

Anaphora

Anaphora Definition

In writing or speech, the deliberate [repetition](#) of the first part of the sentence in order to achieve an artistic effect is known as Anaphora.

Anaphora, possibly the oldest literary device, has its roots in Biblical Psalms used to emphasize certain words or phrases. Gradually, Elizabethan and Romantic writers brought this device into practice. Examine the following psalm:

“O LORD, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.
Have mercy upon me, O LORD; for I am weak: O LORD, heal me; for my bones are vexed.
My soul is also sore vexed: but thou, O LORD, how long?”

The repetition of the phrase “O Lord,” attempts to create a spiritual sentiment. This is anaphora.

Common Anaphora Examples

It is common for us to use anaphora in our everyday speech, to lay emphasis on the idea we want to convey, or for self affirmation. The following are anaphora examples:

“**Every** day, **every** night, in **every** way, I am getting better and better.”
“**My life** is my purpose. **My life** is my goal. **My life** is my inspiration.”
“Buying diapers for **the baby**, feeding **the baby**, playing with **the baby**: This is what your life is when you have **a baby**.”
“I want my money **right** now, **right** here, all **right**?”
“The **wrong person** was selected for the **wrong job**, at the **wrong time**, for the **wrong purpose**.”

“Their property **was sold**, their homestead **was sold**, and their everything **was sold** for want.”

“**Who is to** blame, **who is to** look to, **who is to** turn to, in a tough situation like this.”

“In adversity, his close friends **left him**, his close colleagues **left him**, and his best close relatives **left him**.”

“**Everything looked** dark and bleak, **everything looked** gloomy, and **everything** was under a blanket of mist.”

“**All the people were** moving in the same direction; **all the people were** thinking about the same thing; and **all the people were** discussing the same topic.”

“After a long term of studies, the students **wanted** to go home, they **wanted** to play, and they **wanted** to meet their parents and friends.”

“**The players** were much exited for the tour; **the players** wished to do a lot of shopping; **the players** planned to go sightseeing.”

“**The young writer** was given the award for his best seller. **The young writer** was exited to get the reward, and he decided to celebrate the occasion in a fitting manner.”

“**Tell them to** be good, **tell them to** follow their elders, and **tell them to** mind their manners.”

“The young athlete was in a decent uniform, and wanted to perform very well.”

“My mother liked the house very much, but she couldn’t buy it.”

“An apple fell on the head of a peasant, but he couldn’t grasp the laws of motion.”

“The search party barely got to the middle of the desert, when a storm overtook it.”

“The film was based on a true story, but it failed to get viewers’ attention.”

Examples of Anaphora in Literature

Example # 1: *Richard II*, Act 2, Scene 1 (By William Shakespeare)

“This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England,
This nurse, this teeming womb of royal kings [. . .]
This land of such dear souls, this dear dear land,”

Here, Shakespeare does not disappoint us in the use of anaphora. The repetition of the word “this” creates an emotional effect on the readers, particularly those who are English. Further, it highlights the significance of

attachment to the land, and expects to elicit a similar response from the readers as well.

Example # 2: *A Tale of Two Cities* (By Charles Dickens)

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair.”

The repetitive structure used in the above lines make it the most memorable and remarkable start of a [narrative](#) ever achieved by a writer. The word “it” – repeated all the way through the passage – makes the reader focus more on the traits of the “age” they are reading about.

Example # 3: *Tintern Abbey* (By William Wordsworth)

This technique is employed by William Wordsworth in “*Tintern Abbey*”:

“Five years have passed;
Five summers, with the length of
Five long winters! and again I hear these waters...”

Wordsworth also employs the technique of anaphora in this piece. The repetition of the word “five” at the beginning of each line gives melody to the lines, which matches well with its nostalgic tone.

Example # 4: *The Tyger* (By William Blake)

“What the hammer? what the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?”

The repetition of a series of questions, which starts with the query, “what,” creates a [rhythm](#) that elicits the effect of awe in readers.

Politicians frequently use anaphora as a rhetorical device, in their addresses and political speeches, to evoke passion among the [audience](#). Read an excerpt from Winston Churchill's speech during the Second World War:

“We shall not flag or fail. **We shall** go on to the end. **We shall** fight in France, **we shall** fight on the seas and oceans, **we shall** fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, **we shall** defend our island, whatever the cost may be, **we shall** fight on the beaches, **we shall** fight on the landing grounds, **we shall** fight in the fields and in the streets, **we shall** fight in the hills. **We shall** never surrender.”

This extract from Winston Churchill's speech is full of anaphoric examples in which the [speaker](#) has spoken the phrase “we shall” several times to refer to the plural form that he is using for the whole nation.

The repetitive structures in the above passage suggest the importance of the war for England. Moreover, it inspires patriotic sentiments among the masses.

Example # 6: *I have a Dream* (By Martin Luther King Jr.)

“Go back to Mississippi, go back to Alabama, **go back to** South Carolina, **go back to** Georgia, **go back to** Louisiana, **go back to** the slums and ghettos of our northern cities, knowing that somehow this situation can and will be changed.”

This extract from I have a Dream contains the repetition of the phrase “go back to” many time. The whole speech is full of the anaphoric example.

Function of Anaphora

Apart from the function of giving prominence to certain ideas, the use of anaphora in literature adds rhythm, thus making it more pleasurable to read, and easier to remember. As a literary device, anaphora serves the purpose of giving artistic effect to passages of [prose](#) and poetry.

As a rhetorical device, anaphora is used to appeal to the emotions of the audience. in order to persuade. inspire. motivate. and encourage them.

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