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# ALLITERATION AS A LITERARY DEVICE

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**Abstract:** This article is devoted to some literary and theoretical views of Alliteration in English, giving a stylistic analysis of some literary passages in which the word master in the text of a work of art uses repetitions of individual consonants or their combinations. Alliteration is a method of euphonic repetition in one voice, tuning one or two similar sounds. It is a beautiful musical unity of the author's thought inherent in poetry and high prose. Usually the semantic words of a sentence are alliterated. The article emphasizes that for alliteration to be effective, alliteration words must be consistent. If there are too many non-alliterative words in the middle, then the literary medium is not fit for purpose. In this regard, this article discusses alliteration and its methodological and stylistic functions in the literature.

**Keywords:** alliteration, repetition of the words, literary device, poetry, consonance, assonance, rhetorical and artistic impact of the words, tongue twisters, thematic intention, stanza, rhythm, prose.

## INTRODUCTION.

Alliteration is a literary device that reflects repetition in two or more nearby words of initial consonant sounds. Alliteration does not refer to the repetition of consonant letters that begin words, but rather the repetition of the consonant sound at the beginning of words. For example, the phrase “kids’ coats” is alliterative; though the words begin with different consonant letters, they produce the same consonant sounds. Similarly, the phrase “phony people” is not alliterative; though both words begin with the same consonant, the initial consonant sounds are different. In addition, for alliteration to be effective, alliterative words should flow in quick succession. If there are too many non-alliterative words in between, then the literary device is not purposeful.

For example, alliterative “tongue twisters” are useful for encouraging language learners, generally children, to hear the similar sound repeated at the

beginning of several words. A well-known alliterative tongue twister is: Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers. A peck of pickled peppers Peter Piper picked. However, though alliterative tongue twisters are associated with children, they are useful for practicing and improving pronunciation, fluency, and articulation. They are often utilized by actors, politicians, and public speakers for verbal exercises in clarity of speaking.

People use alliterative phrases frequently in everyday conversation. These phrases can sometimes sound cliché; however, they are effective in expressing both broad and familiar meaning. Here are some examples of alliteration in everyday speech:

rocky road

big business

jumping jacks

no nonsense

tough talk

### **METHODS AND MATERIALS.**

Alliteration, consonance, and assonance are all literary devices that are utilized as a means of creating emphasis, attention, significance, and importance to words in poetry, prose, or speech. These literary devices can be used for both artistic and rhetorical effect. Alliteration almost exclusively refers to the repetition of initial consonant sounds across the start of several words in a line of text.

The repetition of vowel sounds is generally excluded from alliteration, and categorized instead as assonance. Assonance refers to the repetition of vowel sounds, whether at the beginning, middle, or end, of words in close proximity to each other in a line of text. Consonance, of which alliteration is considered a subcategory, is the repetition of consonant sounds in successive words. Like assonance, consonance refers to the repetition of these sounds at the beginning, middle, or end of words. However, alliteration is limited to consonant sounds repeated at the beginning of words.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS.**

Alliteration is a useful device in literary works. The repetition of initial consonant sounds can have a pleasing effect for readers and listeners. In addition, it calls attention to the rhetorical and artistic impact of the words in that alliteration signifies that the alliterative words are linked purposefully and thematically. This allows writers to turn the focus of their audience on the subject presented.

In literature, alliteration is the conspicuous repetition of identical original consonants in consecutive or closely related syllables in a group of words, even if they are spelled differently. As a method of linking words for the effect, alliteration is also called the initial rhyme or the initial rhyme. For example, "humble home" or "potential power game". Familiar example: "Peter Piper plucked a piece of pickled pepper." "Alliteration" comes from the Latin word *littera*, meaning "letter of the alphabet"; it was first coined by the Italian humanist Giovanni Pontano in the 15th century in Latin dialogue. Alliteration is poetically used in various languages of the world, including Arabic, Irish, German, Mongolian, Hungarian, American Sign Language, Somali, Finnish, Icelandic.

Some literary experts mistake repetition of vowels or repetition at the end of a word for alliteration. Alliteration narrowly refers to the repetition of a letter in any syllables that, according to the meter of the poem, are underlined, as in James Thomson's "Come ... stretching out a lazy, languid line" along. "

Consonance is a broader literary device defined by the repetition of consonants at any point in a word (for example, homecoming, hot leg). Alliteration is a special case of consonance, when a repetitive consonant sound is in the stressed syllable. Alliteration can also refer to the use of different but similar consonants, such as the alliteration of z with s, as the author Sir Gawain and the Green Knight does, or as the Anglo-Saxon (Old English) poets alliterate.

**Analysis.** There is one specialized form of alliteration called symmetric alliteration. That is, alliteration containing parallelism or chiasm. In this case, the phrase should have a pair of outer end words starting with the same sound, and a

pair of outer words starting with matching sounds as it approaches the center. For example, "the rule of rusty brown jackets" or "fluorescent combination forever." Symmetrical alliteration is similar to palindromes in using symmetry.

In English poetry, poets can draw attention to certain words in a poetic line using alliteration. They can also use alliteration to create a pleasing rhythmic effect. In the following lines of verse, notice how alliteration is used to emphasize words and create rhythm:

"Give me a magnificent silent sun with its dazzling rays!" Walt Whitman, "Give Me a Gorgeous Silent Sun"

"Some newspapers like writers, some like wrappers. Are you a writer or a wrapper?" Karl Sandberg, "Paper I"

Alliteration can also add mood to a poem. If the poet repeats soft melodic sounds, it can create a calm or dignified mood. On the other hand, if harsh, harsh sounds are repeated, the mood can become tense or agitated.

Alliteration has been used in various areas of public speaking and rhetoric. Alliteration can also be seen as an artistic constraint that the speaker uses to make the audience feel some urgency, or perhaps even a lack of urgency, or some other emotional effect. For example, H or E sounds can be soothing, while P or B sounds can be pounding and attention can be grabbing. S sounds can mean danger or make the audience feel like they are being tricked. Other sounds can evoke feelings of happiness, discord, or anger, depending on the context. Alliteration serves to "strengthen any signified relationship." Its significance as a rhetorical device lies in the fact that it adds textural complexity to speech, making it more attractive, mobile and memorable. The use of alliteration in speech captures a person's auditory sensations; it helps the speaker to create a mood. the repeating sound or letter is not icy and therefore grabs the audience's attention and evokes emotion. A well-known example is John F. Kennedy's inaugural address, in which he uses alliteration 21 times. The last paragraph of his speech is included here as an example.

“Finally, whether you are citizens of America or the whole world, ask us here for the same high standards of strength and sacrifice that we ask of you. With a clear conscience, our only sure reward is history as the last judge of our affairs, let's go forward to lead the land we love, asking for His blessings and His help, but knowing that here on Earth, God's work must truly be ours. ” - John F. Kennedy

Here are some examples of alliteration in literature:

*The Raven (Edgar Allan Poe)*

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary,  
Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore—  
While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,  
As of some one gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.  
“This some visitor,” I muttered, “tapping at my chamber door—  
Only this and nothing more.”

Ah, distinctly I remember it was in the bleak December;  
And each separate dying ember wrought its ghost upon the floor.  
Eagerly I wished the morrow;—vainly I had sought to borrow  
From my books surcease of sorrow—sorrow for the lost Lenore—  
For the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore—  
Nameless here for evermore.

In this first stanza of his well known poem, Poe utilizes alliteration to build a poetic mood. The poet begins his descriptive alliteration with “weak and weary” as well as “nodded, nearly napping” to establish a somnambulate atmosphere. The repetition of these sounds enhances their poetic effect, emphasizing the disillusioned and heartbroken subject of the poem and the thematic intention of the poet. As a result, the sudden “tapping” at the door is both a surprise to the poet and reader.

Poe’s use of alliteration in the first few stanzas continues throughout the entire poem. The presence of this literary device within the poetic lines reinforces the raven’s repetitious answer to the poet, “nevermore,” and underscores the escalating

mood of fear, desperation, and frustration felt by the poet. This creates a similar effect for readers as they share in the poem's mood and the poet's emotions and experience.

*Romeo and Juliet (William Shakespeare)*

From forth the fatal loins of these two foes  
A pair of star-crossed lovers take their life;  
Whose misadventured piteous overthrows  
Doth with their death bury their parents' strife

In the prologue of his tragic work, Shakespeare utilizes alliterative wording like "fatal" and "foes" as a means of foreshadowing the events of the play. This alliteration also calls attention to certain pairings of words in the prologue to emphasize the themes of "Romeo and Juliet." For example, "fatal" is associated with "foes," "lovers" with "life," and "doth" with "death." These alliterative pairs reflect the pairing of characters in the tragedy, through love and conflict, including the feuding Capulet and Montague families, the romance between Romeo and Juliet, and even the cousins Tybalt and Benvolio.

Therefore, the use of alliteration as a literary device in the prologue helps to create a sense of balance between the opposing forces of and within the overall play. In addition, the alliterative phrasing, most notably in the first line of this excerpt, provides melody and rhythm to the verse, indicating to the reader how the words may sound if spoken aloud or performed. This enhances Shakespeare's intended thematic effects of discord and harmony for the reader.

*To an Athlete Dying Young (A.E. Housman)*

The time you won your town the race  
We chaired you through the market-place;  
Man and boy stood cheering by,  
And home we brought you shoulder-high.  
Today, the road all runners come,  
Shoulder-high we bring you home,

And set you at your threshold down,  
Townsmen of a stiller town.  
Smart lad, to slip betimes away  
From fields where glory does not stay,  
And early though the laurel grows  
It withers quicker than the rose.  
Eyes the shady night has shut  
Cannot see the record cut,  
And *silence* sounds no worse than cheers  
After earth has stopped the ears.  
Now you will not swell the rout  
Of lads that wore their honours out,  
Runners whom renown outran  
And the name died before the man.  
So set, before its echoes fade,  
The fleet *foot* on the sill of shade,  
And hold to the low lintel up  
The still-defended challenge-cup.  
And round that early-laurelled head  
Will flock to gaze the strengthless dead,  
And find unwithered on its curls  
The garland briefer than a girl's.

In this poem, Housman creates what may be considered a “preemptive” *elegy* to an athlete who is dying. In each stanza, the poet incorporates alliteration as a literary device to emphasize the intention of the poem. In addition, the alliterative wording reflects the poet’s use of artistic expression as a means of elegizing the athlete. For example, the lines “Eyes the shady night has shut / Cannot see the record cut” each feature alliteration that underscores the *theme* of the poem. Once the athlete has died, indicated by the euphemistic phrase “his eyes are shut by the shady night,” he

won't have lived to see his legacy undone; upon his death, the athlete "cannot see" his record "cut," as in broken or surpassed by someone else.

Housman's use of alliteration also mirrors the *power* of the athlete. For example, the poet uses alliterative phrases such as "fleet foot" and "the road all runners come" to indicate that the athlete, in a sense, has won a race against time. Rather than outliving his renown among the living, the poet suggests that the athlete will be renowned among the dead as they flock to see his laurel. This creates a sense of *irony* in the poem in that the poet appears to appreciate the athlete dying young and triumphant instead of lamenting the early loss of someone young and strong.

An interesting example of the overuse of alliteration is given in Swinburne's "Nephelidia" where the poet parodies his own style:

"Gaunt as the ghestliest of glimpses that gleam through the gloom of the gloaming when ghosts go aghast."

When the choice of words depends primarily on the principle of alliteration, exactitude of expression, and even sense may suffer. But when used sparingly and with at least some slight inner connection with the sense of the utterance, alliteration heightens the general aesthetic effect.

Alliteration in the English language is deeply rooted in the traditions of English folklore. The laws of phonetic arrangement in Anglo-Saxon poetry differed greatly from those of present-day English poetry. In Old English poetry alliteration was one of the basic principles of verse and considered, along with rhythm, to be its main characteristic. Each stressed meaningful word in a line had to begin with the same sound or combination of sounds.

Unlike rhyme in modern English verse, the semantic function of which is to chain one line to another, alliteration in Old English verse was used to consolidate the sense within the line, leaving the relation between the lines rather loose. But there really is an essential resemblance structurally between alliteration and rhyme

(by the repetition of the same sound) and also functionally (by communicating a consolidating effect). Alliteration is therefore sometimes called initial rhyme.

The traditions of folklore are exceptionally stable and alliteration as a structural device of Old English poems and songs has shown remarkable continuity. It is frequently used as a well-tested means not only in verse but in emotive prose, in newspaper headlines, in the titles of books, in proverbs and sayings, as, for example, in the following:

Tit for tat; blind as a bat, betwixt and between; It is neck or nothing; to rob Peter to pay Paul; or in the titles of books:

"Sense and Sensibility" (Jane Austin); "Pride and Prejudice" (Jane Austin); "The School for Scandal" (Sheridan); "A Book of Phrase and Fable" (Brewer).

### **CONCLUSION.**

The artist of the word, creating his work, strives by all possible lexical, syntactic and stylistic means to create a vivid figurative picture, to influence the audience of readers and evoke a certain response. For this, various figures of artistic speech are used. The concept of a figure includes syntactic and stylistic constructions based on the repetition of individual sounds, words, conjunctions that carry the main semantic load in a literary text. This way of highlighting words is called repetition.

Repetitions can be formed by repeating sounds of different categories - consonants and vowels, or a combination of both. If the artist of the word in the text of a poetic work deliberately uses the repetition of individual consonants or their combinations, then it is about alliteration that we discussed above.

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