

Double Entendre Examples In Literature

IDIOMS & PHRASES

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

DOUBLE ENTENDRE

MEANING

The meaning of this phrase is that a word or sentence has a double meaning. Often the meaning of the sentence will be perfectly innocent and its 'double entendre' will be something slightly rude or comical.

ORIGIN


This is a term which originates from the French language and literally translates to 'double hear.' The term was first used in English in the 17th century and was particularly apt to its meaning as at the time, the Brits considered all things French to be slightly risqué.


EXAMPLES

- He is a master of the pun and the **double entendre**.
- I found none of the **double entendres** in Whiplash Whispers funny, and the illustrations were a bit tasteless.
- It was funny surely, because it dissolved that secret source of female power into a **double entendre**.

CONVERSATION

Person 1: "I went to see that new comedian last night."
Person 2: "How was he?"
Person 1: "The show was excellent, full of **double entendre**."





Double entendre examples in literature serve as a fascinating lens through which readers can explore deeper meanings and complexities in texts. A double entendre is a figure of speech in which a phrase can be understood in two different ways, one of which is often risqué or ironic. This literary device has been employed by writers across various genres and periods, enriching their narratives and dialogues with wit, humor, and layered meanings. In this article, we will explore the nature of double entendre, its historical significance, various examples from renowned literary works, and its impact on modern literature.

Understanding Double Entendre

To fully appreciate double entendre in literature, it is essential to understand its definition and purpose.

Definition

A double entendre is a word or phrase that has two meanings, where one is typically more

straightforward and the other is often implicit or suggestive. This duality can create humor, irony, or sarcasm, and it often invites the audience to engage more deeply with the text.

Purpose in Literature

The use of double entendre serves several purposes in literature:

1. Wit and Humor: It can add a layer of humor, making the text more engaging.
2. Character Development: Through double entendre, authors reveal character traits and relationships.
3. Social Commentary: It allows writers to comment on societal norms and taboos subtly.
4. Engagement: Readers are prompted to think critically and explore the text for deeper meanings.

Historical Context of Double Entendre

Double entendre has roots in classical literature and continues to be a popular device in contemporary writing. Its historical context highlights how the device has evolved over time.

Classical Literature

In classical literature, double entendre was often used in plays and poetry.

- Aristophanes: The ancient Greek playwright frequently utilized double entendre in his comedies, where humor often revolved around sexual innuendos.
- Shakespeare: William Shakespeare is perhaps the most famous user of double entendre. His plays are replete with clever wordplay that allows for multiple interpretations, often with sexual connotations.

Renaissance and Enlightenment

During the Renaissance and Enlightenment, double entendre continued to flourish.

- John Milton: In "Paradise Lost," Milton employs double entendre to explore themes of temptation and desire.
- Alexander Pope: In "The Rape of the Lock," Pope's use of double entendre highlights the frivolity and vanity of high society.

Modern Literature

In modern literature, double entendre takes on new forms and themes.

- James Joyce: In "Ulysses," Joyce's use of language is rich with double meanings that challenge readers' perceptions.
- T.S. Eliot: Eliot's poetry often contains layers of meaning, where double entendre plays a crucial role in revealing the complexities of modern life.

Examples of Double Entendre in Literature

Now, let's delve into specific examples of double entendre from various literary works.

William Shakespeare

Shakespeare's works are a treasure trove of double entendre. Here are a few notable examples:

1. "A Midsummer Night's Dream":
 - In the play, the character Puck says, "Lord, what fools these mortals be!" The line can be interpreted as a commentary on human folly, but it also carries a subtext about the foolishness of love, which is further complicated by the magical events of the play.
2. "Romeo and Juliet":
 - In Act 1, Scene 4, Mercutio's famous "Queen Mab" speech serves as a complex double entendre. While it addresses dreams, it also critiques the romantic ideals held by the characters, indicating that love can be deceptive.

Jane Austen

Jane Austen's novels often contain clever uses of double entendre:

1. "Pride and Prejudice":
 - The character Mr. Collins proposes to Elizabeth Bennet, stating, "My reasons for marrying are, first, that I think it a right thing for every clergyman in easy circumstances...to set the example of matrimony in his parish." This statement can be interpreted as a serious reasoning, but it also reveals his superficial and pompous character.
2. "Emma":
 - In conversations between Emma and Mr. Knightley, their playful banter often includes double entendres that hint at their romantic feelings while maintaining a veneer of social propriety.

Mark Twain

Mark Twain's works are filled with humor and double meanings:

1. "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn":

- Twain often uses dialect and colloquialisms that can have multiple interpretations. For instance, when Huck says, "You can't pray a lie," it suggests both the importance of honesty and the complexities of morality in a society filled with hypocrisy.

2. "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County":

- The story's humor and absurdity often stem from Twain's use of double meanings in dialogue, revealing the cultural nuances of the characters.

T.S. Eliot

Eliot's poetry is rich with allusions and double entendres:

1. "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock":

- The repeated line, "Do I dare?" can be read as a question of social anxiety, but it also alludes to deeper existential dilemmas about life and purpose.

2. "The Waste Land":

- Eliot's use of fragmented language and mixed references creates layers of meaning that often reflect the disillusionment of the post-war era, inviting multiple interpretations.

The Impact of Double Entendre on Modern Literature

The tradition of double entendre continues to influence modern writers, who employ this technique to engage readers in new and innovative ways.

Contemporary Examples

1. David Foster Wallace: In "Infinite Jest," Wallace's use of irony and double meanings critiques contemporary culture and addiction.

2. Margaret Atwood: In "The Handmaid's Tale," Atwood uses double entendre to explore themes of power, sexuality, and oppression.

3. Neil Gaiman: In "American Gods," Gaiman's characters often engage in conversations filled with double meanings, reflecting the complexities of identity and belief in modern society.

Conclusion

Double entendre examples in literature not only add depth and richness to the text but also invite readers to engage in a more active interpretation of the narrative. From classical works to contemporary literature, this clever device has proven its versatility and enduring appeal. As readers continue to uncover the layers of meaning hidden within the words, the charm and complexity of double entendre will undoubtedly remain a staple of literary exploration for generations to come. Through humor, irony, and social critique, double entendre serves as a powerful tool in the hands of skilled writers, enriching their storytelling and enhancing the reader's experience.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a double entendre in literature?

A double entendre is a figure of speech in which a phrase has two meanings, one of which is often risqué or suggestive, allowing for a layered interpretation.

Can you provide a classic example of double entendre in Shakespeare's works?

In 'Romeo and Juliet', the phrase 'You kiss by the book' carries a literal meaning about kissing and a suggestive implication about romantic experience.

How does Jane Austen use double entendre in her novels?

Austen often employs double entendre to subtly critique societal norms, as seen in 'Pride and Prejudice' where characters' dialogue can imply hidden meanings about class and relationships.

What role does double entendre play in modern literature?

In modern literature, double entendre can create humor, add depth to character interactions, and engage readers by prompting them to explore multiple interpretations of a text.

What are some examples of double entendre in poetry?

In John Donne's poem 'The Flea', the flea itself serves as a double entendre, symbolizing both love and sexual union, allowing for a playful yet serious exploration of intimacy.

How can double entendre enhance character

development?

Double entendre can reveal character traits, motivations, and relationship dynamics, as characters may use ambiguous language to communicate hidden agendas or social commentary.

Are there any contemporary authors known for using double entendre?

Yes, authors like Neil Gaiman and Margaret Atwood frequently incorporate double entendre in their works, using it to enrich their storytelling and offer layers of meaning.

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double long double -

The long double function prototypes are identical to the prototypes for their double counterparts, except that the longdouble data type replaces the double data type. The long double versions ...

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You have slain an enemy. Double Kill Triple Kill Quadra Kill Penta Kill
Ace (LOL) Riot ...

double triple quatra penta hexa....10~

"double triple quatra penta hexa...."double10 2double3triple4
quatra5penta6hexa7hepta8octa9 ...

Explore fascinating double entendre examples in literature and uncover the layers of meaning behind these clever phrases. Discover how wordplay enriches storytelling!

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