

# Diacope

## Definition of Diacope

Diacope has originated from a Greek work *thiakhop*, which means “to cut into two.” This literary device is a [repetition](#) of a phrase or word, broken up by other intervening words. For instance, a very popular example of diacope is in William Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, “to be, or not to be!” In this line, you can notice that the [speaker](#) has repeated the phrase “to be,” which is separated by another phrase “or not.” This is called diacope.

## Popular use of Diacope

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### Example #1: *The Roar* (by Katy Perry)

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“You held me down, but I got up”  
You hear my [voice](#), you hear that sound ...  
You held me down, but I got up  
Get ready 'cause I've had enough  
I see it all, I see it now”

In this song, the phrase “You held me down,” lays emphasis on main idea, which is confidence and strength in the time of adversity. Then, the repetition of the phrase “you hear” and “I see it” gives [rhythm](#) to the song.

## Types of Diacope

There are two types of diacope:

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### Vocative diacope

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This type of diacope just repeats a phrase or word for emphasis such as:

“**The horror!** Oh, **the horror!**”

Repetition in this line is on the phrase “the horror,” which emphasizes how horrific something is! It also shows how a [character](#) is mentally overwhelmed.

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## Elaborative diacope

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This version of diacope repeats a phrase or word with an additional description or adjective that describes, clarifies, or further lays emphasis on a particular aspect of the thing or subject such as:

“He is standing with a lovely woman. A **tall, well-dressed and beautiful** woman.”

Here elaborative diacope adds further clarity to the appearance of a woman: tall, well-dressed and beautiful.

## Examples of Diacope in Literature

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### Example #1: *Antony and Cleopatra* (by William Shakespeare)

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“Cleopatra: O sun,  
Burn the great sphere thou movest in!  
darkling stand  
The varying shore o’ the world. O **Antony**,  
**Antony, Antony! Help**, Charmian, **help**, Iras, **help**;  
**Help**, friends below; let’s draw him hither ...

“Antony: I am **dying**, Egypt, **dying**; only  
I here importune death awhile...”

This is a very good example of vocative diacope, where Cleopatra is repeating the words “Antony,” “help,” and “dying,” which are shown in bold, for emphasis.

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### Example #2: *Deep Thoughts* (by Jack Handey)

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“I can picture in my mind **a world without war, a world without hate**. And I can picture us attacking that world, because they’d never expect it.”

This is another example of vocative diacope in which the author has repeated the phrase “a world without” to emphasize the world.

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#### Example #3: *The Life that I Have* (by Leo Marks)

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“And the life **that I have**  
**Is yours.**  
The love **that I have**  
Of the life **that I have**  
**Is yours** and **yours** and **yours.**  
Yet death will be but a pause ...  
In the long green grass  
Will be **yours** and **yours** and **yours.**”

Here are two phrases “that I have” and “yours” the poet repeats to highlight love of a lover for the loved one. It also adds rhythm to the lines.

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#### Example #4: *Growing Up* (by Russell Baker)

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“He wore **prim** vested suits with neckties blocked **primly** against the collar buttons of his **primly** starched white shirts. He had a **primly** pointed jaw, a **primly** straight nose, and a **prim** manner of speaking that was so correct, so gentlemanly, that he seemed a comic antique.”

In the excerpt given above, the author has used elaborative diacope using a word “primly” to emphasize and illustrate man’s primness that he is prim in looks, actions and dressing, etc.

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#### Example #5: *A Child is Born* (by Stephen Vincent Benet)

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**“Life is not lost** by dying! **Life is lost**  
**Minute** by **minute**, **day** by dragging **day**,  
In all the thousand, small uncaring ways.”

In the first sentence, the phrase “Life is not lost” is followed by same phrase “Life is lost,” which is an instance of elaborative diacope. The author has re-defined and clarified it. Another repetition is on the words “minute” and “day,” which emphasizes passing of time.

### **Function of Diacope**

Diacope is frequently used in writing, advertising, slogans, catch-phrases, speeches, TV shows, and music, as well as in movie scripts. Its purpose is to describe, specify, and emphasize an idea or subject. Writers often use diacope to express their strong emotions, and to draw attention towards repeated phrase or words. It also serves to make a phrase memorable and rhythmic.