

Some Poetic & Rhetorical Devices

Alliteration: the repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of a word, like the “H” sound in “Hark the herald angels sing”. Count the uses of alliteration in this section of Bob Dylan’s “Chimes Of Freedom” (look for B, F, D,S and M words):

- Far between sundown’s finish and midnight’s broken toll
We ducked inside the doorway, thunder crashin’
As majestic bells of bolts struck shadows in the sun
Seeming to be the chimes of freedom flashing

Anadiplosis: Repeating the last word or phrase of one line at the beginning of the next one:

- Poor man wanna be rich
Rich man wanna be king
And a king ain’t satisfied
Till he rules everything
— “Badlands,” Bruce Springsteen

Anaphora: Repetition of the same words at the beginning of successive lines. Martin Luther King, Jr. used anaphora repeatedly in his “I Have A Dream” speech. “Somewhere Over The Rainbow” uses the title phrase to begin each verse. Also see “This Old Porch”, Lyle Lovett, “If Heaven”, Gretchen Peters.

Antimetabole: A figure of speech in which the same phrase or idea is repeated in transposed order, giving the second phrase a different or deeper meaning:

- “You can take the girl out of the city, but you can’t take the city out of the girl”

Antistrophe: Similar to antimetabole, but more limited in scope. Antistrophe occurs when words are repeated in reverse order, meaning essentially the same thing each time:

- “All for one, and one for all”

Antithesis: the juxtaposition of two opposing elements through the parallel grammatical structure:

- Easy come, easy go
- One man’s junk is another man’s treasure
- Get busy living or get busy dying
- No pain, no gain

Apostrophe: As a literary device, an apostrophe is a poetic phrase or speech made by a character that is addressed to a subject that is not literally present in the literary work. The subject may be dead, absent, an inanimate object, or even an abstract idea. A literary apostrophe is designed to direct a reader or audience member’s attention to the entity being addressed as a means of indicating its importance or significance. In addition, apostrophe is also utilized as a way for a character to express their internal thoughts and feelings to someone or something that is not able to respond.

- “Death, Be Not Proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou are not so” - John Donne

Assonance: The repetition of vowel sounds within non-rhyming words.

Consonance: The repetition of consonants within non-rhyming words.

Epanadiplosis: Repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning and end of a phrase:

- “The king is dead, long live the king!”

Epinome: The repetition of a refrain.

- "How long, how long must we sing this song? How long?"— "Sunday Bloody Sunday," U2

Epistrophe: The opposite of Anaphora. Repetition of a word or phrase at the end of successive verses or clauses.

- "Then I'll be all around in the dark. I'll be everywhere – wherever you look. Wherever there's a fight so hungry people can eat, I'll be there. Wherever there's a cop beatin' up a guy, I'll be there ... And when our folk eat the stuff they raise and live in the houses they build – why, I'll be there ..." — The Grapes of Wrath, John Steinbeck

Hyperbole: Figurative speech that uses exaggeration.

- "I would walk 500 miles, and I would walk 500 more, just to be the man who walked 1,000 miles to fall down at your door"— "I'm Gonna Be (500 Miles)," The Proclaimers

Internal Rhyme (Also called Middle Rhyme): Rhyme that occurs within a line or within the body of closely grouped lines, rather than End Rhyme, which occurs at the end of lines. Hip hop songs use internal rhyme extravagantly and brilliantly. Cole Porter was also a master of internal rhyme.

- Just turn me **loose** let me **straddle** my old **saddle**,
Underneath the western skies,
On my **cayuse** let me **wander** over **yonder**,
'Til I see the mountains rise.

Metaphor: A comparison between two unlike things, in which one is symbolic or representative of the other. "Landslide" by Stevie Nicks is an example of an extended metaphor (sustained throughout the song).

Paradox: A paradox engages a listener to discover an underlying logic in a seemingly self-contradictory statement or phrase. Paradox allows readers to understand concepts in a different and even non-traditional way.

- Less is more
- I close my eyes so I can see
- The Cure for the Pain is the Pain

Objective Correlative: This is basically SHOW, DON'T TELL. As defined by T.S. Eliot:

“The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an “objective correlative”; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked.”

Hank Williams’ “I’m So Lonesome I Could Cry” uses a series of objective correlative to express loneliness: the night, a whippoorwill, a midnight train, the moon behind clouds, a weeping robin, turning leaves and a falling star.

Personification: When the poet treats an abstraction or inanimate object as if it were concrete or human:

- “While My Guitar Gently Weeps”, George Harrison

Polyptoton: Repetition of a word root in two different forms (suffix or prefix):

- “Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.”

Simile: Similar to a metaphor but the comparison or connection is made using the word “like” or “as.”

- “My love is like a red, red rose”