

# Anthimeria

## Definition of Anthimeria

Anthimeria has originated from the Greek word *anti-meros*, which means “one part for another.” It is a rhetorical device that uses a word in a new grammatical shape, often as a noun or a verb. Simply, it replaces one part of speech with another.

For instance, Shakespeare converts a noun “peace” into verb in this line: “The thunder would not peace at my bidding” (King Lear). Using nouns as verbs has become such a common practice that now many nouns are often used as verbs. In grammar studies, anthimeria has another name, “functional shift,” or “conversion.” In fact, language is always fluid, and is in constant transformation. Therefore, use of a verb as a noun or vice versa is not a surprise for linguists.

## Use of Anthimeria in Songs

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**Example #1: *These Boots Are Made for Walking* (by Nancy Sinatra)**

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“Yeah, you keep lyin’ when you oughta be truthin’  
And you keep losing when you oughta not bet  
You keep samin’ when you oughta be a changin’  
Now, what’s right is right but you ain’t been right yet.”

This song by Nancy Sinatra shows two nouns used as verbs, which are “truthing” and “saming.”

## Types of Anthimeria

Depending upon its usage, anthimeria has two types:

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## Temporary Anthimeria

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This type may be trendy or popular; however, it does not make its appearance permanent in language. For instance, these days a temporary anthimeria is “hashtagging,” since it has emerged recently, but it may not last long.

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## Permanent Anthimeria

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This type has become a permanent part of language after its emergence. For instance, “texting” has become a permanent part of language. Another one is “typing.”

## Examples of Anthimeria in Literature

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### Example #1: *Under the Greenwood Tree* (by Thomas Hardy)

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“The parishioners about here,” continued Mrs. Day, not looking at any living being, but snatching up the brown delf tea-things, “are the laziest, **gossipest**, **poachest**, **jailest** set of any ever I came among. And they’ll talk about my teapot and tea-things next, I suppose!”

Hardy was popular for his creativity, inventiveness, and coining completely weird and new words such as, “gossipest,” “poaches,” and “jailest” in this excerpt taken from *Under the Greenwood Tree*.

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### Example #2: *Letter to F. Scott Fitzgerald* (by Thomas Wolfe)

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“**Flaubert** me no **Flauberts**. **Bovary** me no **Bovarys**. **Zola** me no **Zolas**. And **exuberance** me no exuberances. Leave this stuff for those who huckster in it and give me, I pray you, the benefits of your fine intelligence and your high creative faculties, all of which I so genuinely and profoundly admire.”

In these lines, the names of the writers are changed into plural forms, which we have never seen before. This is another good example of anthimeria.

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**Example #3: *In the Marvelous Dimension* (by Kate Daniels)**

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“Until then, I’d never liked  
petunias, their heavy stems,  
the peculiar **spittooning** sound  
of their name. Now I loved  
a petunia for all it was worth  
—a **purplish** blue bloom  
waving in a red clay pot outside  
an office window.”

In this poem, Kate has changed the noun “spittoon” into a verb “spittooning,” and changed the color purple into an adjective.

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**Example #4: *More Die of Heartbreak* (by Saul Bellow)**

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“I’ve often got the kid in my mind’s eye. She’s a dolichocephalic Trachtenberg, with her daddy’s narrow face and **Jesusy** look.”

In this example, “Jesus” is transformed into a new form of adjective “Jesusy.” It gives a complete new expression to a noun.

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**Example #5: *Emma* (by Jane Austen)**

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“Let me not suppose that she dares go about, Emma **Woodhouse-ing** me!”

Austen has invented a verb “woodhouse-ing” from an existing noun “woodhouse,” giving a new shape to an old noun.

**Function of Anthimeria**

Anthimeria is very common in novels, short stories, and particularly in poetry, where such replacement evokes mild emotions of confusion. However, the proposed meaning is not difficult to recognize from the ways and methods of expression commonly used in literature. It happens in advertisements, because the culture of this world is constantly changing, language must also grow, improve, and develop. Anthimeria, in fact, provides writers a method to describe ideas in a unique way that makes the readers think. Sometimes, writers use a new word to create images and [imagery](#). Besides this, it is a method through which we transform and change our language over time.