

Cadence

Definition of Cadence

Cadence is derived from the Latin word *cadentia*, which means “a falling.” It is the term used to signal the rising and falling of the [voice](#) when reading a literary piece. In poetry, it is the momentary changes in [rhythm](#) and pitch. Cadences help set the rhythmic pace of a literary piece.

Types of Cadences

Most of the cadence examples in literature

Imperfect or half cadence – In poetry, a half cadence is a pause. Half cadence is represented with a comma, or a semi-colon, in poetry and [prose](#). This rhythm does not sound final, and often the lines end with indecisive tension.

Perfect or authentic cadence – Perfect cadence comes at the end of the phrase in a poem.

Examples of Cadence in Literature

Example #1: *Painting of a Bedroom with Cats* (By Elizabeth Bartlett)

“The curved cane chair has dented cushions, the cats
Catch spiders and craneflies on the wardrobe tops,
The guitar lies in its funeral case, the road is quiet,
The apple trees have dropped their fruit in the grass;

Rain is coming in from the west; the garden is lush and damp,
The draught is over, and the day is at the eleventh hour,
Sleep is nearly here on fern-patterned pillowcases,
Books slither to the floor, cats is stretched on the quit...”

In this poem, cadence appears in the middle of the fourth line of each [stanza](#), giving the speech a pause. This pause is shown by a semi-colon. It also gives a momentary variation to the rhythm of poem.

Example #2: *The Raven* (By Edgar Allan Poe)

“Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary,
Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore—
While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,
‘ ‘Tis some visiter,’ I muttered, ‘tapping at my chamber door—
Only this and nothing more.’ ...

“And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, *still* is sitting
On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door;
And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon’s that is dreaming,
And the lamp-light o’er him streaming throws his shadow on the floor;
And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor.”

The Raven is a perfect example of cadence. Here we can see breaks and ends within a piece of poetry. These endings come in the middle of the poem, and are represented by dashes and semi-colons. Due to these pauses, it speeds up and slows down the tone of the whole poem.

Example #3: *London* (By F. S. Flint)

“It is not the sunset
Nor the pale green sky
Shimmering through the curtain
Of the silver birch,
Nor the quietness;
It is not the hopping
Of the little birds
Upon the lawn,
Nor the darkness

Stealing over all things
That moves me..."

The [style](#) of this poem is a free [verse](#), which does not have a distinct [meter](#). Since most of the [free verse](#) poems have cadences, the same is the case here. In this poem, cadence is used in the middle as a little pause that changes the rise and fall of the tone when reading out loud.

Function of Cadence

Cadence is a musical movement, marked by melodic, rhythmic, or harmonic characteristics. It is used to establish sectional articulation and closure. However, the basic purpose of cadence is a communicative function that indicates to the listeners when a part ends, and therefore helps them elucidate the formal composition of the piece.

Cadences are used in poetry and in music, where they sync with a variety of musical idioms. Poets use cadence to put rhythm in their poems. Cadence plays a significant role in making the sounds and the senses in a poem connect to each other.