

- **Auditory (sound) image:** *The clackety-clack of the wheels on the track and steamy hiss of the engine made the sound of the Lincoln funeral train even more poignant.*
- **Tactile (touch) image:** *The weight of her father's strong arm around her shoulder comforted the mourning child.*
- **Gustatory (taste) image:** *The tang of the grapefruit slice made her mouth pucker.*
- **Olfactory (smell) image:** *The baking bread in the oven welcomed with its yeasty sweetness that filled the kitchen.*

Allusions are specific references to other texts or scenes outside the text that build readers' associations and deepen their understanding of the text. Sometimes these are clichés:

Everybody has a cross to bear.

No matter what religious background you come from, you probably recognize that sentence as an allusion to the Biblical story of Jesus on his way to crucifixion. It tells you something about what the writer thinks about the burdens people carry. A writer might make an allusion to another text:

"Ay, there's the rub."

The phrase is from Hamlet's famous "To be, or not to be" soliloquy in Shakespeare's play, and you recognize that the writer wants to suggest some kind of quandary or dilemma in using the phrase.

Figures of Rhetoric: Schemes and Tropes

To convey purpose and affect readers through the features of a text, writers almost always use **figures of rhetoric**, whether they do so consciously or not. Readers who analyze texts well recognize these figures and explain how the writer uses them in communicating and persuading.

People have been teaching and learning about the figures since ancient Greece and Rome, where rhetoric was first studied. Classical rhetoricians divided the figures into two broad categories: *schemes* and *tropes*. The definitions are simple:

- A **scheme** is any artful, that is, deliberate, variation from typical arrangements of words and sentences. For example, the following passage from Winston Churchill's famous Dunkirk speech during World War II is an example of the scheme of *anaphora*, the deliberate repetition of words, phrases, or clauses as the beginning of successive sentences:

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.

- A **trope** is any artful variation from the typical expressions of ideas or words. For example, this sentence contains an example of the trope of *metonymy*, in which a range of meanings and associations are packed into one word or phrase:

The top brass inspected the troops in the field.

In ancient Rome, and later in the European Middle Ages and Renaissance, scholars developed substantial lists of figures, categorizing them under these two general labels, and school children had to learn the definitions and find examples of the figures in literary works and public discourse. It would not have been unusual for a grammar school student in Renaissance England to be given a list of three hundred or so names of schemes and tropes and to be required to memorize the definitions and produce an example of any one of them on demand! Students undertook this task not simply to memorize or even to learn how to vary their own expression. Their lessons in schemes and tropes taught them something crucial about language, that a different way of *saying* something about the world was also a different way of *seeing* something about the world. In other words, classical instruction taught that using figurative language to express ideas helped to clarify and sharpen a person's thinking—not a bad lesson for students even today.

You don't have to memorize three hundred definitions to recognize and analyze the figures. (There are many excellent handbooks and Internet sites that list figures of rhetoric. One particularly helpful resource is Professor Gideon Burton's web site at Brigham Young University called *Silva Rhetoricae*, literally "the forest of rhetoric.") But you can learn to recognize schemes and tropes when you read them by how they work and their effect on readers. What follows are a few schemes and tropes in common use.

Schemes Involving Balance When a passage, a paragraph, or even a sentence has two or more similar ideas, a good writer will often express those ideas in the same grammatical form: words balance words, phrases balance phrases, clauses balance clauses. The writer is using parallel constructions to affect and balance readers' responses.

Abraham Lincoln was a master at creating parallel structure. His most famous work, the brief but eloquent Gettysburg Address, is a tour de force of parallelism. Here is its final paragraph. Notice how Lincoln both begins and ends this paragraph with a parallel structure:

But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate—we cannot consecrate—we cannot hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

Three parallel, balanced clauses

Three parallel, balanced verbs

Three famous parallel phrases

What, in general, is the effect of parallel structure on the reader? The key concept is balance: A solid parallelism emphasizes the thoroughly trustworthy, balanced character of the speaker or writer. Because he or she is perceived as more credible, the readers adhere to the take-home idea more willingly.

One particular variety of parallelism is an **antithesis**, which emerges when the content of the clauses, phrases, or words being balanced in the parallel structure offer a striking contrast to the readers. A famous example of antithetical parallel structure can be found in President John F. Kennedy's inaugural address:

Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.

Another well-known example is the slogan from an anti-drug campaign in the late 1970s:

Up with hope, down with dope.

The parallelism in both cases emphasizes the writer's clever contrast.

And, of course, one of the most famous examples of antithesis in American literature comes from Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address:

Both parties deprecated war, but one of them would *make* war rather than let the nation survive, and the other would *accept* war rather than let it perish, and the war came.

Parallelism uses the same grammatical structure for similar elements, and it helps readers understand the logical equivalence the writer gives to the parallel elements:

- **Parallelism of words:** Exercise physiologists argue that body-pump aerobics sessions benefit a person's heart and lungs, muscles and nerves, and joints and cartilage.
- **Parallelism of phrases:** Exercise physiologists argue that body-pump aerobics sessions help a person breathe more effectively, move with less discomfort, and avoid injury.
- **Parallelism of clauses:** Exercise physiologists argue that body-pump aerobics is the most efficient exercise class, that body-pump participants show greater gains in stamina than participants in comparable exercise programs, and that body-pump aerobics is less expensive in terms of equipment and training needed to lead or take classes.

Each of these three parallel schemes, by the way, is also called a **zeugma**, a figure in which more than one item in a sentence is governed by a single word, usually a verb. You see that the verb for these sentences is *argue*.

Antithesis points out to the reader differences between two juxtaposed ideas rather than similarities. Here are three antitheses (that's the plural spelling):

- **Antithesis of words:** When distance runners reach the state they call the zone, they find themselves mentally *engaged yet detached*.
- **Antithesis of phrases:** When distance runners reach the state they call the zone, they find themselves mentally engaged *with their physical surroundings yet detached from moment-to-moment concerns about their conditioning*.
- **Antithesis of clauses:** When distance runners reach the state they call the zone, they find *that they are empirically engaged with their physical surroundings, yet they are also completely detached from moment-to-moment concerns about their conditioning*.

A famous example of antithesis in clauses is "To err is human; to forgive, divine."

Another scheme like antithesis is an **antimetabole** (anti-muh-TI-boh-lee), in which words are repeated in different grammatical forms. Well-known examples of antimetabole are:

When the going gets tough, the tough get going (adjective becomes noun; noun becomes verb)

You can take the kid out of the country, but you can't take the country out of the kid.

Schemes Involving Interruption Sometimes a writer wants to interrupt the flow of a passage in order to provide information, give an insight, or make a comment to readers. Two schemes are especially useful for this purpose—parenthesis and appositive.

Parenthesis **Parenthesis** (the same word as the singular of parentheses, the punctuation marks) allows for this kind of interruption. Suppose you're writing a letter to a friend about your growing interest in sports. Here is a parenthesis embedded in a sentence from this letter:

Sports night at the school always brings out the would-be jocks—who would expect any different?—ready to show that they're potentially as good as the varsity players.

Notice that this parenthesis is set off by dashes, the punctuation marks commonly used to set off an interruptive word, phrase, or clause. When you use dashes to set off an interruption, be sure to include them at the beginning and the end of the interruption. A parenthesis, however, can also be set off from the remainder of the sentences with parentheses:

Sports night at the school always brings out the would-be jocks (who would expect any different?) ready to show that they're potentially as good as the varsity players.

Notice that a parenthesis in the form of a question, as in the example above, needs to be punctuated with a question mark. The same would hold true for an exclamation.

When sports night is canceled—oh, sorrowful day!—all the would-be jocks get a case of show-off withdrawal.

not for a simple declaratory sentence:

Sports night supervisors have to stop people from trying to slam dunk—this is the ultimate showboat move—for fear that one of the would-be jocks might hurt himself.

Appositive A second scheme useful for setting off additional material is an appositive. An **appositive** is a construction in which two coordinating elements are set side by side, and the second explains or modifies the first.

David Brooks calls Franklin, inventor, entrepreneur, and statesman, “our Founding Yuppie.”

Schemes Involving Omission A writer occasionally needs to omit material from a sentence so that its rhythm is heightened or accelerated and so that the readers will pay close attention to the potentially dramatic effect. Two schemes useful for this purpose are ellipsis and asyndeton.

Ellipsis An **ellipsis** is any omission of words, the meaning of which is provided by the overall context of the passage:

In times of conflict, if you talk to your friend, and he to you, you'll find a way around the fight.

The phrase *and he to you* omits “talk,” and it highlights the connection by omitting the verb.

Asyndeton An **asyndeton** is an omission of conjunctions between related clauses. From Lincoln's Gettysburg Address: “. . . and that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth.”

Schemes Involving Repetition Writers are often warned not to be repetitive because saying something several times doesn't seem to advance a point. But repetition is not being repetitive. Repeating sounds or words can actually lead the reader to pay closer attention to the prose and to recognize the writer's purpose and respond to the writer's voice more clearly. You'll likely be familiar with some of the schemes involving the artful use of repetition.

- **Alliteration** is the repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning or in the middle of two or more adjacent words:

Fourscore and twenty years ago our forefathers brought forth upon this continent a new nation . . .

- **Assonance** is the repetition of vowel sounds in the stressed syllables of two or more adjacent words:

Ye shall say they all have passed away

That they pass and have

- **Anaphora** (uh-NA-fuh-ruh) is the repetition of the same group of words at the beginning of successive clauses:

We cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow . . .

- **Epistrophe** (e-PIS-truh-fee) is the repetition of the same group of words at the end of successive clauses:

Yes I am, I am Indian, Indian, I am.

- **Anadiplosis** (a-nuh-duh-PLOH-suhs) is the repetition of the last word of one clause at the beginning of the following clause:

Watch your thoughts, they become words; watch your words, they become actions; watch your actions, they become habits.

- **Climax** is the repetition of words, phrases, or clauses in order of increasing number or importance:

Excellent athletes need to be respectful of themselves, their teammates, their schools, and their communities.

Anadiplosis and climax are closely enough related that some teachers of the figures refer to the two schemes together as *climbing the ladder*.

Tropes Involving Comparisons The most important trope in this category, the one upon which all the others in this group are based, is **metaphor**, an implied comparison between two things that, on the surface, seem dissimilar but that, upon further examination, share common characteristics:

My life it stood, a loaded gun.

Clearly, a life and a gun are dissimilar. Yet the metaphor here suggests that life is awaiting and that it's potentially violent or tempestuous. A **simile** makes the comparison visible.

My life seemed like a loaded gun, waiting to be fired in some field.

Notice that this sentence, which begins with a simile, ends with an **implied metaphor**—it continues the metaphor by implying the consequences.

Other tropes involving comparison include the following:

- **Synecdoche** (suh-NEK-duh-kee): A part of something is used to refer to the whole.

I would not keep in a cage

A wing that would be free

- **Metonymy** (muh-TAH-nuh-mee): An entity is referred to by one of its attributes.

I hear America singing.

- **Personification**: Inanimate objects are given human characteristics.

You are loosed from your moorings, and are free.

- **Periphrasis** (puh-RI-frah-suhs): A descriptive word or phrase is used to refer to a proper name.

Hog butcher to the world

Tropes Involving Word Play Some writers like to entertain (and even enlighten) their readers simply by playing with the sounds and meanings of words.