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ALLITERATION (1)



When a writer uses words close together which all begin with the same letter sound - usually consonants - we call it ALLITERATION.

For example, if we write, "The cold and calculating crook crossed the road and broke the window in the chemist's shop", we have a rather crude example of alliteration. The sentence has five words which begin with the consonant, C.

This device, or particular use of language, is often used in

- advertising jingles
- nonsense or comic verse
- by serious writers of prose and poetry when they want to create a particular effect
- in tongue-twisters



Advertising Jingles

Derris deals with dandruff!!

Make a list of any advertising jingles that you can think of which use alliteration.



Nonsense Verse

'And hast thou slain the Jabberwock!
Come to my arms, my beamish boy!
O frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!
He chortled in his joy.

(from *Jabberwocky* by Lewis Carroll)

Look through the poetry books in your library. Try to find examples of comic and nonsense verse which use alliteration. You might find it useful to look for Ogden Nash, Lewis Carroll, W. S. Gilbert.



Tongue-Twisters

Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled pepper.

Copy out any tongue-twisters which you can find.

ASSONANCE

Assonance is the repetition of vowel sounds. It is, therefore, a sort of rhyme and it is, in fact, sometimes called vocalic rhyme - the rhyming of vowel sounds.

All of these words, for example, have a similar vowel sound - hope, boat, roam, comb, store, floor, groaning, Simone. If some of these words occurred close together, in a poem or a piece of prose, we would call it assonance - repeated similar sounds.

Listen to the sounds in these lines from Wilfred Owen's poem, *Exposure*.

Our brains ache, in the merciless iced east winds that knife us . . .
Wearied we keep awake because the night is silent . . .
Low, drooping flares confuse our memory of the salient . . .
Worried by silence, sentries whisper, curious, nervous,
But nothing happens.

Watching, we hear the mad gusts tugging on the wire,
Like twitching agonies of men among its brambles,
Northward, incessantly, the flickering gunnery rumbles,
Far off, like a dull rumour of some other war.
What are we doing here?

The thin vowel sound "i" is repeated in *merciless, winds, knife, night, silent, silence, wire, like*. These repeated sounds emphasise the exposure and the biting coldness of the night, just as the repeated s sound in the first line mimics the sound of the "merciless iced east winds".

A duller sound is repeated in *brains, ache, wearied, awake, salient* and in *Low, drooping, worried, gunnery, rumour*. These sounds seem to suggest the sleepy monotony endured by these soldiers in their front line trenches.

Question One Starting with the words flake, strong, flight and pull, make lists of words with similar vowel sounds.

Question Two Write about the effects of the assonance in the following:

***Cargoes* by John Masefield**

Quinquireme of Nineveh from distant Ophir
Rowing home to haven in sunny Palestine,
With a cargo of ivory,
And apes and peacocks,
Sandalwood, cedarwood, and sweet white wine.

Stately Spanish galleon coming from the Isthmus,
Dipping through the Tropics by the palm-green shores,
With a cargo of diamonds,
Emeralds, amethysts,
Topazes, and cinnamon, and gold moidores.

Dirty British coaster with a salt-caked smoke stack
Butting through the Channel in the mad March days,
With a cargo of Tyne coal,
Road-rail, pig-lead,
Firewood, iron-ware, and cheap tin trays.

1. How does the use of assonance add to the effectiveness of each verse?
2. How well do these sounds in each verse help to suggest the three different kinds of cargoes, places and ships?

SPOONERISMS

The Reverend W. A. Spooner - the queer old dean!

The Reverend William Archibald Spooner (1844-1930) was Dean and Warden of New College, Oxford. He apparently had a nervous habit of mixing up words by transposing their initial sounds. When he referred to “the queer old dean” he really meant “the dear old queen”! We might say that it is a slip of the tongue - when we say something that we don't really mean to say.

It's quite easy to see what spoonerisms are - bash cook (cash book); damp stealer (stamp dealer); a blushing crow (a crushing blow); parrots and keys (carrots and peas). Notice that it is the *sound* of the words which is important. Often when spoonerisms are written down there is a spelling change - as in *keys/peas* in the example above.

Some of the spoonerisms attributed to the Reverend Spooner may well have been made up by his students to exaggerate his nervous habit. Look at the spoonerisms below and then write out what Spooner really meant to say. They have all, rightly or wrongly, been attributed to him.

1.
 - (a) You have tasted a worm and hissed all my mystery lectures.
 - (b) A scoop of Boy Trouts.
 - (c) A well-boiled icicle.
 - (d) Our Lord is a shoving leopard.
 - (e) The farmers of Britain are noble tons of soil.
 - (f) I think you are occupewing my pie. May I sew you to another sheet?
 - (g) (When visiting a friend's cottage) You have a nosey little cook here.
 - (h) (When announcing a hymn in church) “Kinkering Congs Their Titles Take”
 - (i) (At a review of naval ships) - a vast display of cattle ships and bruisers.
 - (j) “Which of us has not felt in his heart a half-warmed fish?”
 - (k) (When visiting the Dean of another college) Is the bean dizzy?
 - (l) Spooner apparently punished a student for “fighting a liar” in the college quadrangle.

2. All of the examples in Question One are *supposed* to have been said by Reverend Spooner. From time to time we don't always say exactly what we intend to. Spoonerisms are really fairly common. Write out what was really intended in the spoonerisms below.
 - (a) A lack of pies
 - (b) Go and shake a tower.
 - (c) I think you have very mad banners.
 - (d) There will be drain or rizzle with the possibility of shattered scowers.
 - (e) Dumb and mad. (Some teenagers may well think this of their parents!!)
 - (f) The poet W. H Auden referred sarcastically to two nineteenth century poets as “Sheets and Kelly”. Which two poets did he mean?

3. Make up a few spoonerisms of your own.

DRAMATIC IRONY

When the audience watching a play can see something significant in what a character says or does but which the character is unaware of, we call it dramatic irony. We, the audience, can see a meaning which the character on stage is not aware of. A few examples will make this clearer.

If a character *thinks* he is alone and talks aloud about a crime he has committed but does not know that a policeman is hiding behind a curtain and listening then we call this dramatic irony. The audience knows that the criminal is giving himself away - the criminal is not aware of the situation he is in.

In Shakespeare's play *Macbeth*, Duncan, the king of Scotland, arrives at Macbeth's castle and speaks admiringly about the castle's splendid and healthy outlook. He does not realise - but the audience knows - that Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are planning to murder him. Duncan's stay at the castle will certainly not be healthy!

After the murder of Duncan his two sons run away from Macbeth's castle. They seek shelter, one in England and one in Ireland. They are afraid of being murdered too, but Macbeth tries to make people believe that they fled because they had murdered their father.

Later in the play, after Macbeth has become king himself, Macbeth plans to have his friend Banquo murdered. The witches had prophesied that Banquo would be the father of kings. Macbeth feels threatened by Banquo and his son, Fleance. Macbeth is about to hold a state banquet or feast, to which Banquo, of course, is invited, but Macbeth plans that both Banquo and his son Fleance will be murdered before the feast that evening.

Macbeth Ride you this afternoon?
Banquo Aye, my good lord.
Macbeth We should have else desired your good advice
(Which still hath been both grave and prosperous)
In this day's council; but we'll take tomorrow.
Is't far you ride?
Banquo As far, my lord, as will fill up the time
'Twixt this and supper. Go not my horse the better
I must become a borrower of the night
For a dark hour or twain.
Macbeth **Fail not our feast.**
Banquo My lord, I will not.
Macbeth **We hear our bloody cousins are bestowed
In England and in Ireland, not confessing
Their cruel parricide, filling their hearers
With strange invention.** But of that tomorrow,
When therewithal we shall have cause of state
Craving us jointly. Hie you to horse; adieu,
Till you return at night. **Goes Fleance with you?**
(*Macbeth* Act Three Scene 1)

Knowing what we, the audience, know about Macbeth, his fears and his character, write about this scene in the play.

Pay particular attention to those lines printed in bold in the extract above.