

Monosyllable

Definition of Monosyllable

A monosyllable is an utterance or a word having only one syllable. It has originated from a Greek word “monosyllable,” which simply means “one syllable.” In fact, monosyllable is an unbroken sound or a single sound that makes up a complete word. For example, in the [sentence](#), “For what do we live, but to make sport for our neighbors, and laugh at them in our turn?” (*Pride and Prejudice*, by Jane Austen), Jane Austen has used all monosyllables, with the exception of “neighbors.”

Common Use of Monosyllable

And God has said, “Let there be light.”
Please wait for him.
I need this book right now.
Do not go there.
Would you please pass that cup of tea to me?
Small words can be crisp and to the point, like a knife.

Examples of Monosyllables in Literature

Example #1: *King John* (by William Shakespeare)

“Good friend, thou hast no cause to say so yet;
But thou shalt have; and creep time ne’er so slow,
Yet it shall come, for me to do thee good.
I had a thing to say. But let it go.”

All words are monosyllabic in these lines. The monosyllables are not creating monotony, but emphasizing the words through stressed and unstressed effects.

Example #2: *Festus* (by Philip James Bailey)

“Life’s more than breath, and the quick round of blood –
We live in deeds, not years; in thoughts, not breaths –
We should count time by heart-throbs. He most lives
Who thinks most – feels the noblest – acts the best.
Life’s but a means unto an end.”

This is another good example of monosyllabic words. The whole passage contains monosyllabic words with stressed and unstressed patterns.

Example #3: *Raven* (by Edgar Allan Poe)

“By the grave and stern decorum of the countenance it wore,
Though thy crest be shorn and shaven, thou,” I said, “art sure no
craven ...
But the Raven, sitting lonely on the placid bust, spoke only
That one word, as if his soul in that one word he did outpour.”

In this instance, Poe has used some monosyllabic words as underlined. They are adding rhythm and flow to the text.

Example #4: *Hamlet* (by William Shakespeare)

“To be, or not to be? That is the question —
No more — and by a sleep to say we end ...
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come.”

This passage has used all monosyllabic words, with the exception of the word “question.” This creates some ambiguity. In the first line, for instance, Hamlet is unable to decide whether he is stressing the word “that” over “is,” or “to be,” over “not.” The first two lines are highly effective in their impact.

Example #5: *Paradise Lost* (by John Milton)

“That we must change for Heav’n, this mournful gloom
For that celestial light? Be it so, since he ...
A mind not to be chang’d by Place or Time.
The mind is its own place, and in it self
What matter where, if I be still the same,
And what I should be, all but less then he.”

Milton has emphasized all the words in these lines. He has contracted a two syllable word “heaven,” transforming it into a monosyllabic word, “heav’n.”

Example #6: *Tyger Tyger* (by William Blake)

“Dare its deadly terrors clasp!
When the stars threw down their spears
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?...
In the forests of the night.”

Blake has used monosyllabic words throughout this entire text. It has both stressed as well as unstressed words, giving rhythmic flow to the reading and musical quality to the verses.

Function of Monosyllable

Monosyllabic words, or simply “monosyllables,” are either accented or unaccented. They give power to a poet to add stressed or unstressed effects in his verses. This addition of stressed and unstressed syllables in a sequence brings flow and melody in poetry. Other than this, monosyllables also bring musicality in prose. It is because they are easy to pronounce, easy to read, and above all, easy to comprehend. In fact, monosyllables provide writers handy tools to reach their target audience, and make reading their works comfortable, enjoyable, and easy. Writers and poets both use monosyllables to create high- and low-pitched musical quality in

