

Antanaclasis

Definition of Antanaclasis

Antanaclasis is a rhetorical device in which a phrase or word is repeatedly used, though the meaning of the word changes in each case. It is the [repetition](#) of a similar word in a sentence with different meanings, or a word is repeated in two or more different senses. Many of Shakespeare's literary pieces contain examples of antanaclasis. Like in these lines, "Put out the light, then put out the light..." (*Othello*). The first meaning is that Othello would extinguish the candle, and in the second reference its meaning is that he would end Desdemona's life.

Difference Between Epizeuxis and Antanaclasis

There is a slight difference between [epizeuxis](#) and antanaclasis, though both mean the repetition of words. In epizeuxis, the words or phrases are repeated in a succession in the same sentence or line. Such as in this passage, "**Alone, alone, all all alone, /Alone** on a **wide, wide** sea..." (*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, by Samuel Coleridge).

The words or phrases are repeated in a sentence or passage with different meanings. Such as, "I will **dissemble** myself in't; and I would I were the first that ever **dissembled** in such a gown." (*Twelfth Night*, by William Shakespeare). In this case, the first meaning of dissemble is disguised, and the second meaning is to act hypocritically.

Examples of Antanaclasis in Literature

Example #1: *Twelfth Night* (By William Shakespeare)

Viola: "Save thee, friend, and thy music! Dost thou **live** by thy tabour?"

Clown: “No, sir, I **live** by the church.”

Viola: “Art thou a churchman?”

Clown: “No such matter, sir: I do **live** by the church; for I do **live** at my house, and my house doth stand by the church.”

In this example, the word “live” is repeatedly used. Viola is Cesario in disguise, and conversing with Feste (Fool). In the first sentence, it means that he makes his living by playing the drum, and in the later lines it means he lives near the church.

Example #2: *Walter Savage Landor* (By Walter Savage Landor)

“Death, tho I see him not, is near
And grudges me my eightieth year.
Now I would give him all these last
For one that fifty have run past.
Ah! He **strikes** all things, all alike,
But bargains: those he will not **strike**...”

Landor has used, in the final two lines of the poem, the word “strike,” with contrasting meanings. In the first instance, it means killing everyone and everything, while in the second reference it means the opposite.

Example #3: *Stopping By Woods on Snowy Evening* (By Robert Frost)

“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**.”

Here, the poet uses antanaclosis in the last two lines of the poem. The first use of the word “sleep” means nocturnal rest, and in the last line it has the meaning of death. This device is helping to draw the readers’ attention.

Example #4: *Henry V* (By William Shakespeare)

King Henry:

“And tell the pleasant prince this **mock** of his
Hath turned his balls to gun-stones, and his soul
Shall stand sore chargèd for the wasteful vengeance
That shall fly with them; for many a thousand widows
Shall this his **mock mock out** of their dear husbands,
Mock mothers from their sons, **mock** castles down,
And some are yet ungotten and unborn
That shall have cause to curse the Dauphin’s scorn...”

Henry V, as one can see in the above excerpt, is one of Shakespeare’s works which contains examples of antanaclasis. The word “mock,” repeatedly used in this excerpt, has two meanings – “to cheat,” and “to taunt.”

Function of Antanaclasis

Antanaclasis helps in giving an exciting [contrast](#) with different meanings of the same word. It enhances the dramatic and persuasive impact of a piece of writing or speech. Antanaclasis creates comic effect when used in the form of [irony](#) and pun. Apart from that, it makes the literary text memorable due to repetition. It is used as a rhetorical device in poetry, [prose](#), and political speeches. Political leaders make use of this technique in order to persuade and draw the attention of their audiences.