

SCHEMES AND TROPES

Throughout this course, you will be learning new terms and reviewing those you already know, such as metaphor and personification. These **stylistic features**, or rhetorical and literary devices, fall under the umbrella term of **figurative language**, which consists of two categories: **tropes and schemes**.

Schemes: A scheme is an ordering or patterning of language. A schematic use of language does not change meaning. Schemes play with word order, syntax, letters, and sound rather than meaning.

1. Schemes of Balance

- **parallelism**. Similarity of grammatical structure in a pair or series of related words, phrases, or clauses, e.g. I love him, I need him, I want him. Repetition is always parallel.
- **antithesis**. The juxtaposition of contrasting ideas in **parallel structure**, e.g. It was the best of times, it was the worst of times (Dickens).

2. Schemes of unusual or inverted word order

- **Anastrophe** (plays with **syntax**). Inversion of the natural or usual word order, e.g. In *Star Wars*, the character Yoda tells Luke, “**The greatest teacher, failure is.**”
- **parenthesis**. Insertion of some verbal unit in a position that interrupts the normal syntactical flow of the sentence. Also called **parenthetical comment**.
- **apposition**. Placing side by side two coordinate elements, the second of which serves as an explanation or modification of the first, e.g. “Christmas Eve afternoon we scrape together a nickel and go to the butcher’s to buy **Queenie’s traditional gift, a good gnawable beef bone.**” (Called an **appositive** in grammar)

3. Schemes of Omission

- **ellipsis**. Deliberate omission of a word (or words) which is readily implied by the context, e.g. Um...I’m not sure that’s true.
- **asyndeton**. Deliberate omission of conjunctions between a series of related clauses, e.g. He did not still feel weak, he was merely luxuriating in that

supremely gutful lassitude of convalescence in which **time, hurry, doing**, did not exist, the accumulating **seconds and minutes and hours** to which in its well state the body's slave both waking and sleeping, now reversed and time now the lip-server and mendicant to the body's pleasure instead of the body thrall to time's headlong course (Faulkner, The Hamlet). Here **asyndeton** exists alongside **polysyndeton**.

- **polysyndeton**. Deliberate use of many conjunctions (see above example).

4. Schemes of Repetition

- **alliteration**. Repetition of the **same sound** repeats in a group of words; the repeating sound must occur either in the **first letter** of each word, **or in the stressed syllables** of those words.
- **assonance**. Repetition of similar vowel sounds across several words
- **anaphora**. Repetition of the same word or group of words at the beginning of successive clauses, e.g. "So **let freedom ring from the** prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire. **Let freedom ring from the** mighty mountains of New York. **Let freedom ring from the** heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania." (MLK "I Have a Dream").
- **consonance**. Repetition of similar consonant sounds across several words; the repeated sound can occur at any point within the word, not just on first or stressed syllables, e.g. A **l**ittle more than **k**in, and **l**ess than **k**ind (Hamlet).
- **epistrophe**. Repetition of the same word or group of words at the ends of successive clauses, e.g. I like **ice cream**. You like **ice cream**. We all like **ice cream**. (Also called 'epiphora'.)
- **epanalepsis**. Repetition at the end of a clause of the word that occurred at the beginning of the clause, e.g. "Nothing is worse than doing nothing."
- **anadiplosis**. Repetition of the last word of one clause at the beginning of the following clause, e.g. "They call for you: The general who became a **slave**; the **slave** who became a **gladiator**; the **gladiator** who defied an Emperor." —Gladiator (2000 film)
- **climax**. Arrangement of words, phrases or clauses in an order of increasing importance
- **antimetabole**. Repetition of words, in successive clauses, in reverse order, e.g. "Fair is foul and foul is fair" (Macbeth).

Tropes. A trope is a use of language that changes its apparent meaning, that is, there is an unexpected twist in the meaning.

- **metaphor.** A figure of speech in which a name or descriptive word or phrase is transferred to an object or action different from, but analogous to, that to which it is literally applicable
- **simile.** An explicit comparison between two things of unlike nature that yet have something in common.
- **synecdoche.** A figure by which a more comprehensive term is used for a less comprehensive or vice versa; as whole for part or part for whole, genus for species or species for genus, and the like, e.g, "Take thy face hence" (Macbeth). Here, "thy face" (your face) stands in for "you." Macbeth is simply telling the servant to leave, but his use of synecdoche makes the tone of his command more harsh and insulting, showing the audience how angry he really is.
- **metonymy.** Substitution of some attributive or suggestive word for what is actually meant, e.g. A famous example of metonymy is, "The pen is mightier than the sword" from Edward Bulwer Lytton's play Cardinal Richelieu. This sentence has two metonyms: "Pen" stands for "the written word." "Sword" stands for "military aggression."
- **hyperbole.** Use of exaggerated terms for the purpose of emphasis or heightened effect
- **meiosis.** A euphemistic figure of speech that intentionally understates something or implies that it is lesser in significance or size than it really is. For example, Mercutio says "ay, ay, a scratch, a scratch" when he knows he has been mortally stabbed (Romeo and Juliet, Shakespeare)
- **litotes.** A figure of speech and form of understatement, in which an affirmative is expressed by the negative of the contrary, e.g. "The sword wasn't useless to the warrior" (Beowulf). This is an understatement because, of course, a sword is valuable to a warrior. Wasn't useless = was useful.
- **irony.** Use of a word in such a way as to convey a meaning opposite to its literal sense
- **onomatopoeia.** The formation of a word from a sound associated with what is named (e.g. *buzz*, *boom*)

- **oxymoron.** Yoking of two terms which are ordinarily contradictory and create a paradox, e.g. “jumbo shrimp.” The term oxymoron is itself an oxymoron deriving from ancient Greek: oxus meaning sharp + moros meaning dull.
- **paradox.** An apparent contradiction, e.g. What a pity that youth must be wasted on the young. The best oxymorons place two contrasting words next to each other. On the other hand, paradoxes are longer statements that twist contradictions in addition to logic.