

# Antistrophe

## Definition of Antistrophe

Antistrophe is a derivative of a Greek word that means “turning back.” It is a rhetorical device that involves the [repetition](#) of the same words at the end of consecutive phrases, clauses, sentences, and paragraphs. Like in the following excerpt, the phrase “but it is not this day” comes repeatedly at the end:

“A day may come when the courage of men fails, when we forsake our friends and break all bonds of fellowship. **But it is not this day.** An hour of wolves and shattered shields, when the age of men comes crashing down! **But it is not this day!** This day we fight! “

(*The Return of the King*, by J. R. R. Tolkien)

## Similarity with Epistrophe

Antistrophe is similar to [epistrophe](#), which also involves the repetition of words at the ends of successive clauses or sentences. However, it is opposite to [anaphora](#), which is a repetition of words at the beginning of sentences or clauses.

## Examples of Antistrophe in Literature

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Example #1: *The Holy Bible, 1 Corinthians 13:11* (By the Apostle Paul)

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“When I was a child, I spake **as a child**, I understood **as a child**, I thought **as a child**; but when I became a man, I put away childish things...”

This excerpt is one of the examples of antistrophe found in the Holy Bible. The phrase “as a child” is repeated several times at the ends of phrases. This creates [rhythm](#) in the literary piece.

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#### Example #2: *The Soul of Man and Prison Writings* (By Oscar Wilde)

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“Selfishness is not living **as one wishes to live**. It is asking others to live **as one wishes to live ...**”

In this example, the recurring phrase “as one wishes to live” creates rhythm and [cadence](#) in the text, and hence appeals to the readers’ emotions.

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#### Example #3: *The Grapes of Wrath* (By John Steinbeck)

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“Then I’ll be all aroun’ in the dark. I’ll be ever’where – wherever you look. Wherever they’s a fight so hungry people can eat, **I’ll be there**. Wherever they’s a cop beatin’ up a guy, **I’ll be there ...** An’ when our folk eat the stuff they raise an’ live in the houses they build – why, **I’ll be there ...**”

The repeated use of “I’ll be there” lays emphasis and draws the attention of readers to the phrase.

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#### Example #4: *The Tempest* (By William Shakespeare)

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“Hourly joys be still **upon you!** Juno sings her blessings **on you ...** Scarcity and want shall shun you, Ceres’ blessing so is **on you ...**”

Shakespeare has used this device frequently in his works, which can be noticed clearly here as well.

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#### Example #5: *The Holy Bible, Deuteronomy 32:10* (By the prophet Moses)

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“In a desert land he found **him**, in a barren and howling waste.  
He shielded **him** and cared for **him**; he guarded **him** as the apple  
of his eye ...”

Again, in this instance from the Bible, a word is repeated at the end of the sentences to create a pattern and emphasize it.

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**Example #6: *Gift from the Sea* (By Anne Morrow Lindbergh)**

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“Perhaps this is the most important thing for me to take back  
from beach-living: simply the memory that each cycle of the tide  
**is valid**, each cycle of the wave **is valid**, each cycle of a  
relationship **is valid** ... Relationships must be like **islands**, one  
must accept them for what they are here and now, within their  
limits – **islands**, surrounded and interrupted by the sea ...”

Antistrophe examples like the above excerpt draw readers to focus on the repeated words and their meanings.

### **Function of Antistrophe**

The main function of this rhetorical device is to place emphasis on a particular thought or idea. The repetition of words helps in making the text pleasurable to read. Besides poetry, this is a rhetorical device found in a range of works, such as music, literature, political speeches, and sacred texts like the Bible to highlight a point or idea. The pattern and rhythm created with the use of antistrophe enables writers to appeal to readers' emotions, and helps them appreciate a text better.