

Function of Anaphora

As a literary device, anaphora serves the purpose of furnishing artistic effect to the passages of prose and poetry. Moreover, it lends rhythm to the lines that becomes a pleasure to read and is easily memorized. Also, we cannot overlook the emphasis that it adds to the ideas.

As a rhetorical device, it is used to appeal to the emotions of the audience in order to persuade them and also to inspire motivation and courage.

Apart from the function of giving prominence to ideas, the use of anaphora in literature adds rhythm (due to its parallel structure) to it and thus, making it more pleasurable to read. Read the following examples:

1. Shakespeare does not disappoint us in the use of anaphora too. Read the following example taken from his play "Richard II" Act 2 Scene 1:

"This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England,
This nurse, this teeming womb of royal kings [. . .]
This land of such dear souls, this dear dear land,"

The repetition of the word "this" creates an emotional effect on the readers particularly who are English. Further, it highlights the significance of England. The repetition of the word "dear" shows emotional attachment of the writer to the land and expects a similar response from the readers as well.

2. "A Tale of Two Cities" by Charles Dickens starts with following lines:

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair."

The repetitive structure used in the above lines make it the most memorable and remarkable start of a narrative ever achieved by a writer. "It" repeated all the way through the passage makes the readers to focus more on traits of the "age" they are going to read about.

3. This technique is employed by William Wordsworth in "Tintern Abbey":

"Five years have passed;
Five summers, with the length of
Five long winters! and again I hear these waters..."

The repetition of the word "five" at the beginning of each line gives typical melody to the lines that matches well with its nostalgic tone.

4. William Blake in his poem "The Tyger" goes:

"What the hammer? what the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?"

The repetition of series of questions which start with "what" creates a rhythm that inspires the effect of awe in the readers.

5. Politicians frequently use anaphora as a rhetorical device in their addresses and political speeches to evoke passion among the audience. Read an excerpt from Winston Churchill speech during the Second World War:

"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."

The repetitive structures in the above passage suggest the importance of the war for England. Moreover, it inspires patriotic sentiments among the masses.