

Anti-Climax

Definition of Anti-Climax

Anti-[climax](#) is a rhetorical device that can be defined as a disappointing situation, or a sudden [transition](#) in [discourse](#) from an important idea to a ludicrous or trivial one. It is when, at a specific point, expectations are raised, everything is built-up, and then suddenly something boring or disappointing happens — this is an anti-climax. Besides that, the order of statements gradually descend in anti-climax.

Types of Anti-Climax

There are two types of anti-climax. The first is used in narrations, such as the anti-climax about the overall plot of the story. The second one is a [figure of speech](#), which might occur anywhere in the story.

Examples of Anti-Climax in Literature

In literature, there are lots of examples of anti-climax, whether [narrative](#) or as a figure of speech. Let us consider a few of them:

Example #1: *The Rape of the Lock* (By Alexander Pope)

“Here thou, great Anna, whom three realms obey,
Dost sometimes counsel take, and sometimes tea...”

In the extract, it is used as a figure of speech. Pope is drawing the attention of readers to the falseness. Anna is Queen of England, who holds meetings, and indulges also in afternoon tea customs. Ludicrous effect is created by using the anti-climax.

Example #2: *The Deserted House* (By Alfred Lord Tennyson)

“Come away: for Life and Thought
Here no longer dwell;
But in a city glorious—
A great and distant city—have bought
A mansion incorruptible.
Would they could have stayed with us.”

Here, the last line of poem presents anti-climax, as the poet is describing issues associated with life on Earth. Here, heaven is referred as “city glorious.” He asks whether people could come and live in heaven, which is a change in discourse from an important note to trivial.

Example #3: *Othello* (By William Shakespeare)

OTHELLO:

“Well, hurry up and confess. Be quick about it.
I’ll wait over here.
I don’t want to kill you before you’ve readied your soul.
No, I don’t want to send your soul to hell when I kill you...”

DESDEMONA:

“Send me away, my lord, but don’t kill me...”

OTHELLO:

“It’s too late...”

This is one of the narrative anti-climax examples from Shakespeare’s works. Here, a sudden transformation can be seen, when Othello stabs Desdemona. It is creating a disappointing and thrilling effect in the end.

Example #4: *Much Ado About Nothing* (By William Shakespeare)

DON PEDRO:

“Why, then are you no maiden.— Leonato,

Myself, my brother, and this grievèd count
Did see her, hear her, at that hour last night
Talk with a ruffian at her chamber window
Who hath indeed, most like a liberal villain,
Confessed the vile encounters they have had
A thousand times in secret.”

This is a good example of anti-climax, when Hero is publicly denounced and humiliated at her wedding. Her chastity is challenged by her fiancé Claudio. Here climax turns into anti-climax.

Example #5: *Dr.Fautus* (By Christopher Marlowe)

Faustus:

“Nay! Let me have one book more,
and then I have done, wherein I might see all plants, herbs, and
trees that grow upon the earth.”

Meph:

“Here they be.”

Faustus:

“O thou art deceived...”

This is an example of anti-climax as a figure of speech, which has taken place in the final line of this excerpt. Marlowe uses it as a warning to the [audience](#) not to follow the ways of Faustus, because it could bring shallow reward and superficial happiness only.

Example #6: *A Tale of Two Cities* (By Charles Dickens)

“In a moment, the whole company was on their feet. That
somebody was assassinated by somebody vindicating a difference
of opinion was the likeliest occurrence. Everybody looked to see
somebody fall, but only saw a man and a woman standing staring
at each other; the man with all the outward aspect of a

Frenchman and a thorough Republican; the woman, evidently English.”

In this excerpt, everybody is expecting that somebody has been killed, or someone has fallen down dead. However, there is only a man and woman standing there, staring at each other. This is a disappointing anti-climax.

Function of Anti-Climax

Generally ludicrous or comic effect is produced by anti-climax. When employed intentionally, it devalues the subject. Therefore, it is frequently used for satirical and humorous composition in literature and movies. However, sometimes it is used unintentionally – then it is known as “[bathos](#).”