

Interjection

Definition of Interjection

An interjection is a short expression that writers use to express emotion. Interjections can stand alone, or they can appear at the beginning or end of a [sentence](#). Interjections can convey emotions without necessarily connecting to the main idea, and neither a [subject](#) nor verb needs to be present in order to define an interjection.

Interjections are also considered exclamations. An exclamation usually follows an interjection, or comes at the end of an exclamatory sentence. For instance, exclamation marks are used to show the speaker's sadness in the following sentence:

“Alas! (thought I, and my heart beat loud) / How fast she nears
and nears!”

(The Rime of Ancient Mariner, by S.T. Coleridge)

Everyday Use of Interjections

Depending on the emotions being conveyed by a sentence, interjections can be expressed in a variety of ways. Some of those ways include:

Exclamation point (for expressing strong emotion)

Hey! Stop playing tricks on me!

Ouch! That hurts!

Comma or ellipses (for expressing weaker emotion)

Well, it's time to move forward.

*Man...*it does not look good.

Question mark (for expressing disbelief or uncertainty)

How can you say that?

What? You haven't completed your task yet?

Types of Interjection

Adjective

Example: *Great!* Now you can move on to the next chapter.

Noun or Noun Phrase

Example: *Congratulations!* You passed your exam.

Short Clause

Example: Brandy is his science teacher. *Oh, the horror!*

Sounds

Example: Uh-oh! Dude, you are in major trouble now.

Examples of Interjections in Literature

Example #1: *La Belle Dame Sans Merci* (by John Keats)

“And there she lullèd me asleep,
And there I dream’d – ah! woe betide!
The latest dream I ever dream’d
On the cold hill’s side.”

Keats has used a short clause as an interjection, shown here in italics. The exclamation points show extreme suffering on the part of the speaker. The speaker’s expression emphasizes the medieval romantic setting of a cave, where a woman lulls a knight to sleep and he begins to dream.

Example #2: *Othello* (by William Shakespeare)

“Iago: Awake! what, ho, Brabantio! thieves! thieves! thieves!
Look to your house, your daughter and your bags!
Thieves! thieves!”

In these lines, Iago tries to stir up trouble for Othello by awakening Brabantio with news of Desdemona and Othello’s elopement. The emotion being expressed here is Iago’s surprise.

Example #3: *Mother and Child* (by Eugene Field)

“Oh, give me back my heavenly child,
My love!” the rose in anguish cried;
Alas! the sky triumphant smiled,
And so the flower, heart-broken, died.”

Field has employed different forms of interjections here. In the first line, he has used an exclamation point to express surprise, while in the second line he has used the noun phrase “my love” as an interjection. In the third line, the word “Alas!”, complete with exclamation point, is used to express the sadness of a grieving mother.

Example #4: *Waiting for Godot* (by Samuel Beckett)

Vladimir:

“Oh pardon! I could have sworn it was a carrot. (He rummages again in his pockets, finds nothing but turnips.) All that’s turnips...”

At the beginning of this excerpt, Vladimir has used the short clause “oh pardon” as an interjection to show weak emotion.

Example #5: *Ode to Nightingale* (by John Keats)

“Forlorn! the very word is like a bell
To toll me back from thee to my sole self!
Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well...
Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades”

In this final stanza of this poem, Keats uses the term “forlorn” as the sound of a ringing bell, to bring the speaker out of his reverie about the nightingale, and back to real life. Keats uses this interjection, as well as the term “adieu” to indicate the speaker’s sorrow.

Functions of Interjections

Interjections can appear as a single phrase, word, or short clause. The most

might otherwise go ignored in a sentence. Through interjections, writers can express emotions, such as joy, excitement, surprise, sadness, or even disgust. They can also exaggerate those emotions through the use of an exclamation point.

Though interjections may seem trivial, their function as a part of speech is significant. It is often difficult to express emotions in the written language, and without interjections it might otherwise be impossible.