

Lesson 1 on Rhetorical Devices

Repetition (1)

ANAPHORA

Anaphora is the rhetorical device that involves the repetition of beginning words in successive phrases, clauses or sentences. The device can be used effectively in either poetry or prose for emphasis. In the following excerpt from President George W. Bush's Inaugural Speech, the word *if* is repeated at the beginning of successive sentences. This repetition emphasizes the importance for America's leaders to take an active part in resolving domestic and foreign problems.

Example of Anaphora

But the stakes for America are never small. *If* our country does not lead the cause of freedom, it will not be led. *If* we do not turn the hearts of children toward knowledge and character, we will lose their gifts and undermine their idealism. *If* we permit our economy to drift and decline, the vulnerable will suffer most.

—from George W. Bush's Inaugural Speech (2001)

EPISTROPHE

Epistrophe is the rhetorical device that involves the repetition of ending words in successive phrases, clauses or sentences. The device can be used effectively in either poetry or prose for emphasis. In the example below, excerpted from Book 8 of John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, the word *lost* is repeated at the end of two successive phrases found in line 5. In the passage, Adam is musing on Eve's fall—she has been beguiled by the serpent and eaten of the forbidden fruit. With the use epistrophe, not only is Eve's fallen state emphasized, but also Adam's emotional state is suggested: he is overwhelmed and in despair. Note the other rhetorical and poetic devices in the passage such as alliteration—*Defaced, deflowered*, and now to *Death devote*. Again, Eve's fallen state is underscored by the effect; however, it is possible that Milton is suggesting the act of weeping with the “double” alliteration of the “d” and “f” sounds, suggesting that Adam is in deep lamentation over the state that both he and his wife have fallen into.

Example of Epistrophe

O fairest of Creation, last and best
Of all Gods Works, Creature in whom excelled
Whatever can to fight or thought be found,
Holy, divine, good, amiable, or sweet!
How art thou *lost*, how on a sudden *lost*,
Defaced, deflowered, and now to Death devote?

—from John Milton, *Paradise Lost*

SYMPLOCE AND EPANALEPSIS

Similar to epanalepsis, *Symploce* is the rhetorical device that involves the repetition of both beginning and ending words in successive phrases, clauses or sentences. The device can be used effectively in either poetry or prose for emphasis. In the following example, the words “when we” are repeated in the beginning and the words “we are humbled” are repeated at the conclusion. Epanalepsis involves a repetition of words at the beginning and ending of a phrase or clause.

Example of Symploce

When we scan the endless universe, we are humbled; when we scan, with honesty, our own moral being, we are humbled; and when we get a glimpse of eternity and our minuscule part in it, we are humbled.

Examples of Epanalepsis

“The ship was lost” he said “the ship was lost!”

—Alfred Tennyson, *Enoch Arden*

Nothing will come of nothing.

—King Lear in William Shakespeare’s *King Lear*