

Poetic Technique: Anaphora

The term "anaphora" comes from the Greek for "a carrying up or back," and refers to a type of parallelism created when successive phrases or lines begin with the same words, often resembling a litany. The repetition can be as simple as a single word or as long as an entire phrase. As one of the world's oldest poetic techniques, anaphora is used in much of the world's religious and devotional poetry, including numerous Biblical Psalms.

Elizabethan and Romantic poets were masters of anaphora, as evident in the writings of William Shakespeare, Sir Philip Sidney, and Edmund Spenser. Shakespeare frequently used anaphora, in both his plays and poems. For example, in Sonnet No. 66, he begins ten lines with the word "and":

"Tired with all these, for restful death I cry,
As to behold desert a beggar born,
And needy nothing trimm'd in jollity,
And purest faith unhappily forsworn,
And gilded honour shamefully misplac'd,
And maiden virtue rudely strumpeted,
And right perfection wrongfully disgrac'd,
And strength by limping sway disabled
And art made tongue-tied by authority,
And folly--doctor-like--controlling skill,
And simple truth miscall'd simplicity,
And captive good attending captain ill:
Tir'd with all these, from these would I be gone,
Save that, to die, I leave my love alone."

Not only can anaphora create a driving rhythm by the recurrence of the same sound, it can also intensify the emotion of the poem.

Joe Brainard (1942-1944), an American artist and writer, popularized the teaching of anaphora after the publication of his memoir *I Remember*:

"I remember a piece of old wood with termites running around all over it the termite men found under our front porch.

I remember when one year in Tulsa by some freak of nature we were invaded by millions of grasshoppers for about three or four days. I remember, downtown, whole sidewalk areas of solid grasshoppers.

I remember a shoe store with a big brown x-ray machine that showed up the bones in your feet bright green."

Creative Writing Assignment- *A Tale of Two Cities*

Dickens employs the technique of **anaphora** in the opening of *A Tale of Two Cities* in which he specifically uncovers the dualities of English and French society at the time. Using his opening paragraph as a reference, you will also write an anaphora that unveils the duality of some part, or parts, of American contemporary society.

Your anaphora should include both the positive and negative elements of society, culture, and/or the economy; make sure these **paradoxes** are evident in your writing.

Your anaphora should be a minimum of 10-15 sentences. Remember, this device is poetic; each word and line should be chosen carefully.

You may work with a partner (no more than two people per group).

20 points possible