

Anadiplosis



DEFINITION

What is anadiplosis? Here's a quick and simple definition:

Anadiplosis is a [figure of speech](#) in which a word or group of words located at the end of one clause or sentence is repeated at or near the beginning of the following clause or sentence. This line from the novelist Henry James is an example of anadiplosis: "Our doubt is **our passion**, and **our passion** is our task."

Some additional key details about anadiplosis:

- Anadiplosis appears everywhere, from literature, to children's books, to famous speeches, to everyday conversation. It is also very common in the Bible.
- The emphasis created by anadiplosis's repetition of words has the power to persuade, to create a sense of urgency or emotion, as well as to give a pleasing rhythm to text or speech.
- Anadiplosis is also often used to stretch a logical progression of ideas across three or more clauses, as in the line from the movie *Gladiator*: "The general who became a slave. The slave who became a gladiator. The gladiator who defied an emperor."

Anadiplosis Pronunciation

Here's how to pronounce anadiplosis: an-uh-dih-**ploh**-sis

A Closer Look at Anadiplosis

It's helpful to look at examples of anadiplosis in more detail to understand the specific details about how it does (and doesn't) work.

Anadiplosis Can Repeat a Single Word or Multiple Words

Anadiplosis can involve a single repeated word, or the repetition of a group of words. Both of these sentences, for example, employ anadiplosis:

- "She opened a **café**, a **café** that ruined her financially."
- "While driving, whenever you see a **big red hexagon**, the **big red hexagon** means you should stop the car."

Repeated Words Don't Have to be Adjacent

Anadiplosis can include words that aren't immediately next to each other. Take these lines from [Romeo and Juliet](#):

It is the east, and Juliet is the **sun**.
Arise, fair **sun**, and kill the envious moon...

Here, the second sentence's "sun" doesn't immediately follow the preceding "sun." Nonetheless, it appears *near* the beginning of the second sentence, and there is still a sense of repetition of the word "sun." So this is an example of anadiplosis.

Anadiplosis Can Take Place in Different Clauses or Different Sentences

Anadiplosis isn't determined by punctuation, and therefore can appear within different clauses of a single sentence or across two or more sentences. Both of the examples below contain anadiplosis:

- "When you **love**, **love** with all your heart."
- "We ordered **a pizza pie**. **A pizza pie** that changed our lives."

Anadiplosis Often Appears in a String of Related Ideas

The repetition involved in anadiplosis makes it a handy tool for building a sequence of related ideas, each one leading to the next, across either a string of clauses or sentences. In the below quote, Malcolm X uses anadiplosis to argue for a process of personal growth, beginning with philosophy and mounting to action.

Once you change your philosophy, **you change your thought pattern**. Once **you change your thought pattern**, **you change your attitude**. Once **you change your attitude**, it changes your behavior pattern and then you go on into some action.

When anadiplosis extends across at least three clauses, it can also be called by the name gradatio.

Anadiplosis and Antimetabole

Anadiplosis is related to another figure of speech called [antimetabole](#). In antimetabole, the words of the first clause of a sentence are reversed in the next clause. The use of antimetabole frequently results in punchy maxims, such as:

- "When the going gets tough, the tough get going."
- "Live to eat, don't eat to live."

The way that antimetabole creates a mirroring effect between its two clauses also means that it creates a repetition of words within those clauses. As a result, *all* instances of antimetabole also contain anadiplosis:

- "When the going gets **tough**, the **tough** get going."
- "Live to **eat**, don't **eat** to live."

However, *not* all anadiplosis involves antimetabole. For instance, anadiplosis occurs in *both* of the following two sentences:

- "I know what I like and I like what I know."
- "Love leads to marriage; marriage to a baby in a baby carriage."

But antimetabole only occurs in the first sentence, because only in that one do the clauses mirror each other.



EXAMPLES

Once you start to recognize anadiplosis, you'll see it everywhere, from movies to the Bible. The repetition created by anadiplosis has the power to persuade, to evoke emotion, to present a logical progression or sequence of steps, and to please the ear through rhythm. Kids love it in nursery rhymes, and adults respond to it in political speeches. Anadiplosis is common in everyday writing and speech, too.

Anadiplosis Examples in Literature

In both poetry and prose, anadiplosis can signal the importance of a word or concept and create beautiful musicality in the text.

Anadiplosis in Jamaica Kincaid's "Those Words that Echo...Echo...Echo Through Life"

In Jamaica Kincaid's personal essay about her dead father, the repetition of her father's name, Mr. Potter, emphasizes the emotional space he occupies in her life. Through its repetition, anadiplosis can put focus on a writer's—or, in fiction, a character's—fixations, thereby signaling key themes. In this case, the signaled theme is coping with death by using art to reincarnate the lost loved.

I come back and look at Mr. Potter.

"Mr. Potter," I write, and I put clothes on him, even though I do not see him naked, for he was my father, and just now he is not yet dead.

It's worth noting that, here, anadiplosis takes place over a paragraph break.

Anadiplosis in Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*

In *Lolita*, the morally bankrupt Humbert Humbert defends his relationship to the young Lolita to an imagined jury. Here, he reveals that what he presented as another person's letter was actually written by him, ostensibly from memory.

What I present here is what I remember of the letter, and what I remember of the letter I remember verbatim (including that awful French.)

A tactic of his deceit involves convincing the jury of the improbable—that is, that he remembers a letter verbatim—and his use of anadiplosis as a persuasion tool reflects both his charming and incredibly slimy personality.

Anadiplosis in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*

In an address to her father in Act 4, Scene 2 of *Romeo and Juliet*, Juliet uses anadiplosis to plea for forgiveness for her disobedience. In this case, the plea is actually an act, part of her scheme to flee with Romeo, but anadiplosis makes her begging all the more dramatic and convincing.

...[I] am enjoined
By holy Lawrence to fall prostrate here.
I beg your pardon.
Pardon, I beseech you!

Anadiplosis in William Butler Yeats' "The Lake Isle of Innisfree"

In Yeats' iconic poem about longing for nature's tranquility, anadiplosis contributes both to the poem's pleasant, lilting rhythm, and to the dreamy effect of yearning for a place faraway.

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree...
And I will have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow.

Anadiplosis Examples in Children's Stories and Songs

Repetition provides a predictability that is both comforting and delightful for children. In addition, repetition makes retention and memorization easier. It makes sense, then, that anadiplosis is common in children's books, songs, and nursery rhymes.

Anadiplosis in "Dem Bones"

This grade school song uses anadiplosis to teach, in sequence, the connection between different joints in the body.

The leg bone's connected to the knee bone
The knee bone's connected to the thigh bone
The thigh bone's connected to the hip bone
Now shake dem skeleton bones!

Anadiplosis in Beatrix Potter's "The Tale of Squirrel Nutkin"

In this storybook, the red squirrel sings a menacing riddle repeating the words "Hitty Pitty" (the squirrel's nickname for stinging nettles). Here, anadiplosis both has a playful effect and stresses the fearsomeness of Hitty Pitty.

Hitty Pitty within the wall,
Hitty Pitty without the wall;
If you touch Hitty Pitty,
Hitty Pitty will bite you!

Anadiplosis Examples in Speeches

Politicians love using anadiplosis in speeches, as do other orators, public figures, attorneys—anyone trying to evoke a certain response

from their audience. The emphasis from repetition can be powerfully persuasive.

Anadiplosis in Steve Job's Macworld 2007 Keynote Address

Below, Steve Jobs uses anadiplosis to underscore how poorly a Microsoft product performed. Even to a listener unaware of what "two percent market share" means, the repetition implies it's dismal.

And they garnered two percent market share. Two percent market share. iPod had 62 percent market share and the rest had 36.

Anadiplosis in Jesse Jackson's 1988 Democratic National Convention Address

Jesse Jackson's speech uses anadiplosis to argue for the link between suffering and faith. While he doesn't explain *why* suffering breeds character or character breeds faith, the anadiplosis suggests an unspoken logical reasoning. Plus, it makes potentially complex logic easy to follow.

Suffering breeds character; character breeds faith; in the end faith will not disappoint.

Anadiplosis Examples in the Bible

The Bible is brimming with anadiplosis. In fact, some literature and speeches uses anadiplosis as a stylistic reference to the Bible. For instance, Jesse Jackson's 1988 speech shown just above is actually a reference to the line from Romans 5:3-5 shown just below.

Anadiplosis in Romans 5:3-5

This Bible verse uses anadiplosis to show the way suffering can lead people to hope.

We also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance, perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us.

Anadiplosis in Genesis 1:1-2

The following verse is typical of the iconic style, often involving anadiplosis, found in the Bible.

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void.



WHY WRITERS USE IT

Writers, from speechwriters to poets, use anadiplosis for its stylistic power to persuade, to beautify words through rhythm and cadence, and sometimes to give prose a more natural sound, closer to the way we speak.

Anadiplosis is a Killer Tool in Persuasion

Check out Jesse Jackson's original quote, then the same quote with the anadiplosis removed:

- Suffering breeds character; character breeds faith; in the end faith will not disappoint.
- Suffering breeds character, which breeds faith, which in the end will not disappoint.

The second sentence reads as clunky and too "which"-heavy. Anadiplosis makes such claims at once more coherent, easier to grasp, and more powerful and authoritative through forceful repetition.

Anadiplosis Creates Rhythm and Cadence

Because repetition is essential to musicality, anadiplosis can lend a sentence a lyrical effect. Take Edgar Allen Poe's "[The Raven](#)":

While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,
As of some one gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.

Without that second "rapping," the poem's famous cadence would be thrown off kilter.

Anadiplosis' Stylistic Effect Can Sound More Natural

When we speak, we tend to repeat words. Anadiplosis can therefore give a more natural, less rigid effect to the written word, and make it feel more like normal speech. In Jamaica Kincaid's essay "Those Words that Echo...Echo...Echo Through Life," anadiplosis creates the sense that she's speaking aloud to the reader, or perhaps working through her own memory:

"And then that one day, that one day after Mr. Potter's life advanced and exploded on the page, I had to have my lunch..."



OTHER RESOURCES

- [Dictionary.com Entry on Anadiplosis](#): Gives a solid, succinct definition.
- [Wikipedia Page on Anadiplosis](#): The definition offered isn't thorough--in fact, it's arguably incomplete--but Wikipedia does list some useful examples.
- [Slate Article](#): An entertaining think piece on the power of anadiplosis and its popularity in culture.
- [Buzzle Page on Anadiplosis](#): Has some good examples of anadiplosis in different media, plus a bit of explanation of its uses.
- [Manner of Speakin Page on Anadiplosis](#): Brief, but with some good notes on the rhetorical effect of anadiplosis.

HOW TO CITE

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