

Amplification

Definition of Amplification

Amplification is a rhetorical device writers use to embellish a sentence or statement by adding further information. The objective is to increase readability and worth of the statement or sentence. They usually use it when a simple sentence is abrupt, and cannot convey the desired implications. Writers then use amplification to make structural additions, and give further meanings by describing and repeating a certain statement or idea. The purpose of this rhetorical device is to bring the readers' attention to an idea, which they may miss otherwise.

Examples of Amplification in Literature

Example #1: *Our Mutual Friend* (by Charles Dickens)

“Mr. and Mrs. Veneering were bran-new people in a bran-new house in a bran-new quarter of London. Everything about the Veneerings was spick and span new. All their furniture was new, all their friends were new, all their servants were new, their place was new, ... their harness was new, their horses were new, their pictures were new, they themselves were new, they were as newly-married as was lawfully compatible with their having a bran-new baby ...”

In this excerpt, Dickens amplifies the phrase “bran-new,” and then describes it further by giving more details about everything, such as furniture, friends, servants, place, horses, pictures, etc.

Example #2: *Northern Exposure* (by Chris Stevens)

“Goethe’s final words: ‘More light.’ Ever since we crawled out of that primordial slime, that’s been our unifying cry: ‘More light.’ Sunlight. Torchlight. Candlelight. Neon. Incandescent ... Light is [metaphor](#). Thy word is a lamp unto my feet. Rage, rage against the dying of the light. Lead, Kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom, Lead Thou me on! The night is dark, and I am far from home — Lead Thou me on! Arise, shine, for thy light has come. Light is knowledge. Light is life. Light is light.”

You can notice that emphasis is on the “light” in the excerpt given above. Moving on from literal meaning to the metaphorical meaning of the light, the [speaker](#) is describing the purpose of light in human lives.

Example #3: *The Twits* (by Roald Dahl)

“If a person has ugly thoughts, it begins to show on the face. And when that person has ugly thoughts every day, every week, every year, the face gets uglier and uglier until you can hardly bear to look at it.

A person who has good thoughts cannot ever be ugly. You can have a wonky nose and a crooked mouth and a double chin and stick-out teeth, but if you have good thoughts it will shine out of your face like sunbeams and you will always look lovely.”

Here in this excerpt, Dahl elaborates to explain in depth the way an ugly person can turn out to be uglier, and how a beautiful person remains beautiful, despite having physical imperfections.

Example #4: *All Stories Are True* (by John Edgar Wideman)

“A massive tree centuries old holds out against the odds here across from my mother’s house, one of the biggest trees in Pittsburgh, anchored in a green tangle of weeds and bushes, trunk thick as a Buick, black as night after rain soaks its striated hide... If it ever tore loose from its moorings, it would crush her

In this example, John Edgar Wideman gives an expanded and enriched description of a huge old tree. He repeatedly describes how it has anchored itself along with weeds and bushes against his mother's house.

Example #5: *The Scarlet Letter* (by Nathaniel Hawthorne)

“It is a little remarkable, that—though disinclined to talk over much of myself and my affairs at the fireside, and to my personal friends—an autobiographical impulse should twice in my life have taken possession of me, in addressing the public.”

This introduction by Nathaniel Hawthorne in his famous novel, *The Scarlett Letter*, uses amplification. The speaker explains that he is resolved to write his [autobiography](#). Instead of telling it simply, he uses in-depth language to add the main idea into it.

Function of Amplification

By using amplification, writers repeat something they already have said with the purpose to add more information and details to the original description. In writing and speech, amplification tends to highlight the importance of an idea, to stimulate an emotional response among the [audience](#). In fact, it adds an [exaggeration](#), increases the rhetorical effect, and emphasizes to further elaborate definitions, descriptions, and arguments in a piece. Amplification also highlights the persuasive aspects of an idea by elaborating the reason why it needs to be considered. Besides, in creative writing, it draws readers' attention to the most vivid, thought provoking, and compelling parts of a [narrative](#).