterhouse-Five by Kurt Vonnegut. This is another example of cacophony that comes from a novel about war. Kurt Vonnegut lived through the firebombing of Dresden, and wrote about his experiences in part for his masterpiece, Slaughterhouse-Five. In this excerpt, Vonnegut tries to explain the complete devastation that war creates. The excerpt contains many cacophonous words, especially with the [repetition](http://www.literarydevices.com/repetition/) of “*massacre.*” Even the birds, which might be seen as the only positive thing after everything else is dead, respond with the cacophonous sound of “*poo-tee-weet*.”
* *He was a slim, dead, almost dainty young man of about twenty. He lay with one leg bent beneath him, his jaw in his throat, his face neither expressive nor inexpressive. One eye was shut. The other was a star-shaped hole.* ― “The Man I Killed” from The Things They Carried by Tim O’Brien. ― Tim O’Brien writes about the Vietnam War in his collection of stories, The Things They Carried. In this story, “The Man I Killed,” the shock that the narrator feels at killing a man is shown through the short, blunt description of the dead man. There are many cacophonous words in this passage, especially in “leg bent,” “jaw in his throat,” “shut,” and “star-shaped.” The narrator is trying to come to terms with the fact that he has taken another person’s life, and the cacophony in the words mimics the cacophony in the narrator’s mind.
* *People sitting on the sidewalk in the dawn half immolate smoking in their clothes. Like failed sectarian suicides. Others would come to help them. Within a year there were fires on the ridges and deranged chanting. The screams of the murdered. By day the dead impaled on spikes along the road. What had they done? He thought that in the history of the world it might even be that there was more punishment than crime but he took small comfort from it.* ― The Road by Cormac McCarthy. Cormac McCarthy’s novel The Road is a post-apocalyptic account of a man and his child trying to survive. This passage shows how brutal this world has become. McCarthy shows this brutality both through the intense [imagery](http://www.literarydevices.com/imagery/), and also in his choice of words. For example, there are not just dead people but “screams of the murdered,” and “the dead impaled on spikes along the road.” These examples of cacophony portray the intense discord of the [setting](http://www.literarydevices.com/setting/).
* Abundant use of cacophonic words could be noticed in Lewis Carroll’s nonsense poem “*Jabberwocky*” in his novel “*Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There”:*

*‘Twas brillig, and the slithy toves*

*Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;*

*All mimsy were the borogoves,*

*And the mome raths outgrabe.*

*“Beware the Jabberwock, my son!*

*The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!*

*Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun*

*The frumious Bandersnatch!*

In the excerpt, we see a collection of nonsense words which are at the same time unmelodious. After reading the poem, “Alice”, the main character of the novel, gives her impression that reflects clearly the purpose of the poem. She says: *“Somehow it seems to fill my head with ideas—only I don’t exactly know what they are! However, somebody killed something: that’s clear, at any rate”.*

* An example of cacophony is found in Hart Crane’s poem “*The Bridge*”:

*The nasal whine of power whips a new universe….*

*Where spouting pillars spoor the evening sky,*

*Under the looming stacks of the gigantic power house*

*Stars prick the eyes with sharp ammoniac proverbs,*

*New verities, new inklings in the velvet hummed*

*Of dynamos, where hearing’s leash is strummed….*

*Power’s script, – wound, bobbin-bound, refined-*

*Is stopped to the slap of belts on booming spools, spurred*

*Into the bulging bouillon, harnessed jelly of the stars.*

The disorder and confusion of the industrial world has been expressed here by the writer through deliberate selection of cacophonic words and phrases.

* *And being no stranger to the art of war, I have him a description of cannons, culverins, muskets, carabines, pistols, bullets, powder, swords, bayonets, battles, sieges, retreats, attacks, undermines, countermines, bombardments, sea-fights.* ― from Jonathan Swift’s “*Gulliver’s Travel*”. In order to describe the destructive consequences of war, the writer chooses words and arranges them in an order that they produce an effect that is unmelodious, harsh and jarring that corresponds with the subject matter.

**Caesura**

A caesura is a complete stop in a line of poetry. A caesura can be anywhere in a metrical line—it is called an initial caesura if it occurs at or near the beginning of the line, a medial caesura if it is found in the middle of the line, and a terminal caesura if it occurs near the end of the line.

Caesurae are usually marked by a pair of parallel lines (“||”), called a “*double pipe”* sign. However, some caesura examples—usually more contemporary ones—are marked with other forms of punctuation. The word caesura comes from the Latin word caedere, which means “*to cut.”*

So caesura is a rhythmical pause in a poetic line or a sentence. It often occurs in the middle of a line, or sometimes at the beginning and the end. At times, it occurs with punctuation; however, at other times it does not. Caesura can be medial (occurring in the middle of line), initial (occurring at the beginning of poetic line), or terminal (occurring at the end of a poetic line).

## Types of Caesura

## The definition of caesura can be further classified either as masculine or feminine, depending on the syllable following the caesura.

Feminine Caesura. Feminine caesural pause occurs after a non-stressed and short syllable in a poetic line. This is little softer and less abrupt.

* *I hear lake water lapping || with low sounds by the shore.* ― from The Lake Isle of Innisfree by William Butler Yeats.

It has two subdivisions ― Epic Caesura and [Lyric](https://literarydevices.net/lyric/) Caesura.

Masculine caesura. Masculine pause occurs after a long or accented syllable in a line. It creates staccato effect in the poem.

* *of reeds and stalk-crickets, || fiddling the dank air, lacing his boots with vines, || steering glazed beetles.* ― from The Bounty by Derek Walcott.

A caesural break creates various effects depending upon the way it is used. Sometimes it breaks the monotonous rhythm of a line and forces readers to focus on the meaning of the phrase preceding caesura. In some other cases, it might create a dramatic or ominous effects. Normally, it happens in the middle of a sentence, or phrase in poetry. It also adds an emotional and theatrical touch to a line and help conveying depth of the sentiments.

Common Examples of Caesura.

It is easy to find examples of caesura in famous speeches and songs. This is because caesurae happen naturally in regular speech patterns. We often take breaths or change direction in the middle of sentences, which gives rise to caesura examples. Here are some famous phrases that have caesurae in the middle (double pipes added for effect):

* *We hold these truths to be self-evident || that all men are created equal. —* from *Declaration of Independence, United States of America 1776.*
* *My country ’tis of thee || sweet land of liberty || of thee I sing.*

*Land where my fathers died || land of the Pilgrim’s pride,*

*From every mountainside || let freedom ring!* — from *My Country, ’Tis of Thee* by Samuel Francis Smith.

* *Hey Jude || don’t make it bad*

*Take a sad song || and make it better* —from *Hey Jude* by The Beatles.

Originally, the double pipes were used for the purpose of scansion, which is to say determining the metrical character of a line of [verse](http://www.literarydevices.com/verse/). A reader could easily see that an audible pause was called for in a line of poetry with the double pipes.

Caesura examples were very common in Ancient Greek and Ancient Latin poetry, which both emphasized the importance of [meter](http://www.literarydevices.com/meter/). Caesurae help to highlight the meter in a line of verse.

Old English poetry also included examples of caesura in almost every line, as this type of poetry did not generally involve [rhyme](http://www.literarydevices.com/rhyme/) or meter; the preferred methods of creating [euphony](http://www.literarydevices.com/euphony/) and poetic unity were through [consonance](http://www.literarydevices.com/consonance/) and medial caesurae.

While caesurae was particularly important in the poetic works of ancient cultures, there are many caesura examples in contemporary poetry as well. There may not be quite as many rules regarding its usage now. However, most people add natural and frequent breaks in the middle of lines when speaking normally. Thus, when contemporary poets make their verse resemble natural speech it is common to use caesurae.

## Examples of Caesura from Literature

* *There was Shield Sheafson, scourge of many tribes,*

*A wrecker of mead-benches, rampaging among foes.*

*This terror of the hall-troops had come far.*

*A foundling to start with, he would flourish later on*

*As his powers waxed and his worth was proved.*

*In the end each clan on the outlying coasts*

*Beyond the whale-road had to yield to him*

*And begin to pay tribute. That was one good king.* ― from Beowulf, translated by Seamus Heaney.

The anonymously written Old English epic Beowulf was masterfully translated by contemporary poet Seamus Heaney. Heaney worked to retain the most important aspects of the poem, which were the medial caesurae in every line and the emphasis on consonance. He marks the caesurae with punctuation such as commas and periods. For example, in the first line there is a caesura between “*Sheafson”* and “*scourge,”* and a much larger break in the final line of this [stanza](http://www.literarydevices.com/stanza/) between “*tribute*” and “*that*.” The caesurae in this poem help to create [rhythm](http://www.literarydevices.com/rhythm/) and regularity.

* *Dead ! One of them shot by the sea in the east,*

*And one of them shot in the west by the sea.*

*Dead ! both my boys ! When you sit at the feast*

*And are wanting a great song for Italy free,*

*Let none look at me!* ― from *Mother and Poet* by Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning uses all three types of caesurae in her poem “*Mother and Poet*.” In the above stanza we can see examples of initial caesurae in the lines beginning with the single word *“Dead!”* Barrett Browning also uses a medial caesura in the line *“both my boys! When you sit…”* In another part of the poem she uses a terminal caesura in this line: “*No* [*voice*](http://www.literarydevices.com/voice/) *says “My mother” again to me. What!”* This poem presents a perfect example of masculine caesura such as the pauses occurring after stressed syllables including “*at,” “babes,” “boys,” “hurt,”* and *“proud.”*

* *Something there is that doesn’t love a wall,*

*That wants it down.” I could say “Elves” to him,*

*But it’s not elves exactly, and I’d rather*

*He said it for himself. I see him there*

*Bringing a stone grasped firmly by the top*

*In each hand, like an old-stone savage armed.* ― from *“Mending Wall”* by Robert Frost.

Robert Frost uses many caesura examples in his poetry. In his famous poem “*Mending Wall*,” there are natural breaks between “*down”* and “I,” and “himself” and *“I.”* Frost marks these metrical pauses with punctuation, periods in these cases.

* *All of these waves crepitate from the culture of Ovid,*

*its sibilants and consonants; a universal metre*

*piles up these signatures like inscriptions of seaweed*

*that dry in the pungent sun, lines ruled by mitre*

*and laurel, or spray swiftly garlanding the forehead*

*of an outcrop.* ― from *“The Bounty”* by Derek Walcott. Derek Walcott, a contemporary Caribbean poet, uses many caesura examples in his poem “*The Bounty.”*

The above excerpt from the poem shows how closely the devices of caesura and [enjambment](http://www.literarydevices.com/enjambment/) are linked. Walcott chooses to break lines in the middle and write many lines that run on to the next line (only one of the above lines is an [end stopped line](http://www.literarydevices.com/end-stopped-line/)). It is common especially in contemporary poetry for caesura examples to be accompanied with strong enjambment.

* *It is for you we speak, || not for ourselves:*

## *You are abused || and by some putter-on*

## *That will be damn’d for’t; || would I knew the villain,*

## *I would land-damn him. || Be she honour-flaw’d,*

## *I have three daughters; || the eldest is eleven.* ― from The Winter Tales by William Shakespeare. This passage is an instance of feminine caesura, which occurs immediately after unstressed syllable like “*speak,”* second syllable “*bused, in abused,” “him,”* and *“ters”* in word “*daughters.”*

* *Alas, how chang’d! || what sudden horrors rise!*

*A naked lover || bound and bleeding lies!*

*Where, where was Eloise? || her* [*voice*](https://literarydevices.net/voice/)*, her hand,*

*Her poniard, || had oppos’d the dire command.*

*Barbarian, stay! || that bloody stroke restrain;…*

*Death, || only death, can break the lasting chain*. ― from “Eloisa to Abelard” by Alexander Pope.

Pope has frequently used caesural pauses in his poems to bring depth. Mostly he has used masculine caesura happening in the middle of the lines. However, sometimes initial caesura occurs, such as in the sixth line, it comes after *“Death.”* This variation clears the meaning of the text.

* *I’m nobody! ||Who are you?*

*Are you nobody, too?*

*Then there’s a pair of us|| — don’t tell!*

*They’d banish ||– you know!* ― from “I’M Nobody! Who Are You?” by Emily Dickinson.

Dickinson has used masculine caesural pause in the middle of verses. These breaks create a staccato effect an uneven rhythm in the flow of sound and conveying the depth of an idea.

**Catachresis**

Catachresis is a [figure of speech](http://literarydevices.net/figure-of-speech/) in which writers use mixed metaphors in an inappropriate way to create rhetorical effect. Often, it is used intentionally to create a unique expression. So, catachresis is an extravagant, implied metaphor using words in an alien or unusual way. When we listen to normal speech we do not think about how correct it is. However, when something is said that breaks the rules of language it is immediately clear and so grabs our attention. For most cases, it involves using a word in the wrong context or straining the word's meaning from its norm.

* *The moon was full. The moon was so bloated it was about to tip over. Imagine awakening to find the moon flat on its face on the bathroom floor, like the late Elvis Presley, poisoned by banana splits. It was a moon that could stir wild passions in a moo cow. A moon that could bring out the devil in a bunny rabbit.* ― T.Robbins.

Mixed metaphors are one prominent example of catachresis and writers often use them as a combination of different types of figures of speech to create rhetorical effects.

Catachresis is also known as an exaggerated [comparison](http://literarydevices.net/comparison/) between two ideas or objects. They are used to express extreme alienation or heightened emotions. One way to write catachresis is to substitute an associated idea for the intended one.

* *The elbow of his nose is disproportionable.* — J. Smith.

Sometimes you can substitute a noun for a verb or a verb for a noun, a noun for an adjective, and so on.

* *The little old lady turtled along at ten miles per hour.*
* *She typed the paper machine-gunnedly, without pausing at all.*

Sometimes a word is used to indicate something completely different from the literal meaning of that word.

* *Tis deepest winter in Lord Timon’s purse; that is, one may reach deep enough, and find little* ― W.Shakespeare.

Sometimes a word is used to indicate something whose actual name is not used, as in the example “*A chair’s arm”*, or a paradoxical statement is used to create illogical strained metaphors, as in the example “*Take arms against a sea of troubles”.*

Catachresis is prominently used in post-structuralist literary works, since those writers were expert in using wordplay and creating confusion in literary texts, which is an important part of catachresis. While difficult to invent, it can be rather effective.

* *A man that studies revenge keeps his own wounds green.* ― F.Bacon. Bacon uses metaphorical language by comparing revenge with wounds. The writer has made a connection between seemingly unconnected topics. However, catachresis is creating a rhetorical effect in this serious text.
* *With just the Door ajar*

*That oceans are—and Prayer—*

*And that White Sustenance–Despair*— E.Dickinson. In the first and second lines, we can see the [paradox](http://literarydevices.net/paradox/) in phrases which describe two differing distances that spread hopelessness. In the same way, “white sustenance” means colorless nourishment that actually does not nourish the body.

* *The* [*voice*](http://literarydevices.net/voice/) *of your eyes is deeper than all roses –nobody, not even the rain, has such small hands.* ― E.E. Cummings. In this extract, the poet is making an illogical comparison between the voice of his beloved’s eyes with roses and rain with the hands. The poet is trying to express the power of his beloved over him and her importance to him.
* *Mow the beard,*

*Shave the grass,*

*Pin the plank,*

*Nail my sleeve.* ― A.Pope.

In the above example, the metaphoric words are shown in bold. The literal and metaphorical meanings can be understood in the [context](http://literarydevices.net/context/) which the poet is describing as: know-how, capacities, dispositions and skills.

**Chiasmus**

Chiasmus is a rhetorical device in which two or more clauses are balanced against each other by the reversal of their structures in order to produce an artistic effect.

We may understand chiasmus with the help of an example.

* *Never let a Fool Kiss You or a Kiss Fool You.*

The second half of the above mentioned sentence is an inverted form of the first half both grammatically and logically. In the simplest sense, the term chiasmus applies to almost all “criss-cross” structures and this is the concept that is common these days. In its strict classical sense, however, the function of chiasmus is to reverse grammatical structure or ideas of sentences given that the same words and phrases are not repeated.

Chiasmus might be called "reverse parallelism," since the second part of a grammatical construction is balanced or paralleled by the first part, only in reverse order. So instead of writing, *"What is learned unwillingly is forgotten gladly,"* you could write, *"What is learned unwillingly is gladly forgotten."* Similarly, the parallel sentence, *"What is now great was at first little,"* could be written chiastically as, *"What is now great was little at first."*

* *The secret of life is not to do what you like but to like what you do.*
* *And so, my fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country.* ― from J.Kennedy's inaugural address.
* *The art of progress is to preserve order amid change, and to preserve change amid order.* ― A.N.Whitehead.
* *The value of marriage is not that adults produce children, but that children produce adults.* ― P.de Vries.
* *Don't sweat the petty things, and don't pet the sweaty things.* ― J.Small.

Chiasmus is easiest to write and yet can be made very effective simply by moving subordinate clauses around. •

* *If you come to them, they are not asleep; if you ask and inquire of them, they do not withdraw themselves; they do not chide if you make mistakes; they do not laugh at you if you are ignorant.* — R. de Bury.

Prepositional phrases or other modifiers can also be moved around to form chiastic structures. Sometimes the effect is rather emphatic.

* *Tell me not of your many perfections; of your great modesty tell me not either.*
* *Just as the term "menial" does not apply to any honest labor, so no dishonest work can be called "prestigious."*

At other times the effect is more subdued but still desirable. Compare the versions of these sentences, written first in chiastic and then in strictly parallel form.

* *On the way to school, my car ran out of gas; then it had a flat on the way home. / On the way to school, my car ran out of gas; then on the way home it had a flat.*
* *Sitting together at lunch, the kids talked incessantly; but they said nothing at all sitting in the dentist's office. / Sitting together at lunch, the kids talked incessantly; but sitting in the dentist's office, they said nothing at all.*
* *The computer mainframe is now on sale; available also at a discount is the peripheral equipment. / The computer mainframe is now on sale; the peripheral equipment is also available at a discount.*

Chiasmus may be useful for those sentences in which you want balance, but which cannot be paralleled effectively, either because they are too short, or because the emphasis is placed on the wrong words. And sometimes a chiastic structure will just seem to "work" when a parallel one will not.

The use of chiasmus as a rhetorical device dates back to the ancient Greek and Roman civilizations. Its traces have been found in the ancient texts of Sanskrit and also in the ancient Chinese writings. Greeks, however, developed an unmatched inclination for this device and made it an essential part of the art of oration.

* *It is not the earth that makes us believe the man, but the man the oath. –* Aeschylus. (5th Century B.C.).
* *Love as if you would one day hate, and hate as if you would one day love.* – Bias (6th Century B.C.).
* *Bad men live that they may eat and drink, whereas good men eat and drink that they may live.* – Socrates (5th Century B.C.).

Some examples of chiasmus from literature.

* *Do I love you because you’re beautiful?*

*Or are you beautiful because I love you?* ― O.Hammerstein.

* *Lust is what makes you keep wanting to do it,*

*Even when you have no desire to be with each other.*

*Love is what makes you keep wanting to be with each other,*

*Even when you have no desire to do it.* ― J.Viorst.

* *In the blue grass region,*

*A* [*paradox*](http://literarydevices.net/paradox/) *was born:*

*The corn was full of kernals*

*And the colonels full of corn.* ― J.Marshall.

* *The instinct of a man is to pursue everything that flies from him, and to fly from all that pursues him.* ― Voltaire.

As the above discussion reveals, chiasmus is a unique rhetorical device which is employed by writers to create a special artistic effect in order to lay emphasis on what they want to communicate.

R.A.Lanham, who is probably most widely known for his textbooks on revising prose to improve style and clarify thought in his treatise *Analyzing* [*Prose*](http://literarydevices.net/prose/) puts forward his interesting [point of view](http://literarydevices.net/point-of-view/) about chiasmus in the following words:

*“By keeping the phrase but inverting its meaning we use our opponent’s own power to overcome him, just as a judo expert does. So a scholar remarked of another’s theory, ‘Cannon entertains that theory because that theory entertains Cannon.’ The pun on ‘entertain’ complicates the chiasmus here, but the judo still prevails–Cannon is playing with the power of his own mind rather than figuring out the secrets of the universe.”*

## Cliché

Cliché refers to an expression that has been overused to the extent that it loses its original meaning or novelty. A cliché may also refer to actions and events which are predictable because of some previous events.

A cliché is a saying, idea, or element of artistic work that is overused in a culture to the point of losing its original, more significant, meaning. Clichés often are annoying to a listener or reader in that they display a lack of originality on the part of the speaker or writer. Some clichés are also examples of [idiom](http://www.literarydevices.com/idiom/) that are simply far too commonly used in the language.

The word cliché comes from French, and it is an onomatopoeic word for the sound of using a metal printing plate. Interestingly, this printing plate was also known as a stereotype. Thus, the definition of cliché comes from the idea that the printing plates printed the same words repeatedly.

Anton C. Zijderveld, a Dutch sociologist, throws light on the function of a cliché in his book *“On Clichés”*pointing out that a cliché is a traditional form of human expression (in words, thoughts, emotions, gestures, acts) which – due to repetitive use in social life – has lost its original, often ingenious heuristic power. Although it thus fails positively to contribute meaning to social interactions and communication, it does function socially, since it manages to stimulate behavior (cognition, emotion, volition, action), while it avoids reflection on meanings.

All examples of Cliché are expressions that were once new and fresh. They won popularity in public and hence have been used so extensively that such expressions now sound boring and at times irritable due to the fact that they have lost their original color.

## Common Cliché Examples.

In describing time, the following expressions have turned into cliché.

* *in the nick of time –* to happen just in time.
* *only time will tell –* to become clear over time.
* *a matter of time –* to happen sooner or later.
* *at the speed of light –* to do something very quickly.
* *lasted an eternity –* to last for a very long time.
* *lost track of time –* to stop paying attention to time.

In describing people, these expressions have turned into cliché.

* *as brave as a lion* – a cliché to describe a very brave person.
* *as clever as a fox* – a cliché to describe a very clever person.
* *as old as the hills* – a cliché to describe an old person.
* *a diamond in the rough* – a cliché to describe someone with a brilliant future.
* *fit as a fiddle* – a cliché to describe a person in a good shape.
* *as meek as a lamb* – a cliché to describe a person who is too weak and humble.

In describing various sentiments, a number of expressions have turned into cliché.

* *frightened to death* – to be too frightened.
* *scared out of one’s wits* – to be too frightened.
* *all is fair in love and war* – to go to any extent to [claim](https://literarydevices.net/claim/) somebody’s love.
* *all is well that ends well* – a happy ending reduces the severity of problems that come in the way.
* *every cloud has a silver lining* – problems also have something good in them.
* *the writing on the wall* – something clear and already understood.
* *time heals all wounds* – pain and miseries get will with the passage of time.
* *haste makes waste* – people make mistakes in a rush.

Some more common clichés.

* *Let’s touch base.*
* *The apple doesn’t fall far from the tree.*
* *Don’t put all of your eggs in one basket.*
* *I’m like a kid in a candy store.*
* *I lost track of time.*
* *Time heals all wounds.*
* *We’re not laughing at you, we’re laughing with you.*
* *Play your cards right.*
* *They all lived happily ever after.*
* *Read between the lines.*
* *Fall head over heals.*
* *Waking up on the wrong side of the bed.*
* *The quiet before the storm.*

There are two main ways in which clichés are significant in literature in positive ways. The first is that many of our common, overused phrases actually come from works of literature. This is especially the case with phrases that William Shakespeare created, which are now repeated *ad nauseum*.

The other way that an author may use a cliché example on purpose is in [dialogue](http://www.literarydevices.com/dialogue/) to show a character’s triteness, or perhaps even for humorous effect. If an author writes a cliché knowingly, at times this may be a wink at the audience that the author is using tired conventions and perhaps playing off of them. This could be an effective usage of cliché in [parody](http://www.literarydevices.com/parody/), for example.

In general, though, authors try to avoid using clichés. Clichés are also not limited to expressions. There can be clichéd characters, plot lines, and settings. For example, many people scoffed at the popular trilogy Fifty Shades of Grey by E. L. James because the personalities of the characters are so clichéd. Indeed, James even based the series off the similarly popular Twilight books, and thus the characters are necessarily “overused.” The effect of using clichés generally closes the mind of the reader down in that it doesn’t present images in a new way or challenge the reader to imagine possibilities that he or she has never imagined before.

## Examples of Cliché in Literature

* *HAMLET: Slanders, sir. For the satirical rogue says here that old men have gray beards, that their faces are wrinkled, their eyes purging thick amber and plum-tree gum, and that they have a plentiful lack of wit, together with most weak hams—all which, sir, though I most powerfully and potently believe, yet I hold it not honesty to have it thus set down; for yourself, sir, should be old as I am, if like a crab you could go backward. POLONIUS:* (aside)*Though this be madness, yet there is method in ’t.* ― from Hamlet by William Shakespeare. This is one of the many examples of cliché that has come into use from William Shakespeare. As Hamlet becomes more and more insane and speaks in even stranger ways, he encounters the character Polonius. Hearing Hamlet’s strange [discourse](http://www.literarydevices.com/discourse/) on aging, Polonius makes the remark, “*Though this be madness, yet there is method in ‘t.”* Polonius says this as an aside so that Hamlet cannot hear him. In modern-day usage, this expression has now turned into the cliché “*There’s method in his madness.”* The list of clichés that have come from Shakespeare also includes sayings such as, *“The game is up,” “Send him packing,” “Mum’s the word,”* and, *“Too much of a good thing.”*
* *There was only one catch and that was Catch-22, which specified that a concern for one’s own safety in the face of dangers that were real and immediate was the process of a rational mind. Orr was crazy and could be grounded. All he had to do was ask; and as soon as he did, he would no longer be crazy and would have to fly more missions. Orr would be crazy to fly more missions and sane if he didn’t, but if he was sane he would have to fly them. If he flew them he was crazy and didn’t have to; but if he didn’t want to he was sane and had to. Yossarian was moved very deeply by the absolute simplicity of this clause of Catch-22 and let out a respectful whistle. “That’s some catch, that Catch-22,” he observed. “It’s the best there is,” Doc Daneeka agreed.* ― from Catch-22 by Joseph Heller. Joseph Heller’s novel Catch-22 has a [theme](http://www.literarydevices.com/theme/) at its core that has become a cliché in modern culture. This satirical book focuses on a group of soldiers in World War II who are waiting on an island off of Italy for missions to fly. Heller created the phrase “Catch-22” to describe a situation that is an unsolvable logical puzzle in which one answer precludes the other, opposite solution. This kind of logical puzzle is also known as a double bind, but in modern culture English-speakers generally use Heller’s made-up term Catch-22 instead.
* *And if all others accepted the lie which the Party imposed – if all records told the same tale – then the lie passed into history and became truth. “Who controls the past,” ran the Party slogan, “controls the future: who controls the present controls the past.” And yet the past, though of its nature alterable, never had been altered. Whatever was true now was true from everlasting to everlasting. It was quite simple. All that was needed was an unending series of victories over your own memory. “Reality control,” they called it: in Newspeak, “doublethink.”* ― from 1984 by George Orwell. In his dystopian novel 1984, George Orwell created many ideas that are still popular now, and even seem to have foretold what reality would become. One of these popular ideas is the concept of “doublethink,” in which people have to believe two contradictory ideas at the same time. This was important for people at all levels of this dystopian world, from politicians to average citizens. Many people in the real world have since adopted this phrase to talk about the way real politicians and media types have gone on record stating completely contradictory beliefs without any seeming inner struggle.

## Expressions that are not Clichés

It is important to keep in mind that constant reuse of expressions does not necessarily create a cliché. Typical expressions that are used almost at all times in formal ceremonies, festivals, courts etc. are not considered cliché examples. Rather they befit such occasions and are regarded as more appropriate.

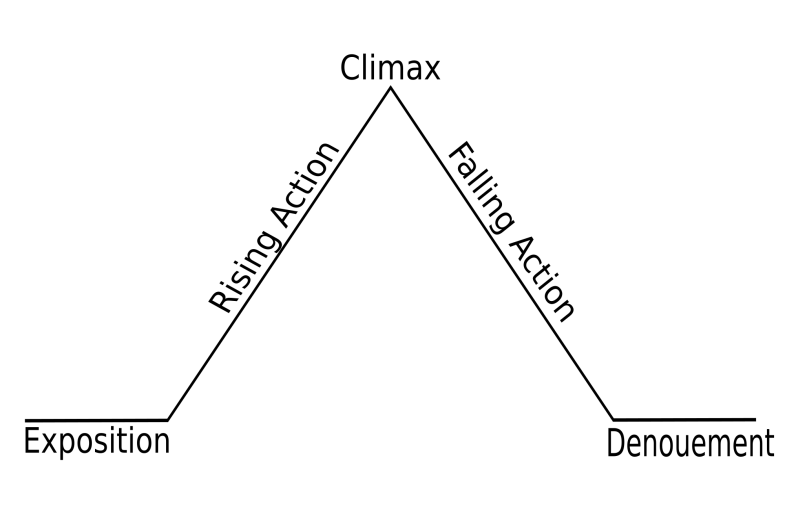
* *I second the motion.* ― Courts.
* *I now pronounce you man and wife.* ― Wedding Ceremony.
* *I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will faithfully execute the office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States.* ― Oath taking ceremony.
* *Happy Birthday!*

Similarly, certain epithets like “*reverend”* and “*father”* are attached to the names of church officials. Besides, people of the royal family are addressed with epithets “*Your Grace”, “Your Highness*” or “*Your Royal Highness*”. Such expressions are part of etiquette and do not fall under the category of clichés.

**Climax**

Climax, a Greek term meaning “ladder”, is that particular point in a [narrative](http://literarydevices.net/narrative/) at which the [conflict](http://literarydevices.net/conflict/) or tension hits the highest point. Climax is a structural part of a plot and is at times referred to as a crisis. It is a decisive moment or a turning point in a storyline at which the [rising action](http://literarydevices.net/rising-action/) turns around into a [falling action](http://literarydevices.net/falling-action/). Thus, a climax is the point at which a conflict or crisis reaches its peak that calls for a [resolution](http://literarydevices.net/resolution/) or [*denouement*](http://literarydevices.net/denouement/) (conclusion). In a five-act play, the climax is close to the conclusion of act 3. Later in the 19th century, the five-act plays were replaced by three-act plays and the climax was placed close to the conclusion or at the end of the play.

In 1863, the German writer G.Freytag described five stages of dramatic tension: exposition. rising action. climax, falling action, and dénouement. He illustrated this concept with a diagram of a pyramid. Freytag’s analysis is generally called the dramatic arc of a story. Here is a brief description of each stage.



* *Exposition* —Exposition introduces the audience to the story by giving information about the setting. characters, and a general sense of the upcoming story.
* *Rising Action* —Rising action takes up the largest section of most works of literature. Rising action is comprised of many important events that lead up to the climax. These events present conflicts and challenges for the protagonist to deal with.
* *Climax* —The climax, as explained above, is the point of highest tension. All of the events in the story have been leading to this moment and after the climax nothing can be the same for the characters in the story.
* *Falling Action* —Falling action may contain some final moment of suspense. Usually, falling action takes up only a short amount of space in the work of literature.
* *Denouement* —In this final aspect of a work of literature the main conflict is resolved, whether for better or for worse. The conclusion to the story occurs in this part.

G.Freytag’s analysis applies to classical drama, whereas not all modern drama contains each of these five parts, or perhaps contains more than one climax.

Stories can have several climaxes as sub-plots reach smaller conclusions before the grand climax near the end of the story. The climax leads to a point of closure that resolves much of the tension in the story (although not necessarily all of it).

* *The concerto was applauded at the house of Baron von Schnooty, it was praised highly at court, it was voted best concerto of the year by the Academy, it was considered by Mozart the highlight of his career, and it has become known today as the best concerto in the world.*
* *At 6:20 a.m. the ground began to heave. Windows rattled; then they broke. Objects started falling from shelves. Water heaters fell from their pedestals, tearing out plumbing. Outside, the road began to break up. Water mains and gas lines were wrenched apart, causing flooding and the danger of explosion. Office buildings began cracking; soon twenty, thirty, forty stories of concrete were diving at the helpless pedestrians panicking below.*
* *To have faults is not good, but faults are human. Worse is to have them and not see them. Yet beyond that is to have faults, to see them, and to do nothing about them. But even that seems mild compared to him who knows his faults, and who parades them about and encourages them as though they were virtues.*

The climax is often the most exciting part of the story, where a lot of major action happens.

The climax is a very important part of each work of literature. All literature must contain conflict, and in order to resolve this conflict there must be some moment or event that decides the fates of the characters involved. Without a climax in a work of a literature, the audience would be frustrated to have invested so much time and attention without a payoff. The climax may be an event that the reader is waiting for—a battle that must come, or an inevitable meeting between the protagonist and antagonist. However, the climax also may be an unexpected turn of events after which nothing remains the same.

In W.Shakespeare’s play “Romeo and Juliet”, the story reaches its climax in Act 3. In the first scene of the act, Romeo challenges Tybalt to a duel after he (Tybalt) killed Mercutio:

* *And fire-eyed fury be my conduct now!*

*Now, Tybalt, take the ‘villain’ back again*

*That late thou gavest me; for Mercutio’s soul*

*Is but a little way above our heads.*

As soon as he killed Tybalt, Romeo says:

* *O! I am Fortune’s Fool!*

He realizes that he has killed his wife’s cousin. This juncture in the play is a climax as the [audience](http://literarydevices.net/audience/) wonders how Romeo would get out of this terrible situation. Similarly, it qualifies as a climax because after this act all the prior conflicts start to be resolved and mysteries unfold themselves and thus the story moves toward its logical conclusion during the coming scenes.

As a stylistic device, the term “climax” refers to a literary device in which words, phrases and clauses are arranged in an order to increase their importance within the sentence, so in its structure climax (gradatio) consists of arranging words, clauses, or sentences in the order of increasing importance, weight, or emphasis.

Parallelism usually forms a part of the arrangement, because it offers a sense of continuity, order, and movement-up the ladder of importance. But if you wish to vary the amount of discussion on each point, parallelism is not essential. After the long and steady rising action within a story or sub-plot, at last things come to a head in the climax of the story.

* *When you step out into the jungle, there are three things that you need to be aware of, the time of day, your whereabouts and wild animals.*
* *He is uncomplicated, upright, strict, austere and inspirational.*
* *Beauty is but a vain and doubtful good;*

*A shining gloss that vadeth suddenly;*

*A flower that dies when first it gins to bud;*

*A brittle glass that’s broken presently:*

*A doubtful good, a gloss, a glass, a flower,*

*Lost, vaded, broken, dead within an hour.* ― W.Shakespeare.

The phrase “dead within an hour” is placed at the very end as it marks the climax of the fate of beauty which he introduces as “a vain and doubtful good”.

* *This note was a promise that all men, yes, black men as well as white men, would be guaranteed the unalienable Rights of Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happines*s. ― a memorable address of Martin Luther King.

The aforementioned line qualifies as the climax of Martin Luther’s speech which criticizes and rejects racial discrimination suffered by black Americans at the hands of white Americans.

A climax, when used as a plot device, helps readers understand the significance of the rising action earlier to the point in the plot where the conflict reaches its peak and makes readers mentally prepared for the resolution of the conflict. Moreover, climax is used as a stylistic device or a [figure of speech](http://literarydevices.net/figure-of-speech/) to render balance and brevity to speech or writing. Being properly employed, it qualifies itself as a powerful tool that can instantly capture the undivided attention of listeners and readers alike.

## Connotation

Connotation refers to a meaning that is implied by a word apart from the thing which it describes explicitly. Words carry cultural and emotional associations or meanings in addition to their literal meanings or denotations. For instance, “*Wall Street*” literally means a street situated in Lower Manhattan but connotatively it refers to “*wealth*” and “*power*”.

Connotation comes from the Latin word “*connotare,*” which means, “*to mark in addition.”*

The connotation of a word refers to the emotional or cultural association with that word rather than its dictionary definition. The connotation definition is therefore not the explicit meaning of the word, but rather the meaning that the word implies.

In some cases, connotation can also be similar to [symbolism](http://www.literarydevices.com/symbolism/) as it hinges on culturally-accepted meanings. For example, the connotation of *a red rose* is *love and passion,* and if an author were to refer to a red rose while talking about a relationship, the reader would understand that this connotation and symbolism was at play. However, there are many cases of connotation that don’t use symbolism

## Positive and Negative Connotations

Words may have positive or negative connotations that depend upon the social, cultural and personal experiences of individuals. For example, the words *childish, childlike* and *youthful* have the same denotative but different connotative meanings. *Childish* and *childlike* have a negative connotation as they refer to immature behavior of a person. Whereas, *youthful* implies that a person is lively and energetic.

## Common Connotation Examples

The suggested meanings of the given connotation examples are shaped by cultural and emotional associations.

* *A dog* connotes shamelessness or an ugly face.
* *A dove* implies peace or gentility.
* *Home* suggests family, comfort and security.
* *Politician* has a negative connotation of wickedness and insincerity while statesperson connotes sincerity.
* *Pushy refers to someone loud-mouthed and irritating.*
* *Mom and Dad* when used in place of mother and father connote loving parents.

There are many words that can be understood as synonyms with the same definition, yet their connotations are notable different.

* *“House*” versus “*Home”*: Both words refer to the structure in which a person lives, yet *“home*” connotes more warmth and comfort, whereas “*house*” sounds colder and more distant.
* “*Cheap”* versus “*Affordable”:* While both words mean that something does not cost a lot, “*cheap*” can also connote something that it not well-made or of low value, while “*affordable*” can refer to a quality item or service that happens to be well-priced.
* “*Riots*” versus “*Protests”*: The difference between these two words is that “*riots”* connotes a violent gathering of people who are not necessarily in the right, while “*protests*” can have a more peaceful connotation and is often used when there is sympathy with the protesters.

The connotations of words can also change drastically from one culture to the next. For example, to call someone “*fat*” in some cultures is a huge insult, whereas in others, it connotes that the person is healthy and well-fed.

Connotation plays a role in almost every type of communication, as it adds nuance and more subtle meaning. Authors use connotation to allow the readers to infer more meaning than there is explicitly written on the page, making the readers more active parts of the interpretive process. So in literature, connotation paves way for creativity by using figures of speech like [metaphor](https://literarydevices.net/metaphor/), [simile](https://literarydevices.net/simile/), [symbolism](https://literarydevices.net/symbolism/), [personification](https://literarydevices.net/personification/) etc. Had writers contented themselves with only the literal meanings, there would have been no way to compare abstract ideas to concrete concepts in order to give readers a better understanding .Therefore, connotative meanings of words allow writers to add to their works, dimensions which are broader, more vivid and fresher.

## Examples of Connotation in Literature

In literature, writers use to figures of speech to deviate from the literal meanings of words in order to create novel ideas. Figures of speech are examples of such deviations.

Metaphors are words that connote meanings that go beyond their literal meanings.

* Shakespeare in his [Sonnet](https://literarydevices.net/sonnet/) 18 says:

*Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer’s Day.*

Here, the phrase “*a Summer’s Day*” implies the fairness of his beloved.

* Similarly, John Donne says in his poem “*The Sun Rising*”:

*She is all states, and all princes, I.*

This line suggests the [speaker](https://literarydevices.net/speaker/)’s belief that he and his beloved are wealthier than all the states, kingdoms, and rulers in the whole world because of their love.

[Irony](https://literarydevices.net/irony/) and [satire](https://literarydevices.net/satire/) exhibit connotative meanings, as the intended meanings of words are opposite to their literal meanings.

* For example, a sarcastic remark passed by Antonio on Shylock, the Jew, in William Shakespeare’s play “*The Merchant of Venice”:*

*Hie thee, gentle Jew. The Hebrew will turn Christian: he grows kind.*

The word “*Jew*” has a negative connotation of wickedness, while “*Christian*” demonstrates positive connotations of kindness.

[Metonymy](https://literarydevices.net/metonymy/) is another [figure of speech](https://literarydevices.net/figure-of-speech/) that makes use of connotative or suggested meanings, as it describes a thing by mentioning something else with which it is closely connected.

* For example, Mark Anthony in Act III of Shakespeare’s “*Julies Caesar*” says, *Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears*. Here the word “*ear*” connotes the idea of people listening to him attentively.
* Another example is the lines form Robert Frost’s poem “*Out, Out*”:

*As he swung toward them holding up the hand*

*Half in appeal, but half as if to keep*

*The life from spilling.*

In the line “*The life from spilling*” the word “*life*” connotes “*blood*”. It does make sense as well because loss of blood may cause loss of life.

Some more examples of connotation in Literature

* *My mistress’ eyes are nothing like the sun;*

*Coral is far more red than her lips’ red;*

*If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;*

*If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.* ― “[*Sonnet*](http://www.literarydevices.com/sonnet/) *130*” by William Shakespeare. In this famous sonnet, Shakespeare compares his lover unfavorably to many wonderful things. Shakespeare uses *the sun, the coral,* and *the snow* to connote beauty, love, and purity. By saying that his lover is not like any of these things, she carries none of their connotations. Therefore, she is not beautiful and certainly not pure or innocent.

* *Some say the world will end in fire,*

*Some say in ice.*

*From what I’ve tasted of desire*

*I hold with those who favor fire.*

*But if it had to perish twice,*

*I think I know enough of hate*

*To say that for destruction ice*

*Is also great*

*And would suffice. ―* “*Fire and Ice*” by Robert Frost. This short poem by Robert Frost imagines the two possible apocalyptic scenarios, and which one he would prefer. There are clear connotations of passion and aggression Frost’s usage of fire [imagery](http://www.literarydevices.com/imagery/), while ice has the connotation of hard hatred. The world, in his imagination, will either burn up or freeze, and he doesn’t just mean in geological terms. Instead he places human emotion into the two concepts of fire and ice.

* *How can I move thee? Will no entreaties cause thee to turn a favourable eye upon thy creature, who implores thy goodness and compassion? Believe me, Frankenstein: I was benevolent; my soul glowed with love and humanity: but am I not alone, miserably alone? You, my creator, abhor me; what hope can I gather from your fellow-creatures, who owe me nothing? they spurn and hate me. ―* from Frankenstein by Mary Shelley. Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein plays with the concept of what can count as human and what is less than human. The word “*creature*” is used throughout the novel to refer to Frankenstein’s monster, something less than human. Yet in this excerpt, the monster uses the word “*creature*” as he addresses Frankenstein, the human scientist, and the rest of humanity. The connotation of creature is that this being deserves less empathy and less love than a “*normal*” human being. By calling Frankenstein and other humans “*creatures*,” Frankenstein’s monster levels the playing field and shows that he is as deserving as love as any other.
* *I am an invisible man. No, I am not a spook like those who haunted Edgar Allen Poe; nor am I one of your Hollywood-movie extoplasms. I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids—and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me. Like the bodiless heads you see sometimes in circus sideshows, it is as though I have been surrounded by mirrors of hard, distorting glass. When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination—indeed, everything and anything except me. ―* from Invisible Man by Ralph Ellison. In Ralph Ellison’s Invisible Man, the concepts of *invisibility, sight,* and *blindness* take on great meaning. These are not just abstract concepts or basic physical descriptions, but instead indicative of society as a whole. *Invisibility* and *blindness* therefore take on very negative connotations, as they refer to the society’s inability and even unwillingness to see the narrator, a black man, as a real human being.

## Denotation

The word denotation comes from the Latin word denotationem, which means indication. It came into more frequent usage in English in 1843 when it was used as a word in logic. The denotation of a word is the actual definition of the word rather than the nuances of its meaning or the feelings it implies. The denotation of a word does not carry the associations, emotions, or attitudes that the word might have. Denotation is generally defined as literal or dictionary meanings of a word in [contrast](https://literarydevices.net/contrast/) to its connotative or associated meanings. The opposite concept is called [connotation](http://www.literarydevices.com/connotation/), which refers to those associations and nuances that a word carries. For example, the words “*house*” and “*home*” are synonyms in English and have the same denotation, i.e., a place where one lives. However, they have different connotations. “*House*” connotes the building itself and is a slightly colder word to use when referring to the place where one lives, whereas “*home*” has a warmer connotation and implies a more personal living space.

Readers are familiar with denotations of words but denotations are generally restricted meanings. Writers, therefore, deviate from the denotative meanings of words to create fresh ideas and images that add deeper levels of meanings to common and ordinary words. Readers find it convenient to grasp the connotative meanings of words because of the fact that they are familiar to their literal meanings.

## Common Examples of Denotation

Every word has a denotation. Here are more examples of the differences between the denotations and connotations of common words to illustrate what denotation means.

* **Pants versus trousers.** In American English, *pants* and *trousers* have the same denotation. They both refer to the clothing that one wears on one’s legs. However, “*trousers*” sound like a much more formal item of clothing than “*pants*”. In British English “*pants*” actually refers to underwear and therefore has a different denotation than ‘*trousers’*.
* **Boss versus leader.** While “*boss*” is not necessarily negative it still separates this person more definitively from his or her underlings than the word “*leader*.” “*Leader*” generally sounds more inspiring. Compare also the difference between “*bossy*” and “*demanding*.” Neither sounds particularly appealing, but “*bossy*” connotes more of an attitude that someone tells others what to do without reason, whereas a “*demanding*” person asks much of others but for a good reason.
* **Burden versus obligation.** Both “*burden*” and “*obligation*” refer to something that a person must do. However, *a burden* is more onerous. A burden makes life difficult for the person who shoulders it, while *an obligation* may be simply what a person is required to do without resenting it.

As every word has a denotation, the concept of denotation is ubiquitous in literature. The denotation of a word in literature is significant, however, when it differs from the connotation of that word. Authors may make very specific [diction](http://www.literarydevices.com/diction/) choices based on the denotations and connotations of words. The process of separating out the dictionary definition from the nuances and associations of a word asks the reader to do more critical thinking and therefore involves the reader more in the reading experience.

While every word has a definition, many philosophers and literary theorists question whether a word can ever really represent the thing it refers to. Ferdinand de Saussure and Jacques Derrida were especially important in advancing the branch of literary and linguistic analysis that considers how we construct meaning out of words. They posited that the meanings of words are dependent on the meanings of other words, either in their similarities or in their differences. When we talk about the “literal definition” of a word we must use other words to define that original word, requiring the reader to conjure up those other words and their own definitions. For example, the definition of the simple word “*cat”* could be “*a small, domesticated carnivorous mammal of the genus* felis*.”* This definition requires the reader to understand the concepts of “domesticated,” “*carnivorous,” “mammal,”* and “*genus.*”

This is both problematic and interesting in that language is thus based on itself and its connection to real things is tenuous at best. Understanding language in a work of literature requires the reader to have a vast knowledge and experience of the world so as to understand both the denotations and connotations of the words used.

## Examples of Denotation in Literature

* *that this too too solid flesh would melt,*

*Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew!*

*Or that the Everlasting had not fix’d*

*His canon ’gainst self-slaughter! O God! O God!* ― from Hamlet by William Shakespeare. This famous quote from William Shakespeare’s [tragedy](http://www.literarydevices.com/tragedy/) shows Hamlet contemplating suicide for the first time. We know this from the word “*self-slaughter*,” yet Shakespeare starts the [monologue](http://www.literarydevices.com/monologue/) with a more poetic phrasing of the concept. Hamlet speaks of a wish that “*this too too solid flesh would melt.”* The denotations of the words in this line don’t quite add up—flesh is not liquid and therefore cannot melt. This is a case in which the reader’s ability to understand the difference between the denotations and connotations of the words used leads to a new metaphorical way of thinking about death.

* *I hope she’ll be a fool—that’s the best thing a girl can be in this world, a beautiful little fool. ― from* The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald. This famous quote is spoken by Daisy, who is talking about her daughter. It is a quote that is often misunderstood because readers only look at the denotation of the word “*fool.”* Many readers assume that Daisy wishes her daughter to be foolish because that’s all that women can hope to achieve. Instead, Daisy is speaking from her own painful experience of not being a fool and being aware of the vast injustices of women’s lot in life. Only by being a fool would a woman remain ignorant of her substandard rights.
* *I wanted you to see what real courage is, instead of getting the idea that courage is a man with a gun in his hand. It’s when you know you’re licked before you begin, but you begin anyway and see it through no matter what. ― from* To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee. In this denotation example, the character of Atticus Finch redefines the word “*courage”* for his children. Speaking against the popular belief that guns represent power and therefore courage, Atticus instead defines courage as the attempt to change things even knowing that there is no hope. This redefinition of the concept of courage shapes both the book and his children’s lives.
* *With an inked brush he marked everything with its name: table, chair, clock, door, wall, bed, pan. He went to the corral and marked the animals and plants: cow, goat, pig, hen, cassava, caladium, banana. Little by little, studying the infinite possibilities of a loss of memory, he realized that the day might come when things would be recognized by their inscriptions but that no one would remember their use. Then he was more explicit. The sign that he hung on the neck of the cow was an exemplary proof of the way in which the inhabitants of Macondo were prepared to fight against loss of memory: “This is the cow. She must be milked every morning so that she will produce milk, and the milk must be boiled in order to be mixed with coffee to make coffee and milk.” Thus they went on living in a reality that was slipping away, momentarily captured by words, but which would escape irremediably when they forgot the values of the written letters. ―* from One Hundred Years of Solitude by Gabriel García Márquez. There is a very memorable [subplot](http://www.literarydevices.com/subplot/) in One Hundred Years of Solitude in which the residents of the town of Macondo become “infected” with insomnia and begin to lose their memories. One of the main characters, Aureliano, fears that with the loss of memory the villagers will forget what things are called and what they are used for. This is an interesting example of the importance of denotation and how losing the definitions of words cuts off the ability of humans to interact with the world.
* *And on a day we meet to walk the line*

*And set the wall between us once again.*

*We keep the wall between us as we go.*

* *To each the boulders that have fallen to each.* ― from Robert Frost’s *“Mending Wall”.* In the above lines, the word “*wall”* is used to suggest a physical boundary which is its denotative meaning but it also implies the idea of “*emotional barrier”.*
* *A slumber did my spirit seal;*

*I had no human fears–*

*She seemed a thing that could not feel*

*The touch of earthly years.*

*No motion has she now, no force;*

*She neither hears nor sees;*

*Roll’d round in earth’s diurnal course*

*With rocks, and stones, and trees.* ― from William Wordsworth’s *“A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal”.* Wordsworth makes a contrast between a living girl and a dead girl in the first and second [stanza](https://literarydevices.net/stanza/) respectively. We are familiar to the meanings of the words used in the last line of the second stanza; *rock, stone* and *tree* but the poet uses them connotatively where rock and stone imply cold and inanimate object and the tree suggests dirt and thus the burial of that dead girl.

* *In the spring, I asked the daisies*

*If his words were true,*

*And the clever, clear-eyed daisies*

*Always knew.*

*Now the fields are brown and barren,*

*Bitter autumn blows,*

*And of all the stupid asters*

*Not one knows.* ― from Sara Teasdale’s poem “*Wild Asters*”. Here a number of striking symbols are developed by deviating from the denotative meanings of the words: *spring* and *daisies* are symbol of youth.;*brown and barren* are a symbol of [transition](https://literarydevices.net/transition/) from the youth to the old age; *bitter Autumn* symbolizes death.

**Detachment**

Sometimes one of the secondary parts of the sentence by some specific consideration of the writer is placed so that it seems formally independent of the word it logically refers to. Such parts of structures are called detached. They seem to dangle in the sentence as isolated parts. The detached part, being torn away from its referent, assumes a greater degree of significance and is given prominence by intonation".

The structural patterns of detached constructions have not yet been classified, but the most noticeable cases are those in which an attribute or an adverbial modifier is placed not in immediate proximity to its referent, but in some other positionю

* *Steyne rose up, grinding his teeth, pale, and with fury in his eyes.*
* *Sir Pitt came in first, very much flushed, and rather unsteady in his gait.*

Sometimes a nominal phrase is thrown into the sentence forming a syntactical unit with the rest of the sentence.

* *And he walked slowly past again, along the river ― an evening of clear, quiet beauty, all harmony and comfort, except within his heart.*

The essential quality of detached construction lies in the fact that the isolated parts represent a kind of independent whole thrust into the sentence or placed in a position which will make the phrase (or word) seem independent. But a detached phrase cannot rise to the rank of a primary member of the sentence - it always remains secondary from the semantic point of view, although structurally it possesses all the features of a primary member. This clash of the structural and semantic aspects of detached constructions produces the desired effect ― forcing the reader to interpret the logical connections between the component parts of the sentence. Logical ties between them always exist in spite of the absence of syntactical indicators.

Detached constructions in their common forms make the written variety of language akin to the spoken variety where the relation between the component parts is effectively materialized by means of intonation. Detached construction, as it were, becomes a peculiar device bridging the norms of written and spoken language. This stylistic device is akin to inversion. The functions are almost the same. But detached construction produces a much stronger effect, inasmuch as it presents parts of the utterance significant from the author's point of view in a more or less independent manner.

Some more examples of detached constructions.

* *Daylight was dying, the moon rising, gold behind the poplars. ―* J.Galsworthy.
* *I want to go,' he said, miserable. ―* J.Galsworthy.
* *She was lovely: all of her-delightful. ―* Th.Dreiser.

The italicized phrases and words in these sentences seem to be isolated, but still the connection with the primary members of the corresponding sentences is clearly implied. Thus gold behind the poplars may be interpreted as a simile or a metaphor: the moon like gold was rising behind the poplars, or the moon rising, it was gold.

Detached construction sometimes causes the simultaneous realization of two grammatical meanings of a word. In the sentence ‘*I want to go,' he said, miserable’* the last word might possibly have been understood as an adverbial modifier to the word said if not for the comma, though grammatically miserably would be expected. The pause indicated by the comma implies that miserable is an adjective used absolutely and referring to the pronoun ‘*he*’.

The same can be said about Dreiser's sentence with the word *delightful*, here again the mark of punctuation plays an important role. The dash, standing before the word, makes the word conspicuous and being isolated, it becomes the culminating point of the climax ― *lovely... delightful*, i.e. the peak of the whole utterance. The phrase all of her is also somehow isolated. The general impression suggested by the implied intonation, is a strong feeling of admiration; and as is usually the case, strong feelings reject coherent and logical syntax.

In the English language detached constructions are generally used in the belles-lettres prose style and mainly with words that have some explanatory function.

* *June stood in front, fending off this idle curiosity ― a little bit of a thing, as somebody said, 'all hair and spirit.*

Detached construction as a stylistic device is a typification of the syntactical peculiarities of colloquial language.

Detached construction is a stylistic phenomenon, which has so far been little investigated. The device itself is closely connected with the intonation pattern of the utterance. In conversation any word or phrase or even sentence may be made more conspicuous by means of intonation. Therefore precision in the syntactical structure of the sentence is not so necessary from the communicative point of view. But it becomes vitally important in writing. Here precision of syntactical relations is the only way to make the utterance fully communicative. Therefore when the syntactical relations become obscure, each member of the sentence that seems to be dangling becomes logically significant.

A variant of detached construction is parenthesis. (Parenthesis is a qualifying, explanatory or appositive word, phrase, clause, sentence, or other sequence which interrupts a syntactic construction without otherwise affecting it, having often a characteristic into¬nation and indicated in writing by commas, brackets or dashes.)

In fact parenthesis sometimes embodies a considerable volume of predicativeness, thus giving the utterance an additional nuance of meaning or a tinge of emotional colouring.

## Diction

Diction can be defined as [style](https://literarydevices.net/style/) of speaking or writing determined by the choice of words by a [speaker](https://literarydevices.net/speaker/) or a writer.

As a literary device, diction refers to the choice of words and [style](http://www.literarydevices.com/style/) of expression that an author makes and uses in a work of literature. Diction can have a great effect on the tone of a piece of literature, and how readers perceive the characters.

One of the primary things that diction does is establish whether a work is formal or informal. Choosing more elevated words will establish a formality to the piece of literature, while choosing [slang](http://www.literarydevices.com/slang/) will make it informal. For example, consider the difference between *“I am much obliged to you, sir”* and “*Thanks a bunch, buddy!”* The former expression of gratitude sounds much more formal than the latter, and both would sound out of place if used in the wrong situation.

Diction or choice of words separates good writing from bad writing. It depends on a number of factors.

Firstly, the word has to be right and accurate. Secondly, words should be appropriate to the [context](https://literarydevices.net/context/) in which they are used. Lastly, the choice of words should be such that the listener or readers understand easily.

Besides, proper diction or proper choice of words is important to get the message across. On the contrary, the wrong choice of words can easily divert listeners or readers which results in misinterpretation of the message intended to be conveyed.

## Types of Diction

Individuals vary their diction depending on different contexts and settings. Therefore, we come across various types of diction.

It may be “formal” where formal words are used in formal situations such as press conferences, presentations etc.

Similarly, we use “informal” diction in informal situations like writing or talking to our friends.

Moreover, a “colloquial” diction uses words common in everyday speech. “[Slang](https://literarydevices.net/slang/)” is the use of words that are impolite or newly coined.

In literature, writers choose words to create and convey a typical mood, tone and atmosphere to their readers. A writer’s choice of words and his selection of graphic words not only affects the reader’s [attitude](https://literarydevices.net/attitude/) but also conveys the writer’s feelings toward the literary work.

In writing, the goal is to maintain a level of diction that is both appropriate and consistent. “High diction” is a formal writing style best suited for essays and university entrance letters. “Low diction,” which might contain slang, is appropriate in emails and texts. While you can mix levels of diction on purpose for effect, uneven diction is generally a characteristic of bad writing.

Common Examples of Diction

We alter our diction all the time depending on the situation we are in. Different communication styles are necessary at different times. We would not address a stranger in the same way as a good friend, and we would not address a boss in that same way as a child. These different choices are all examples of diction. Some languages have codified diction to a greater extent. For example, Spanish is one of many languages that has a different form of address and verb conjugation if you are speaking to a stranger or superior than if you are speaking to a friend or younger person.

* *Could you be so kind as to pass me the milk?* Vs. *Give me that!*
* *I regret to inform you that that is not the case.* Vs. *You’re wrong!*
* *It is a pleasure to see you again! How are you today?* Vs. *Hey, what’s up?*
* *I’m a bit upset.* Vs. *I’m so pissed off.*
* *I would be delighted!* Vs. *Sure, why not?*
* *I’ll do it right away, sir.* Vs. *Yeah, just a sec.*

## Diction Examples in Literature

Depending on the topics at hand, writers tend to vary their diction. Authors make conscious and unconscious word choices all the time when writing literature, just as we do when speaking to one another. The diction in a piece establishes many different aspects of how we read the work of literature, from its formality to its tone even to the type of story we are reading. Moreover, poetry is known for its unique diction that separates it from [prose](https://literarydevices.net/prose/). Usually, a poetic diction is marked by the use of figures of speech, rhyming words etc.

* *Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard*

*Are sweeter: therefore, ye soft pipes, play on. ―* J.Keats. In his “*Ode to the Grecian Urn”* J. Keats uses formal diction to achieve a certain effect. He uses formal *“ye”* instead of informal *“you”.* The formality here is due to the respect the urn inspires in J.Keats.

* *Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed*

*Your leaves, nor ever bid the spring adieu.* In the same poem J.Keats uses more formal “*adieu”* instead of informal “*goodbye*”.

* *Busy old fool, unruly Sun,*

*Why dost thou thus,*

*Through windows, and through curtains, call on us?*

*Must to thy motions lovers’ seasons run?*

*Saucy* [*pedantic*](https://literarydevices.net/pedantic/) *wretch.* ― from “The Sun Rising” by John Donne. John Donne uses [colloquialism](https://literarydevices.net/colloquialism/) in his poem. Treating the sun as a real human being, the poet speaks to the sun in an informal way using colloquial expressions. He rebukes the sun because the sun has appeared to spoil the good time he is having with his beloved. Further, he orders the “*saucy pedantic sun”* to go away.

* *And the trees all died. They were orange trees. I don’t know why they died, they just died. Something wrong with the soil possibly or maybe the stuff we got from the nursery wasn’t the best. We complained about it. So we’ve got thirty kids there, each kid had his or her own little tree to plant and we’ve got these thirty dead trees. All these kids looking at these little brown sticks, it was depressing.* ― from a short story “*The School*” by Donald Barthelme. Writers skillfully choose words to develop a certain tone and [atmosphere](https://literarydevices.net/atmosphere/) in their works. The use of the words “*died”, “dead”, “brown sticks”* and “*depressing*” gives a gloomy tone to the passage.
* *It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair.* ― from *“ A Tale of Two Cities”* by Charles Dickens. Sometimes writers repeat their chosen words or phrases to achieve an artistic effect. By repeating the phrase “*It was…*” throughout the passage, the writer ensures that the readers will give more consideration to characteristic of the “age” they are going to read about in the novel.
* *MACBETH: Is this a dagger which I see before me,*

*The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee.*

*I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.*

*Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible*

*To feeling as to sight? Or art thou but*

*A dagger of the mind, a false creation,*

*Proceeding from the heat-oppressèd brain?*

Vs.

MACBETH: I have done the deed. – Didst thou not hear a noise?

LADY MACBETH: I heard the owl scream and the crickets cry.

Did not you speak?

MACBETH: When?

LADY MACBETH: Now.

MACBETH: As I descended?

LADY MACBETH: Ay. ― from Macbeth by William Shakespeare.

This is an interesting example of diction from Shakespeare’s famous [tragedy](http://www.literarydevices.com/tragedy/) Macbeth. As modern readers, we often consider Shakespeare’s language to be quite formal, as it is filled with words like “thou” and “thy” as well as archaic [syntax](http://www.literarydevices.com/syntax/) such as in Macbeth’s questions “Didst thou not hear a noise?” However, there is striking difference in the diction between these two passages. In the first, Macbeth is contemplating a murder in long, expressive sentences. In the second excerpt, Macbeth has just committed a murder and has a rapid-fire exchange with his wife, Lady Macbeth. The different word choices that Shakespeare makes shows the different mental states that Macbeth is in in these two nearby scenes.

* *It seemed to me that a careful examination of the room and the lawn might possibly reveal some traces of this mysterious individual. You know my methods, Watson. There was not one of them which I did not apply to the inquiry. And it ended by my discovering traces, but very different ones from those which I had expected. ―* fromThe Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. This diction example is quite formal, even though Sherlock Holmes is speaking to his close friend Dr. Watson. He speaks in very full sentences and with elevated language *(“might possibly reveal some traces” and “not one of them which I did not apply to the inquiry”).* When speaking to such a close acquaintance, most people would choose other constructions and less formal language. However, this diction employed by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle shows that Sherlock Holmes is always a very formal character, no matter the situation.
* *You just hold your head high and keep those fists down. No matter what anybody says to you, don’t you let ’em get your goat. Try fighting with your head for a change. ―*from To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee. This is a quote from Atticus Finch, the father of To Kill a Mockingbird’s narrator, Scout. Atticus uses very formal language in his profession, as he is a celebrated lawyer. When speaking to his daughter, though, he changes his diction and uses short, simple phrases and words. He also uses the [cliché](http://www.literarydevices.com/cliche/)s *“hold your head high”* and *“don’t you let ‘em get your goat.”* This informal diction shows his close relationship to his daughter and makes him seem more approachable than if we only saw him in his lawyerly role.
* *His adolescent nerdliness vaporizing any iota of a chance he had for young love. Everybody else going through the terror and joy of their first crushes, their first dates, their first kisses while Oscar sat in the back of the class, behind his DM’s screen, and watched his adolescence stream by. Sucks to be left out of adolescence, sort of like getting locked in the closet on Venus when the sun appears for the first time in a hundred years.* ― from The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao by Junot Díaz. Contemporary writer Junot Díaz is noted for using a very distinct diction in his books. He often sprinkles in Spanish words and phrases in his works to make his characters—many of whom are from the Dominican Republic—seem more authentic. In this excerpt from his novel The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao, Díaz uses very informal language, even creating the word *“nerdliness.”* He uses the slang term *“sucks”* to reinforce the sense of his character Oscar’s youth.

Some more examples of diction.

* *I hain't got no money... It's a lie. Judge Thatcher's got it. You git it. I want it... I hain't got no money, I tell you. You ask Judge Thatcher; he'll tell you the same*. ― from *Huckleberry Finn* by mark Twain.
* *You can choose your friends but you sho' can't choose your family, an' they're still kin to you no matter whether you acknowledge 'em or not, and it makes you look right silly when you don't*. ― From *To Kill a Mockingbird* by by Harper Lee.
* *They're certainly entitled to think that, and they're entitled to full respect for their opinions... but before I can live with other folks I've got to live with myself. The one thing that doesn't abide by majority rule is a person's conscience.* ― from *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee.
* *I do not speak it in vanity, but simply record the fact that I was not unemployed in my profession by the late John Jacob Astor; a name which, I admit, I love to repeat; for it hath a rounded and orbicular sound to it, and ring like unto bullion.* ― from “Bartelby, the Scrivener” by Herman Melville. Herman Melville chooses diction that is roundabout and pompous to help characterize the lawyer who narrates his story.

**Epithet**

Epithet is an adjective or adjective phrase appropriately qualifying a subject by naming a key or important characteristic of the subject, as in *"laughing happiness," "sneering contempt," "untroubled sleep," "peaceful dawn,"* and *ting water."* Sometimes a metaphorical epithet will be good to use, as in *"lazy "tired landscape," "smirking billboards," "anxious apple."* Aptness and effectiveness are the key considerations in choosing epithets.

Epithets may be classified from different standpoints: semantic and structural.

Semantically, epithets should be divided into two main groups: affective (associated) and figurative (unassociated). Structurally, epithets can be viewed from the angle of composition and distribution. From the point of view of their compositional structure epithets may be divided into simple, compound, phrase and sentence epithets.

From the point of view of their compositional structure epithets may be divided into:

1. simple (adjectives, nouns, participles). *He looked at them in animal panic.*
2. compound *apple - faced man*.
3. sentence and phrase epithets. *It is his do* - *it - yourself attitude.*
4. reversed epithets ― composed of two nouns linked by an of phrase: *a shadow of a smile.*

Affective (or emotive proper) epithets serve to convey the emotional evaluation of the object by the speaker. Most of the qualifying words found in the dictionary can be and are used as affective epithets ― *gorgeous, magnificent, atrocious.*

Figurative or transferred epithets are formed of metaphors, metonymies and similes expressed by adjectives. Thus epithets can also be based on similarity of characteristics, on nearness of the qualified objects, and on their comparison respectively. A transferred epithet is expressed by an adjective modifying a noun which it does not normally modify, but which makes figurative sense.

* *At length I heard a ragged noise and mirth of thieves and murderers.* — G.Herbert.
* *In an age of pressurized happiness, we sometimes grow insensitive to subtle joys.*

The striking and unusual quality of the transferred epithet calls attention to it, and it can therefore be used to introduce emphatically an idea which is planned to develop. The phrase will stay with the reader, so there is no need to repeat it, for that would make it too obviously rhetorical and even a little annoying. It may be best to save a transferred epithet for a space near the conclusion of the discussion where it will be not only clearer (as a synonym for previously stated and clearly understandable terms), but more effective, as a kind of final, quintessential, and yet novel conceptualization of the issue.

* *As I sat in the bath tub, soaping a meditative foot and singing, if I remember correctly, 'Pale Hands I Loved Beside the Shalimar,’ it would be deceiving my public to say that I was feeling boomps-a-daisy.* ― P.G.Wodehouse.
* *We're coming close to those little creeks now, and we keep a discreet silence. ―* H.Hollenbaugh.
* *[Peggotty] rubs everything that can be rubbed, until it shines, like her own honest forehead, with perpetual friction.* ― Ch.Dickens.
* *All ye, beneath life's crushing load,*

*Whose forms are bending low.*

*Who toil along the climbing way*

*With painful steps and slow,*

*Look, now! for glad and golden hours*

*Come swiftly on the wing:*

*O rest beside the weary road,*

*And hear the angels sing!* ― E.H.Sears.

* *You don't really criticize any author to whom you have never surrendered yourself Even just the bewildering minute counts; you have to give yourself up.* ― T.S.Eliot.
* *There will be the cough before the silence, then*

*Expectation; and the hush of portent*

*Must be welcomed by a diffident music*

*Lisping and dividing its renewals.* ― W.S.Merwin.

* *An intellectual hatred is the worst,*

*So let her think opinions are accursed.*

*Have I not seen the loveliest woman born*

*Out of the mouth of Plenty's horn,*

*Because of her opinionated mind*

*Barter that horn and every good*

*By quiet natures understood*

*For an old bellows full of angry wind? ―* W.B.Yeats.

The Bible is full of epithets. Some of the ones used for Jesus: *Wonderful Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.* The use of epithets in the Bible is a way to assign certain qualities to God or to refer memorably to specific persons and events of significance.

A *Homeric epithet* (also known as *fixed* or *epic)* is a formulaic phrase (often a compound adjective) used habitually to characterize a person or thing (for example, “*blood-red*  sky” and *“wine-dark* sea”). A homeric ephithet is a nickname or tag in Greek poetry that can be used on its own or together with the real name. It is one of the noticeable features of Homers *'Illiad'* and '*Odyssey*'. Homeric epithets make the name sound more interesting and act as tools for reminding the audience that the character has been mentioned.

* *Michael Jackson, that kingly man* (Odysseus).
* *Swift-footed Ronaldo* (Achilles)
* *Master mariner Leonardo DiCaprio* (Odysseus).
* *Madonna, tireless one* (Athena).
* *Britney Spears, man of twists and turns* (Odysseus).
* *Brad Pitt, man of action* (Odysseus).
* *Barack Obama, of the endless speech* (Thersites).
* *Laughter-loving Eddie Murphy* (Aphrodite).
* *Loud-roaring Christina Aguilera* (the sea).
* *The mighty Tom Cruise* (Ajax).
* *Nicole Kidman, softly-braided nymph* (Calypso).

## Types of Epithet

as Epithet. A Kenning is derived from Norse and Anglo-Saxon poetry. Kenning is a type of an epithet, which is a two-word phrase that describes an object by employing metaphors, for example, a two-word phrase *“whale-road*” represents the sea.

The Fixed Epithet. Fixed epithets are found in epic poetry that involves the repetitive use of a phrase or word for the same object. Such as in Homer’s *Odyssey*, the wife is “*prudent”*, Odysseus himself as “*many–minded*” and their son Telemachus as “*sound-minded*”.

Argumentative Epithet. Expert orators use argumentative epithets. Short arguments use this type of epithet to give hints.

Epithet used as *Smear Word*. An epithet used as a smear word means a derogatory word or name for someone or something.

## Epithet Examples from Literature.

* *Here of a Sunday morning*

*My love and I would lie,*

*And see the coloured counties,*

*And hear the larks so high*

*About us in the sky.* ― A.E.Housman. Here, “coloured” is an epithet used to describe the pleasant and beautiful spring season in those countries where the poet wishes to enjoy his beloved’s company.

* *The earth is crying-sweet,*

*And scattering-bright the air,*

*Eddying, dizzying, closing round,*

*With soft and drunken laughter.* ― R.Brooke. In this excerpt, the description of the air and earth is enhanced by the usage of epithets: *crying-sweet, scattering-bright,* and *soft and drunken laughter.* These epithets help in developing [imagery](http://literarydevices.net/imagery/) in the minds of readers.

* *God! he said quietly. Isn’t the sea what Algy calls it: a great sweet mother? The snot-green sea. The scrotum-tightening sea! I must teach you. You must read them in the original. Thalatta! Thalatta! She is our great sweet mother.* ― J.Joyce. In this passage, Joyce uses several epithets to describe the sea. These epithets include a great sweet mother, snot-green sea and scrotum-tightening sea.
* *My restless blood now lies a-quiver,*

*Knowing that always, exquisitely,*

*This April twilight on the river*

*Stirs anguish in the heart of me.* ― R.Brooke. Brooke makes use of epithets (*a-quiver and April twilight on the river*) to describe the anguish and agitation he feels deep inside him.

* *What time the gray-fly winds her sultry horn,*

*Blind mouths! that scarce themselves know how to hold*

*A sheep-hook, or have learn’d aught else the least*

*That to the faithful herdman’s art belongs! ―* J.Milton. Milton employs epithets *(gray-fly and “blind mouths)* in the extract which describe the insects and later refer to the desire of feeding the mouths.

With the use of epithets, writers are able to describe the characters and settings more vividly in order to give richer meanings to the text. Since they are used as a literary tool, they help in making the description of someone or something broader and hence easier to understand. With the help of epithets, the writers and poets develop suitable images in fewer words. Besides, the metaphorical use of epithets helps in making the poetry and [prose](http://literarydevices.net/prose/) vibrant and strong.

**Hyperbaton**

Hyperbaton has been derived from a Greek word that means [inversion](http://literarydevices.net/inversion/) in the arrangement of common words. It can be defined as a rhetorical device in which the writers play with the normal position of words, phrases and clauses in order to create differently arranged sentences, but which still suggest a similar meaning.

Hyperbaton includes several rhetorical devices involving departure from normal word order. One device, a form of inversion, might be called *delayed* *epithet*, since the adjective follows the noun. To amplify the adjective, the inversion is very useful.

* *From his seat on the bench he saw the girl content-content with the promise that she could ride on the train again next week.*

But the delayed epithet can also be used by itself, though in only a relatively few cases.

* *She had a personality indescribable.*
* *His was a countenance sad.*

Some rhetoricians condemn delayed epithet altogether in formal writing because of its potential for abuse. Each case must be tested carefully, to make sure it does not sound too poetic: •

* *His was a countenance friendly.*
* *These are rumors strange.*

The phrase should not be affected, offensive, or even disgusting:

A similar form of inversion might be called *divided epithets.* Here two adjectives are separated by the noun they modify, as in Milton's *"with wandering steps and slow."*

* *It was a long operation but successful.*
* *Let's go on a cooler day and less busy.*
* *So many pages will require a longer staple, heavy-duty style.*

Another form of hyperbaton involves the separation of words normally belonging together, done for effect or convenience:

* *In this room there sit twenty (though I will not name them) distinguished people.*

A verb may be emphasized by putting it at the end of the sentence.

* *We will not, from this house, under any circumstances, be evicted.*
* *Sandy, after a long struggle, all the way across the lake, finally swam to shore.*

## Features of Hyperbaton

* In hyperbaton words are not arranged in their normal order.
* It is classified as the figure of disorder.
* It is employed for emphasis and rhetorical effects.
* It interrupts the natural flow of sentences.
* It is greatly used as inflected language.

## Examples of Hyperbaton from Literature

* *Winter kept us warm, covering*

*Earth in forgetful snow, feeding*

*A little life with dried tubers….*

*You cannot say, or guess, for you know only*

*A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,*

*And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,*

*And the dry stone no sound of water. Only*

*There is shadow under this red rock,*

*(Come in under the shadow of this red rock).* ― T.S. Eliot.

The preceding excerpt is one of those which are considered as perfect examples of hyperbaton. Here, the natural order has been changed throughout the text. This inflected language interrupts the flow of sentences.

* *Some rise by sin, and some by virtue fall.* ― W.Shakespeare.

This is only one of the many hyperbaton examples found in Shakespeare’s works. Here, he uses the unexpected word order, which is “*some by virtue fall”* instead of *“some fall by virtue*”. This disordering of words helps in emphasizing the phrase “virtue fall”.

* *Women and men (both little and small)*

*Cared for anyone not at all*

*they sowed their isn’t they reaped their same*

*sun moon stars rain*

*children guessed(but only a few*

*and down they forgot as up they grew….*

*when by now and tree by leaf*

*she laughed his joy she cried his grief*

*bird by snow and stir by still*

*anyone’s any was all to her*

*someones married their everyones*

*laughed their cryings and did their dance*

*(sleep wake hope and then)they*

*said their nevers they slept their dream*. ― E.E.Cummings.

This is a very good example of hyperbaton. The words, phrases and clauses are stressed in an unexpected way. Also, it is creating complex structures of sentences and aesthetics of [ambiguity](http://literarydevices.net/ambiguity/).

Hyperbaton is employed in literary writing, poetry, film and all other mediums of visual or textual form. It creates startling and sometimes confusing effects despite being used as inflected language. In rhyming and metered poems, hyperbaton is employed to fit a sentence into the structure of a poem properly. Besides, when hyperbaton is used properly in sentences, it can result in emphasis at the desired place. Also, the unconventional placement of words and phrases result in intriguing and complex sentence structures.

* *Object there was none. Passion there was none. I loved the old man. ―* E.A.Poe.
* *And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made.* ― W.B.Yeats.
* *… pity this busy monster, manunkind, not.* ― E.E.Cummings.

**Hyperbole**

Hyperbole, derived from a Greek word meaning *“over-casting”* is a [figure of speech](http://literarydevices.net/figure-of-speech/), which involves an [exaggeration](http://literarydevices.net/exaggeration/) of ideas for the sake of emphasis.

It is a device that we employ in our day-to-day speech. For instance, when you meet a friend after a long time, you say, “*Ages have passed since I last saw you”.* You may not have met him for three or four hours or a day, but the use of the word “*ages”* exaggerates this statement to add emphasis to your wait. Therefore, a hyperbole is an unreal exaggeration to emphasize the real situation.

* *Your suitcase weighs a ton!*
* *She is as heavy as an elephant!*
* *I am dying of shame.*

Hyperboles can be found in literature and oral communication. They would not be used in nonfiction works, like medical journals or research papers; but, they are perfect for fictional works, especially to add color to a character or humor to the story. Hyperboles are comparisons, like similes and metaphors, but are extravagant and even ridiculous.

Hyperbole, the counterpart of understatement, deliberately exaggerates

conditions for emphasis or effect. In formal writing the hyperbole must be clearly intended as an exaggeration, and should be carefully restricted.

Hyberbole should not exaggerate everything, but it should be treated like an exclamation point. One thing can be exaggerated to show how really different it is from something supposedly similar to which it is being compared.

A boring story can come to life or become comical with the use of a hyperbole.

* *I’ve told you a million times.*
* *It was so cold,* / *saw polar bears wearing jackets.*
* *She is so dumb, she thinks Taco Bell is a Mexican phone company.*

Hyperbole is the most overused and overdone rhetorical figure in the whole world. Hyperbole still has a rightful and useful place in art and letters.

* / *am so hungry I could eat a horse.*
* *I have a million things to do.*
* *I had to walk 15 miles to school in the snow, uphill.*
* / *had a ton of homework.He is as skinny as a toothpick.*
* *This car goes faster than the speed of light.*
* *We are so poor; we don't have two cents to rub together.*
* *That joke is so old, the last time I heard it I was riding on a dinosaur.*
* *You could have knocked me over with a feather.*
* *Her brain is the size of a pea.*
* *He is older than the hills.*
* A great example of hyperbole in literature comes from P.Bunyan’s opening remarks in the American folktale Babe, *the Blue Ox.*

*Well now, one winter it was so cold that all the geese flew backward and all the fish moved south and even the snow turned blue. Late at night, it got so frigid that all spoken words froze solid afore they could be heard. People had to wait until sunup to find out what folks were talking about the night before.* Freezing of the spoken words at night in winter and then warming up of the words in the warmth of the sun during the day are examples of hyperbole that have been effectively used by Paul Bunyan in this short excerpt.

* Another example comes from "*As I Walked Out One Evening"* by W.H. Auden.

*I'll love you, dear, I'll love you till China and Africa meet,*

*And the river jumps over the mountain*

*And the salmon sing in the street.*

*I'll love you till the ocean*

*Is folded and hung up to dry*

*And the seven stars go squawking*

*Like geese about the sky.* The use of hyperbole can be noticed in the above lines. The meeting of China and Africa, the jumping of the river over the mountain, singing of salmon in the street, and the ocean being folded and hung up to be dried are exaggerations not possible in real life.

* *Neptune’s ocean wash this blood*

*Clean from my hand? No. This my hand will rather*

*The multitudinous seas incarnadine,*

Making the green one red. ― From W.Shakespeare’s “Macbeth”, *Act II, Scene II*. Macbeth, the [tragic hero](http://literarydevices.net/tragic-hero/), feels the unbearable prick of his conscience after killing the king. He regrets his sin and believes that even the oceans of the greatest magnitude cannot wash the blood of the king off his hands. We can notice the effective use of hyperboles in the given lines.

* *I had to wait in the station for ten days-an eternity.* ― From J.Conrad’s novel *“The Heart of Darkness”.* The wait of ten days seemed to last forever and never end.

It is important not to confuse hyperbole with [simile](http://literarydevices.net/simile/) and [metaphor](http://literarydevices.net/metaphor/). It does make a [comparison](http://literarydevices.net/comparison/) but unlike simile and metaphor, hyperbole has a humorous effect created by an [overstatement](http://literarydevices.net/overstatement/).

The above arguments make clear the use of hyperbole. In our daily conversation, we use hyperbole to emphasize for an amusing effect. However, in literature it has very serious implications. By using hyperbole, a writer or a poet makes common human feelings remarkable and intense to such an extent that they do not remain ordinary. In literature, usage of hyperbole develops contrasts. When one thing is described with an over-statement and the other thing is presented normally, a striking [contrast](http://literarydevices.net/contrast/) is developed. This technique is employed to catch the reader’s attention.

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