

Figures of Speech

Metaphor:

A **figure of speech** that constructs an **analogy** between two things or ideas; the analogy is conveyed by the use of a metaphorical word in place of some other word. For example: "Her eyes were glistening jewels".

Colonel Kurtz: "Are you an assassin?"

Captain Willard: "I'm a soldier."

Colonel Kurtz: "You're neither. **You're an errand boy...sent by grocery clerks...to collect a bill.**"

Pushing a string

Clichés are usually dead metaphors:

- Love is blind.
- It takes two to tango.
- Misery loves company .
- If it ain't broke, don't fix it.
- Too little, too late.
- Tip of the iceberg

But clichés can be used as the basis for a witty jujitsu by taking the form and substituting other words:

- Work is the curse of the drinking classes.
- You can bring a whore to culture (original: horticulture), but you can't make her think.
- Bankruptcy is a fate worse than debt.
- One must have a heart of stone to read the death of little Nell without laughing.
- The leisure of the theory class.

Or as Heinrich suggests, by taking them literally when they are used by others:

Opponent: The early bird catches the worm

You: It can have it. Opponent: Let's not pour the baby out with the bath water. You: No, let just pull the plug.

Syncrisis: Not this, but that.

Chiasmus

A reversal in the order of words in two otherwise parallel phrases, as in "He went to the country, to the town went she."

- "Eat to live, not live to eat" - Attributed to [Socrates](#)
- "Live to fly, fly to live" - [Iron Maiden's](#) 1984 song [Aces High](#)
- "Ask not what *your country* can do for *you*; ask what *you* can do for *your country*." [John F. Kennedy](#), *Inaugural Address*, January 20, 1961.
- "Now this is not the end. It is not even the *beginning* of the *end*, but it is, perhaps, the *end* of the *beginning*." [Winston Churchill](#), *The Lord Mayor's Luncheon, Mansion House*, November 10, 1942.
- "We didn't land on *Plymouth Rock*, the *rock* was landed on *us*." [Malcolm X](#), *The Ballot or the Bullet*, Washington Heights, NY, March 29, 1964..
- "When the going gets tough, the tough get going." [Joseph Kennedy](#)
- "You win to play, and you play to win." origin unknown, common phrase in [sports](#)
- "Truth is beauty, beauty truth." [John Keats](#)
- "The weapons of war must be abolished, before they abolish us." John F. Kennedy
- "With my mind on my money, and my money on my mind." [Snoop Dogg](#)
- "We do what we like, and we like what we do." [Andrew W.K.](#)
- "Mind your wants, 'cause there's someone that wants your mind." [Parliament](#)
- "**Mankind** must put an end to **war** or **war** will put an end to **mankind**." [John F. Kennedy](#)
- "Let's make sure that the **Supreme Court** does not **pick the next president**, and **this president** does not choose the next **Supreme Court**." [Albert Gore Jr.](#) at the 2004 [Democratic National Convention](#).
- "People the world over have always been more impressed by the **power** of our **example** than by the **example** of our **power**." [Bill Clinton](#) at the 2008 Democratic National Convention.
- "**America** did not invent **human rights**. In a very real sense, it is the other way round. **Human rights** invented **America**." [1] [Jimmy Carter](#) *Farewell Address*
- "You have seen how a **man** was made a **slave**; you shall see how a **slave** was made a **man**." [Frederick Douglass](#), *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself*

Anaphora: [*uh-naf-er-uh*]

Figure of repetition that occurs when the first word or set of words in one sentence, clause, or phrase is/are repeated at or very near the beginning of successive sentences, clauses, or phrases; repetition of the initial word(s) over successive phrases or clauses.

Let us not wallow in the valley of despair. I say to you today, my friends, that in spite of the difficulties and frustrations of the moment, **I still have a dream**. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream. **I have a dream** that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal." **I have a dream** that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slaveowners will be able to sit down together at a table of brotherhood. **I have a dream** that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state, sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice. **I have a dream** that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. **I have a dream** today.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

We shall not flag or fail. **We shall** go on to the end. **We shall** fight in France, **we shall** fight on the seas and oceans, **we shall** fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, **we shall** defend our island, whatever the cost may be, **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. **We shall** never surrender. --*Winston Churchill*

With malice toward none;
with charity for all;
with firmness in the right,...

Abraham Lincoln, Second Inaugural Address

It was the best of times, **it was** the worst of times, **it was** the age of wisdom, **it was** the age of foolishness, **it was** the epoch of belief, **it was** the epoch of incredulity, **it was** the season of Light, **it was** the season of

Darkness, **it was** the spring of hope, **it was** the winter of despair, **we had** everything before us, **we had** nothing before us, **we were all going direct** to Heaven, **we were all going direct** the other way...

Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*

I fled Him down the nights and down the days;
I fled Him, down the arches of the years;
I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own mind...

Francis Thompson, "The Hound of Heaven"

Never shall I forget that night, the first night in camp, which has turned my life into one long night, seven times cursed and seven times sealed. **Never shall I forget** that smoke. **Never shall I forget** the little faces of the children, whose bodies I saw turned into wreaths of smoke beneath a silent blue sky. **Never shall I forget** those flames which consumed my faith forever. **Never shall I forget** that nocturnal silence which deprived me, for all eternity, of the desire to live. **Never shall I forget** those moments which murdered my God and my soul and turned my dreams to dust. **Never shall I forget** these things, even if I am condemned to live as long as God Himself. Never. --Elie Wiesel, *Night*

We want freedom by any means necessary. **We want** justice by any means necessary. **We want** equality by any means necessary.

Malcolm X

Epistrophe: [eh-PISS-truh-FEE]

Figure of repetition that occurs when the last word or set of words in one sentence, clause, or phrase is repeated one or more times at the end of successive sentences, clauses, or phrases.

For when we have faced down impossible odds, when we've been told we're not ready or that we shouldn't try or that we can't, generations of Americans have responded with a simple creed that sums up the spirit of a people: **Yes, we can. Yes, we can. Yes, we can.**

It was a creed written into the founding documents that declared the destiny of a nation: **Yes, we can.**

It was whispered by slaves and abolitionists as they blazed a trail towards freedom through the darkest of nights: **Yes, we can.**

It was sung by immigrants as they struck out from distant shores and pioneers who pushed westward against an unforgiving wilderness: **Yes, we can.**

It was the call of workers who organized, women who reached for the ballot, a president who chose the moon as our new frontier, and a king who took us to the mountaintop and pointed the way to the promised land: Yes, we can, to justice and equality.

Yes, we can, to opportunity and prosperity. Yes, we can heal this nation. Yes, we can repair this world. **Yes, we can.** --Barak Obama, *New Hampshire Primary Concession Speech*, January 2008

...and that government of **the people**, by **the people**, for **the people** shall not perish from the earth." --Abraham Lincoln, [*Gettysburg Address*](#)

"The time for the healing of the wounds **has come**. The moment to bridge the chasms that divides [sic] us **has come**."--Nelson Mandela

"Now I want you to remember that no bastard ever won a war by dying **for his country**. He won it by making the other poor dumb bastard die **for his country**."--George Patton

Symploce: [sim-ploh-see]

Figure of repetition that combines [Anaphora](#) and [Epistrophe](#) in which the first and last word or words in one phrase, clause, or sentence are repeated in one or more successive phrases, clauses, or sentences; repetition of the first and last words in a clause over successive clauses.

"Let us let our own children know that we will stand against the forces of fear. **When there is talk of hatred, let us stand up and talk against it. When there is talk of violence, let us stand up and talk against it.**"

"And while there will be time enough to debate our continuing differences, now is the time to recognize that **that which** unites **us** is greater than **that which** divides **us**."-- Al Gore, *2000 Concession Speech*

"My brother need not be idealized, or enlarged in death beyond what he was in life, to be remembered simply as a good and decent man, who **saw** wrong and tried to right **it**, **saw** suffering and tried to heal **it**, **saw** war and tried to stop **it**."-- Ted Kennedy, *Eulogy for Robert F. Kennedy*

"We remember today that all our gentle heroes of Vietnam have given us a lesson in something more: a lesson in living love -- **their love** for their families **lives**; **their love** for their buddies on the battlefields and friends back home **lives**; **their love** of their country **lives**."-- Ronald Reagan, *Address at the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial*

Climax:

Figure of repetition in which words or phrases or sentences are arranged in order of increasing intensity or importance, often in **parallel construction**; words or phrases arranged by degrees of increasing significance.

"You can't hold a whole fraternity responsible for the behavior of a few perverted, sick individuals, but if you do, shouldn't you blame the whole fraternity system? And if the whole fraternity system is guilty, isn't this an indictment of our educational institutions in general? I put it to you, Greg, isn't this an indictment of our entire American Society? You can do what you want to us, but we're not going to sit here and listen to you bad mouth the United States of America." --Otter, *Animal House*

"Oh, America didn't need repeal, she needed repentance; she didn't need rum, she needed righteousness; we don't need jags, we need Jesus; we don't need more grog, we need more of God."—Billy Sunday

"A little neglect may breed great mischief . . . for want of a nail, the shoe was lost; for want of a shoe the horse was lost; and for want of a horse the rider was lost." --Benjamin Franklin

"They call for you: the general who became a slave; the slave who became a gladiator; the gladiator who defied an emperor. Striking story." The Emperor Commodus to Maximus, the gladiator in *Gladiator*

"Aboard my ship, excellent performance is standard. Standard performance is substandard. Substandard performance is not permitted to exist. That I warn you." --Captain Queeg, *The Caine Mutiny*

Alliteration

Figure of emphasis that occurs through the repetition of initial consonant letters (or sounds) in two or more different words across successive sentences, clauses, or phrases.

Harry Potter: Godric Gryffindor, Helga Hufflepuff, Rowena Ravenclaw, and Salazar Slytherin

Shops: "Coffee Corner", "Sushi Station", "Best Buy", "busy as a bee", "dead as a doornail", "good as gold", "right as rain", etc..

"No one standing in this house today can pass a puritanical test of purity that some are demanding that our elected leaders take." -- Richard Gephardt

Nattering nabobs of negativity—Spiro Agnew

Anastrophe: [uh-nas-truh-fee]

Figure of speech involving an inversion of a language's ordinary order of words; for example, saying "smart you are" to mean "you are smart". In English, with its settled natural word order, departure from the expected word order emphasizes the displaced word or phrase: "beautiful" is emphasized in the [City Beautiful](#) urbanist movement; "primeval" comes to the fore in [Longfellow's](#) line "This is the forest primeval."

[Yoda](#) from the [Star Wars](#) series commonly uses anastrophe.

"Told you, I did. Reckless is he. Now matters are worse."

"Mind what you have learned. Save you it can."

"If once you start down the dark path, forever will it dominate your destiny, consume you it will, as it did Obi-Wan's apprentice."

(11/15/10)