

# Repetition

## Definition of Repetition

Repetition is a literary device that repeats the same words or phrases a few times to make an idea clearer and more memorable. There are several types of repetition commonly used in both [prose](#) and poetry.

As a rhetorical device, it could be a word, a phrase, or a full sentence, or a poetical line repeated to emphasize its significance in the entire text. Repetition is not distinguished solely as a [figure of speech](#), but more as a rhetorical device.

## Types of Repetition

The following examples of repetition are classified according to the different types of repetition used, both in literature and in daily conversations.

**[Anadiplosis](#):** Repetition of the last word in a line or clause.

**[Anaphora](#):** Repetition of words at the start of clauses or verses.

**Antistasis:** Repetition of words or phrases in opposite sense.

**[Diacope](#):** Repetition of words broken by some other words.

**Epanalepsis:** Repetition of the same words at the beginning and the end of a sentence.

**Epimone:** Repetition of a phrase (usually a question) to stress a point.

**[Epiphora](#):** Repetition of the same word at the end of each clause.

**Gradatio:** A construction in poetry wherein the last word of one clause becomes the first of the next, and so on.

**Negative-Positive Restatement:** Repetition of an idea first in negative terms, and then in positive terms.

**[Polyptoton](#):** Repetition of words of the same root, with different endings.

**Symploce:** A combination of anaphora and epiphora, in which repetition is both at the end and at the beginning.

## Short Examples of Repetition in Poetry

If you think **you can do it, you can do it.**

The boy was a good **footballer**, because his father **was a footballer**, and his grandfather **was a footballer**.

The bird said, “I don’t sing **because I am happy**, I am happy **because I sing.**”

The politician declared, “**We will fight** come what may, **we will fight** on all fronts, **we will fight** for a thousand years.”

The judge commanded, stamping his mallet on the table, “**Order in the court, order in the court.**”

The refugees were crossing into the neighboring country when they saw **blood all around — blood on the** passageways, **blood on the** fields, **blood on the**

When they came out of the cinema hall they all agreed, the film was **a waste** of money, it was **a waste** of time and energy.

The boy was terrified when he was taken to the hospital; **he shuddered** at the least sound, and **he shuddered** at the least breath of air into the room.

The president said, “**Work, work, and work,**” are the keys to success.

The orator said, “**Good morning to** the old, **good morning to** the young, **good morning to** each and every one present.”

The team captain reiterated his resolve to **win the** match, **win the** tournament, and **win the** hearts of his people.

The general said to his army, “Men — You must fight for the life of **your people, your family, and your country.**”

The boss repeated his routine advice, “**Don’t** come late, **don’t** leave early, and **don’t** delay your work.”

The students chanted to raise the spirits of their team during the match, “**We will win, we will win.**”

The new boss says that, in this organization, the **wrong person** was appointed for the **wrong job**, following the **wrong procedure**, but this will not happen again.

## Examples of Repetition in Literature

---

### Example #1: *One Art* (By Elizabeth Bishop)

---

“The art of losing isn’t hard to master;

so many things seem filled with the intent

to be lost that their loss is no disaster...

Lose something every day. Accept the fluster  
of lost door keys, the hour badly spent.

**The art of losing isn't hard to master**  
though it may look like (Write it!) like disaster.”

In this example, the poet has repeatedly used the refraining line “The art of losing isn't hard to master” throughout the poem. This refraining line creates [rhythm](#), and emphasizes the idea. Notice that this line, however, varies slightly in the final [stanza](#), yet is still considered to be a [refrain](#).

---

### **Example #2: *Annabel Lee* (By Edgar Allan Poe)**

---

“It was many and many a year ago,  
**In a kingdom by the sea,**  
That a maiden there lived whom you may know ...

I was a child and *she* was a child,  
**In this kingdom by the sea,**  
But we loved with a love that was more than love —  
I and my Annabel Lee ...”

The poet is using the refraining line “In a kingdom by the sea.” This appears in the second line of each stanza, and recurs in the final line of the third stanza, drawing readers' attention, and contributing to its [meter](#) and rhythm.

---

### **Example #3: *Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night* (By Dylan Thomas)**

---

“**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...*

And you, my father, there on the sad height,  
Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.  
**Do not go gentle into that good night.**  
*Rage, rage against the dying of the light.”*

This is very a famous poem using repetitions of the refrain, “Do not go gentle into that good night,” and “Rage, rage against the dying of the light.” These refrains make the poem catchy and easy to remember.

---

**Example #4: *Stopping by Woods On a Snowy Evening* (By Emily Dickinson)**

---

“The woods are lovely, dark, and deep,  
But I have promises to keep,

**And miles to go before I sleep,  
And miles to go before I sleep.”**

Frost has used a repeated refrain in only the last stanza, as he utters, “And miles to go before I sleep.” It gives rhythm to the poem, and lays emphasis on this idea of doing many things before dying.

---

**Example #5: *Excelsior* (By Henry Wadsworth Longfellow)**

---

“The shades of night were falling fast...  
A banner with the strange device,  
**Excelsior!**

There in the twilight cold and gray,  
Lifeless, but beautiful, he lay...  
A [voice](#) fell like a falling star,  
**Excelsior!**“

The poet makes use of refrain “Excelsior!” throughout the entire poem, creating rhythm and drawing the attention of readers.

---

**Example #6: *The Properly Scholarly Attitude* (By Adelaide Crapsey)**

---

“The poet pursues his beautiful [theme](#);  
The preacher his golden beatitude ...  
Of the **properly scholarly** [attitude](#)—

The highly desirable, the very advisable,  
The hardly acquirable, **properly scholarly attitude.**”

In this poem, Crapsey uses the refrain, “properly scholarly attitude” to highlight the theme of being a poet having proper scholarly attitude.

---

**Example #7: *O Captain! My Captain!* (By Walt Whitman)**

---

“**O Captain! my Captain!** rise up and hear the bells;  
Rise up — **for you** the flag is flung — **for you** the bugle trills...”

The poet uses refrain throughout this poem to emphasize the mournful theme. See the repetition of the words “captain,” “rise up,” and “for you” in just these two lines. This theme continues throughout.

---

**Example #8: *1940 Speech to House of Commons* (By Winston Churchill)**

---

“**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.”

This is a beautiful example of repetition in prose, where the [speaker](#) has repeated “we shall,” and “we shall fight” several times.

---

**Example #9: *I Have a Dream speech* (By Martin Luther King, Jr.)**

---

“**I have a dream** that one day down in Alabama, with its vicious racists, with its governor having his lips dripping with the words of interposition and nullification – one day right there in Alabama little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers

**I have a dream** today.

**I have a dream** that one day every valley shall be exalted and every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together.”

In this famous speech by American civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr., he repeats the phrase “I have a dream” a number of times. This makes the speech very powerful and memorable.

### **Function of Repetition**

Refrain is purely a poetic device, and the most important function that a refrain may serve in poetry is to lay emphasis and create rhythm. When a line or phrase recurs in a poem, or a piece of literature, it becomes noticeable to the readers. By using refrain, poets can make their ideas memorable, and draw the attention of readers toward a certain idea. This is done by using a single line recurrently throughout a poetic work, allowing readers to take a pause each time they come upon such repetition.

---

#### **Related posts:**

---

[Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow](#)