

# Hyperbaton

## Definition of Hyperbaton

Hyperbaton has been derived from a Greek word that means “transposition,” and refers to an [inversion](#) in the arrangement of common words. It can be defined as a rhetorical device in which the writers play with the normal positions of words, phrases, and clauses in order to create differently arranged sentences, which still suggest a similar meaning. Hyperbaton is also known as a broader version of hypallage.

## Similarity with Anastrophe

Hyperbaton is similar to anastrophe, which is the inversion of the natural word order, or reversal of the word arrangement, in a sentence with the aim to create rhetorical effect. Anastrophe is also regarded as a [simile](#) of hyperbaton.

## Features of Hyperbaton

- Words are not arranged in their normal order.
- It is classified as the figure of disorder.
- It is employed for emphasis and rhetorical effect.
- It interrupts the natural flow of sentences.
- It is greatly used as inflected language.

## Examples of Hyperbaton in Literature

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**Example #1:** *Wasteland* (By T. S. Eliot)

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“Winter kept us warm, **covering**  
Earth in *forgetful snow*, **feeding**  
A little life with dried tubers....  
You cannot say, or guess, **for you know only**

A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,  
And the dead tree gives no shelter, **the cricket no relief**,  
And the dry stone **no sound of water**. Only  
There is shadow under this red rock,  
(Come in under the shadow of this red rock) ...”

The preceding excerpt is one of those which are considered as perfect examples of hyperbaton. Here, the natural order has been changed throughout the text. This inflected language interrupts the flow of sentences.

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**Example #2: *Measure for Measure* (By William Shakespeare)**

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“Some rise by sin, and **some by virtue fall** ...”

This is only one of the many hyperbaton examples found in Shakespeare’s works. Here, he uses the unexpected word order, which is “some by virtue fall,” instead of “some fall by virtue.” This disordering of words helps in emphasizing the phrase “virtue fall.”

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**Example #3: *Anyone Lived in a Pretty How Town* (By E. E. Cummings)**

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“**anyone lived in a pretty how town**  
(with up so floating many bells down)  
spring summer autumn winter  
he sang **his didn’t he** danced his did.

Women and men (both little and small)  
**Cared for anyone not at all**  
they sowed their **isn’t they reaped** their same  
sun moon stars rain

children guessed (but only a few  
and **down they forgot** as up they grew ...)

**when by now** and tree by leaf

bird by snow and stir by still  
**anyone's any was all to her**

**someones married their everyones**  
**laughed their cryings** and did their dance  
(sleep wake hope and then) they  
**said their nevers** they slept their dream ...”

This is a very good example of hyperbaton. The words, phrases, and clauses are stressed in an unexpected way. Also, it is creating complex structures of sentences, and aesthetics of [ambiguity](#).

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#### Example #4: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (By William Shakespeare)

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“The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen,  
man's hand is not able to taste, **his tongue to conceive**, nor his  
heart to report, **what my dream was...**”

Here, Shakespeare has employed an unusual and complex word structure. He has transposed the normal word order, such as “his tongue to conceive,” and “what my dream was.”

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#### Example #5: *Julius Caesar* (By William Shakespeare)

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“His coward lips did from their color fly  
And that same eye whose **bend doth awe** the world  
Did lose his luster. I did hear him groan,  
Ay, and that **tongue of his that** bade the Romans  
Mark him and write his speeches in their books.”

Here, Shakespeare plays with the natural position of words, giving depth to the sentence structure. The purpose is to emphasize the phrase, as it gives a sudden turn in the sentence.

### Function of Hyperbaton

Hyperbaton is employed in literary writing, poetry, film, and all other mediums of visual or textual form. It creates startling and sometimes confusing effects, despite being used as inflected language.

In rhyming and metered poems, hyperbaton is employed to fit a sentence into the structure of a poem properly. Besides, when hyperbaton is used properly in sentences, it can result in emphasis at the desired place. Also, the unconventional placement of words and phrases results in intriguing and complex sentence structures.