

FIGURES OF SPEECH AND RHETORIC

Rhetorical Devices

Style is part of classical rhetoric and a number of rhetorical devices are worth considering in any analysis of style. For the analysis of literature a knowledge of rhetorical devices is indispensable, since there is often a considerable density of rhetorical figures and tropes which are important generators and qualifiers of meaning and effect, particularly in the case in poetry. The analysis of the use of imagery is especially important for any kind of study of literary texts.

Figures of speech in classical rhetoric were defined as “a form of speech artfully varied from common usage” (Quintilian, *Inst. Orat.* IX.i.2). The forms of figurative languages are divided into two main groups: **schemes** (or figures) and **tropes**.

Rhetorical schemes describe the arrangement of individual sounds ([phonological schemes](#)), the arrangement of words ([morphological schemes](#)), and sentence structure ([syntactical schemes](#)).

Rhetorical tropes are devices of [figurative language](#). They represent a deviation from the common or main significance of a word or phrase (semantic figures) or include specific appeals to the audience (pragmatic figures).

SOUNDS

Example

alliteration
onomatopoeia

Cheyenne and Sheridan will surely share their shoulder pads.
Moouoo! (Quack?)

WORDS

anaphora
chiasmus
synchysis
tmesis

I do not like green eggs and ham, I do not like them Sam I Am.
always helpful and disrespectful never
the unforgiving anger of cruel Juno
what-the hell-ever

SENTENCES

asyndeton
enjambment
hyperbaton
polysyndeton

I did this, this, this, this, this to make my parents happy.
two-line sentence
I finished, although it took half the night, the homework.
I did that and that and that and that and that for them.

EXPRESSIONS

apostrophe
hyperbole
litotes
metaphor
metonymy
personification
rhetorical question

I am discussing indirect questions (and you know how hard they are to spot).
Indirect questions are as rare as hen's teeth.
I don't think many of them were all that upset about the indirect question.
Indirect questions are the bane of my existence.
The pen is mightier than the sword.
AP Latin is a harsh taskmaster.
Do I look like an idiot?

simile

Indirect questions are like zebras.

Schemes: Sound-level

Alliteration:

the repetition of the same letter or sound in sequence

Let us go forth to lead the land we love. J. F. Kennedy, Inaugural

Viri validis cum viribus luctant. Ennius

Veni, vidi, vici. Caesar

tum victu revocant viris. Vergil

Onomatopóia:

use of words to imitate natural sounds; accommodation of sound to sense

At tuba terribili sonitu taratantara dixit. Ennius

magno cum murmure montis. Vergil

Schemes: Word-level

Anáphora:

the repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of successive phrases, clauses or lines

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. Churchill.

Nihil agis, nihil moliris, nihil cogitas, quod non ego non modo audiam, sed etiam videam planeque sentiam. Cicero

mirantur dona Aeneae, mirantur Iulum. Vergil

Chiásmus:

two pairs arranged not in parallels (a-b-a-b) but in inverted order (a-b-b-a); from shape of the Greek letter chi (X)

Those gallant men will remain often in my thoughts and in my prayers always. MacArthur

Renown'd for conquest, and in council skill'd. Addison

Ilionea petit dextrā laevāque serestum. Vergil

Sýnchysis:

interlocked word order.

Saevae memorem Junonis iram. Vergil

The unforgiving anger of cruel Juno

Tmésis:

separation of the parts of a compound word by one or more intervening words

Quaecumque terrae vocant me = Quae me cumque vocant terrae

Schemes: Sentence-Level

Asyndeton:

lack of conjunctions between coordinate phrases, clauses, or words

We shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardships, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty. J. F. Kennedy, Inaugural

But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. Lincoln, Gettysburg Address

Enjambment:

A sentence running over from one line to another, so that related words fall in different lines.

Hyperbaton:

The violent displacement of words; a dislocation where phrases or words that belong together are separated.

per omnis te deos oro

I got, so far as the immediate moment was concerned, away.
James, The Turn of the Screw

Polysyndeton:

the repetition of conjunctions in a series of coordinate words, phrases, or clauses

I said, "Who killed him?" and he said, "I don't know who killed him but he's dead all right," and it was dark and there was water standing in the street and no lights and windows broke and boats all up in the town and trees blown down and everything all blown and I got a skiff and went out and found my boat where I had her inside Mango Bay and she was all right only she was full of water. Hemingway, After the Storm

omnia Mercurio similis, vocemque coloremque
et crinis flavos et membra decora iuventae Vergil

Tropes

Apóstrophe:

a sudden turn from the general audience to address, usually in the second person, a specific group or person

For Brutus, as you know, was Caesar's angel. Judge, O you gods, how dearly Caesar loved him. Shakespeare, Julius Caesar

Hypérbole:

exaggeration for emphasis or for rhetorical effect

My vegetable love should grow
Vaster than empires, and more slow;
An hundred years should go to praise
Thine eyes and on thine forehead gaze;
Two hundred to adore each breast,
But thirty thousand to the rest. Andrew Marvell, "To His Coy Mistress"

Da mi basia mille, deinde centum,
Dein mille altera, dein secunda centum,
Deinde usque altera mille, deinde centum. Catullus

Praeruptus aquae mons. Vergil

Litotes:

understatement, for intensification, by denying the contrary of the thing being affirmed. (Sometimes used synonymously with meiosis.)

A few unannounced quizzes are not inconceivable.

War is not healthy for children and other living things.

One nuclear bomb can ruin your whole day. (meiosis)

Métaphor:

implied comparison achieved through a figurative use of words; the word is used not in its literal sense, but in one analogous to it

Life's but a walking shadow; a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage. Shakespeare, Macbeth

From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the continent. W. Churchill

Metonymy:

substitution of one word for another which it suggests

He is a man of the cloth.

The pen is mightier than the sword.

Ceres = goddess of grain = grain

Persónification:

attribution of personality to an impersonal thing

England expects every man to do his duty. Lord Nelson

fuge crudelis terras, fuge litus avarum. Vergil

Símile:

an explicit comparison between two things using 'like' or 'as'

My love is as a fever, longing still
For that which longer nurseth the disease, Shakespeare, Sonnet CXLVII

Let us go then, you and I,
While the evening is spread out against the sky,
Like a patient etherized upon a table... T.S. Eliot, The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock