

Epiphora

Definition of Epiphora

Epiphora, also known as “[epistrophe](#),” is a stylistic device in which a word or a phrase is repeated at the ends of successive clauses. Examples of epiphora are not only found in literary pieces, but debates and persuasive writings are also rich with epiphora examples.

Epiphora and Anaphora

Epiphora is an exact counterpart of another [figure of speech](#), [anaphora](#). An anaphora is [repetition](#) of the *first part* of successive sentences, whereas in an epiphora repetition occurs in the *last part* of successive clauses and sentences. For example, “**Every** day, **every** night, in **every** way, I am getting better and better” is an example of anaphora, as the word “every” is repeated in the successive clauses.

The sentence, “I am an **American**, he is an **American**, and everybody here is an **American**,” exhibits epiphora, as the repetition is in the last part of the successive clauses. Despite being different in their structures, both anaphora and epiphora have the same function of laying emphasis on a particular point.

Examples of Epiphora in Literature

Example #1: *The Tempest* (By William Shakespeare)

“Hourly joys be still upon **you**! Juno sings her blessings on **you** ...
Scarcity and want shall shun **you**, Ceres’ blessing so is on **you**.”

Here, Shakespeare wants to convey the importance of “you” through the use of epiphora.

Example #2: *Romeo and Juliet* (By William Shakespeare)

“Fie, fie, thou shamest **thy shape, thy love, thy wit**,
Which, like a userer, abound’st in all,
And uses none in that true sense indeed
Which should bedeck **thy shape, thy love, thy wit.**”

Again, Shakespeare is at his best in using epiphora, as the phrase “thy shape, thy love, thy wit” comes twice within four lines. It puts much emphasis on three of Romeo’s attributes. Friar Laurence is at his best when he speaks this [dialogue](#).

Example #3: *Merchant of Venice* (By William Shakespeare)

BASSANIO:

“Sweet Portia,
If you did know to whom **I gave the ring**,
If you did know for whom **I gave the ring**
And would conceive for what **I gave the ring**
And how unwillingly I left **the ring**,
When nought would be accepted but **the ring**,
You would abate the strength of your displeasure.”

PORTIA:

“If you had known the virtue of **the ring**,
Or half her worthiness that gave **the ring**,
Or your own honor to contain **the ring**,
You would not then have parted with **the ring.**”

Shakespeare played with the phrase “the ring” in his famous play *The Merchant of Venice*. He makes both of his characters use the same phrase again and again in their dialogues.

Example #4: *King Henry VI* (By William Shakespeare)

“Then, since this earth affords no joy to me
But to command, to check, to o’erbear such
As are of better person than myself,
I’ll make my heaven to dream upon the **crown**;
And, whiles I live, to account this world but hell,
Until my mis-shap’d trunk that bears this head
Be round impaled with a glorious **crown**.
And yet I know not how to get the **crown**,
For many lives stand between me and home.”

Shakespeare plays with the word “crown,” to emphasize his point here that it is important for the [speaker](#).

Example #5: *Merchant of Venice* (By William Shakespeare)

“I’m **a Pepper**, he’s **a Pepper**, she’s **a Pepper**, we’re **a Pepper**.
Wouldn’t you like to be **a Pepper**, too? Dr. Pepper.”

This is an advertising jingle for the Dr. Pepper soft drink. The phrase “a Pepper” has been repeated in all the phrases, to emphasize the point for consumers that they must join the Dr. Pepper [bandwagon](#).

Function of Epiphora

Epiphora, or epistrophe, is a literary device that serves the function of furnishing an artistic effect to passages, in both poetry and [prose](#). It lays emphasis on a particular idea, as well as giving a unique [rhythm](#) to the text, which consequently becomes a pleasurable experience for the readers. That is the reason that it is easily understood and memorized, and easier to comprehend. As a rhetorical or stylistic device, epiphora is brought into action to appeal to the emotions of the [audience](#) in order to persuade them.