

Anagram

Anagram Definition

Anagram is a form of word play in which letters of a word or phrase are rearranged in such a way that a new word or phrase is formed.

An anagram is formed by using exactly the same letters of the original word, but with a different arrangement. For example, the letters in the word “Shakespeare” can be rearranged to form a word, “keshareapes.” However, an anagram in literature is not a nonsensical arrangement of words, as in the previous example. Rather, it aims at parodying, criticizing, or praising its subject – the original word. For instance, a famous anagram for “William Shakespeare” is “I am a weakish speller.”

Common Anagram Examples

We play with words in our everyday, life to create anagrams that are funny and witty. Usually, anagrams are most interesting when they are relevant to each other. Some hilarious anagram examples are given below:

Mother-in-law = Hitler woman
Debit card = Bad credit
Dormitory = Dirty room
The earthquakes = The queer shakes
Astronomer = Moon starrer
Punishments = Nine thumps
School master = The classroom

Anagrams to create Pseudonyms

In literature, the use of anagrams is most commonly connected to pseudonyms, where the writers jumble the letters of their original names to create interesting pennames for themselves. Below are some famous examples:

Jim Morrison = Mr. Mojo Risin
Edward Gorey = Ogdred Weary
Dave Barrey = Ray Adverb
Glen Duncen = Declan Gunn
Damon Albarn = Dan Abnormal

Anagrams in Naming Characters

We see anagrams being employed by several writers in titles of their works, and in naming their characters, giving them a touch of wit and mystery.

Look at the examples below:

William Shakespeare's "Hamlet" is an anagram of "Amleth," a Danish prince.

Vladimir Nabokov, in his novel *Lolita*, presents the [character](#) "Vivian Darkbloom," which is an anagram of his own name.

K. Rowling, in her *Harry Potter* series, uses an anagram "I am Lord Voldemort" for her character "Tom Marvolo [Riddle](#)," to reveal the two different identities of the villain.

The two main characters of Libba Bray's [fantasy](#) novel *The Rebel Angels*, use anagrams to give themselves different names: Claire McCleethy – "They Call Me Circe"; Hester Asa Moore – "Sarah Rees-Toome."

Examples of Anagram in Literature

Depending on the topics at hand, writers tend to vary their use of anagrams. Let us see some examples of anagrams in literature:

Example #1: *Da Vinci Code* (By Dan Brown)

In Dan Brown's novel *Da Vinci Code*, the curator of the museum – Jacques Saunière – wrote the following inscription with his blood:

"O, Draconian devil!
Oh, lame saint!
So dark the con of Man"

These were actually the clues related to Leonardo Da Vinci, and were

“O, Draconian devil!” = Leonardo Da Vinci

“Oh, lame saint!” = The Mona Lisa

“So dark the con of Man” = Madonna of the Rocks

In the same novel, we see a character, Leigh Teabing, who is the Holy Grail expert, inventing an apt name for himself by anagramming the names of the authors of *The Holy Blood and The Holy Grail*, Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh, and Henry Lincoln.

Example #2: Gulliver’s Travels (By Jonathan Swift)

Jonathan Swift had an uncanny skill of inventing new and unusual names for his fictitious characters and places by using the anagrammatic method. We find interesting examples of anagrams in Jonathan Swift’s novel “Gulliver’s Travels”.

For instance, “Brobdingnag,” a land occupied by giants, is an anagram of three words: big, grand, and noble (excluding the syllable -le). Similarly, “Tribinia” and “Langden,” the two other kingdoms traveled by Gulliver during his voyage, are anagrams of Britain and England respectively.

Function of Anagram

The above discussion reveals that anagrams are commonly used in both everyday life and literature. They often provide instances of wit and [humor](#). Additionally, this word play presents itself as a recreational activity in the form of word puzzles (cross words, upwords, scrabble, etc.) to sharpen the deciphering skills of kids, as well as adults.

In literature, authors may use anagrams to hide their identity, by coining pseudonyms for themselves, but still giving interesting clues to keen observers. Similarly, the anagrammatic names of characters and places in a literary piece add layers of meaning to the otherwise nonsense names, and therefore further motivate and develop readers’ interest. In mystery or detective novels and short stories, anagrams play a vital role in proving clues to unfold a mystery.