

Parallel Construction

Definition and Examples

Parallel Construction, also called parallel structure, parallelism, and repetition, is a stylistic device that authors use to create special effects; it adds a degree of rhythm, of harmony, of importance.

One dictionary of literary terms defines parallelism as the writer establishing similar patterns of grammatical structure and length. For instance, "King Alfred tried to make the law clear, precise, and equitable." The previous sentence has parallel structure in use of adjectives. However, the following sentence does *not* use parallelism: "King Alfred tried to make clear laws that had precision and were equitable."

Another dictionary states that parallel structure is repetition of the same pattern of words or phrases within a sentence or passage to show that two or more ideas have the same level of importance. It helps to organize ideas, making a text or speech easier to understand. Parallel structure can also create a satisfying rhythm in the language an author uses.

Some literary examples:

"Friends, Romans, Countrymen, lend me your ears; I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him." William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar*

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times..." Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*

"To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield" Alfred, Lord Tennyson, "Ulysses"

Both short stories "Brothers Are the Same" and "My Wonder Horse" have several examples of parallel construction. Let me provide one from each story:

From "Brothers Are the Same" (pg. 238): "From the deep grass, from the shade of anthills, from clustered rocks, warriors sprang like flames...."

From "My Wonder Horse" (pg. 820): "So many traps, so many snares, so many searching parties, and all in vain. The horse always escaped, always mocked his pursuers, always rose above the control of man."

For your homework, you need to find two different examples than those listed above from each story. Underline the parallelism to prove you see it and follow the directions on your HW sheet.