

# Example Of Parallelism In Literature

## Examples of Parallelism

- Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body.—  
Joseph Addison
- Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the  
ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in  
the seat of the scornful.—The Book of Psalms 1:1
- Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you  
can do for your country.—John F. Kennedy



Example of parallelism in literature is a powerful rhetorical device that enhances the rhythm and clarity of prose and poetry. By employing parallel structures, authors create a sense of balance and symmetry within their writing, which can emphasize particular ideas, evoke emotions, and create memorable phrases. This technique can be found across various literary forms, from poetry to prose, and is often used to reinforce themes and character development. In this article, we will explore the concept of parallelism, its significance in literature, various examples from renowned authors, and its impact on readers.

## Understanding Parallelism

Parallelism, also known as parallel structure, is the repetition of a grammatical structure within a sentence or series of sentences. This technique can involve the repetition of words, phrases, or clauses that have similar grammatical forms. By creating a rhythm through repetition, parallelism allows authors to express complex ideas more clearly and compellingly.

### Definition and Characteristics

1. Repetition: Parallelism involves the repetition of similar grammatical forms. This repetition can occur at various levels:
  - Single words (e.g., "I came, I saw, I conquered.")
  - Phrases (e.g., "To err is human; to forgive, divine.")
  - Clauses (e.g., "We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets.")
2. Balance: A hallmark of parallelism is the balance it creates in sentences. This balance can make

writing more persuasive and impactful.

3. Clarity: By organizing thoughts and ideas in a parallel structure, authors can clarify their messages, making it easier for readers to grasp complex concepts.

4. Emphasis: Parallelism can highlight important ideas or themes, drawing attention to specific points that the author wishes to emphasize.

## The Significance of Parallelism in Literature

Parallelism serves several purposes in literature, and its significance can be observed across different genres and forms. Some key points include:

### Enhancing Rhythm and Flow

- Musical Quality: The repetition inherent in parallelism can create a musical quality in writing, making it more enjoyable to read and listen to.
- Pacing: Authors can control the pacing of their writing through parallel structures, speeding up or slowing down the reader's experience.

### Reinforcing Themes and Ideas

- Thematic Development: Parallelism can reinforce central themes by framing them within a structured context. For example, in poetry, repeated phrases can underscore the poem's emotional core.
- Character Development: Authors can use parallelism to highlight the development of characters, especially in their speeches or inner thoughts.

### Persuasion and Impact

- Rhetorical Device: In speeches and persuasive writing, parallelism is often employed to convince an audience and create a memorable impact.
- Memorable Phrasing: Many famous quotes and speeches use parallel structure, making them resonate with listeners and readers long after they are heard.

## Examples of Parallelism in Literature

Parallelism can be found in a variety of literary works, ranging from classic literature to modern speeches. Below are notable examples that illustrate the use of parallelism effectively.

### 1. Classical Literature

#### a. William Shakespeare

One of the masters of language, William Shakespeare, often employed parallelism in his plays. A famous example comes from Julius Caesar:

- "Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears; I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him."

In this line, the repetition of the structure "I come to..." emphasizes the speaker's intent and creates a memorable opening.

#### b. Charles Dickens

In *A Tale of Two Cities*, Charles Dickens uses parallelism to set the tone of his narrative:

- "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness..."

This opening line contrasts the dualities of the era, providing a rhythmic and thematic foundation for the novel.

### 2. Poetry

#### a. Walt Whitman

Walt Whitman's poetry often features rich examples of parallelism. In *Song of Myself*, he writes:

- "I celebrate myself, and sing myself, and what I assume you shall assume..."

Here, the repetition of "I" and the parallel structure create a sense of unity and personal declaration.

#### b. Maya Angelou

Maya Angelou's poem *Still I Rise* showcases powerful parallelism that emphasizes resilience:

- "You may write me down in history / With your bitter, twisted lies, / You may trod me in the very dirt / But still, like dust, I'll rise."

The repeated "You may..." structure creates a rhythmic defiance that resonates deeply with the reader.

### 3. Modern Speeches

#### a. Martin Luther King Jr.

One of the most iconic examples of parallelism in modern rhetoric can be found in Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech. He famously repeats the phrase "I have a dream" throughout the speech:

- "I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed..."

This repetition not only emphasizes King's vision for equality but also inspires hope and determination in his audience.

#### b. John F. Kennedy

In his inaugural address, President John F. Kennedy employed parallelism effectively to inspire a

generation:

- "Ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country."

This inversion of structure creates a memorable and thought-provoking statement that encourages civic responsibility.

## The Impact of Parallelism on Readers

Parallelism has a profound impact on readers, shaping their experience and understanding of the text. Some of the key effects include:

### Emotional Resonance

- Connection: The rhythmic quality of parallelism can evoke emotions and foster a deeper connection between the reader and the text.
- Memorability: Phrases that utilize parallelism are often more memorable, allowing readers to recall key points or themes long after reading.

### Enhanced Understanding

- Clarity: Parallel structures can clarify complex ideas, making them more accessible to readers.
- Focus: By emphasizing particular ideas, parallelism helps guide the reader's attention to the most important aspects of the text.

### Engagement

- Interest: The musicality and balance of parallelism can keep readers engaged, encouraging them to continue reading and exploring the text.
- Reflection: Readers may find themselves reflecting more deeply on the ideas presented, as the rhythm of parallelism prompts contemplation.

## Conclusion

In summary, example of parallelism in literature illustrates the power of this rhetorical device to enhance the beauty, clarity, and impact of writing. From classical authors like Shakespeare and Dickens to modern speeches by figures like Martin Luther King Jr. and John F. Kennedy, parallelism remains a vital tool for writers seeking to engage their audiences. By understanding and appreciating the significance of parallelism, readers can deepen their connection to literature and the ideas it conveys. Whether through poetry, prose, or speeches, the rhythmic and persuasive qualities of parallelism will continue to resonate throughout the literary landscape for generations to come.

## Frequently Asked Questions

## What is parallelism in literature?

Parallelism in literature refers to the use of similar structures, phrases, or clauses in a series to create rhythm, enhance clarity, or emphasize a point.

## Can you give a famous example of parallelism in literature?

One famous example is found in Charles Dickens' 'A Tale of Two Cities': 'It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness...'

## How does parallelism affect the mood of a piece of literature?

Parallelism can create a sense of balance and harmony, contributing to an uplifting or dramatic mood, depending on how it is used within the text.

## In which types of literature is parallelism most commonly found?

Parallelism is commonly found in poetry, speeches, and rhetorical writing, but it can also appear in prose to enhance emphasis and clarity.

## What is the effect of using parallelism in speeches?

Using parallelism in speeches can make the message more memorable, persuasive, and impactful, as it emphasizes key points and creates a rhythmic flow.

## How does parallelism differ from juxtaposition?

While parallelism involves repeating similar grammatical structures, juxtaposition contrasts differing ideas or themes side by side to highlight their differences.

## Are there modern examples of parallelism in contemporary literature?

Yes, modern authors like Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie often use parallelism in their works to emphasize themes, as seen in her TED Talk 'The Danger of a Single Story' where she contrasts narratives.

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