

Rhetorical Analysis

Aligned with The Gettysburg Address

What is Parallelism (Parallel Structure)?

- Repetition of a chosen grammatical form within a sentence or across multiple sentences.
- By making each compared item or clause follow the same grammatical pattern, a writer creates a sense of **balance, rhythm, and inescapable logic**.

Types of Parallelism

1. Anaphora

- Repetition of a word or phrase at the **beginning** of successive clauses or sentences.
- Builds emotional momentum, establishes a rhythmic “beat,” and emphasizes a specific starting point.
- Ex) **I have a dream** that one day... **I have a dream** that my four little children... **I have a dream** today! (Martin Luther King Jr.)
- **We cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow**
- **It is for us... It is rather for us...**
- **that from these... that we here... that this nation... that government....**

2. Antithesis

- Juxtaposing two opposing ideas using parallel grammatical structures.
- Highlights conflict, creates a sense of logical balance, and forces the reader to weigh two sides.
- Ex) That’s one **small step for man**, one **giant leap for mankind**. (Neil Armstrong)
- **nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here.**
- **who here gave their live that that nation might live**
- **living and dead**
- **to add or detract**
- **these dead shall not have died in vain... that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom**

3. Epistrophe (Epiphora)

- Repetition of a word or phrase at the **end** of successive clauses or sentences.
- Focuses the audience’s attention on the conclusion or the “end result” of an idea; provides a sense of finality.
- (NIV) When I was a **child**, I talked like a **child**, I thought like a **child**, I reasoned like a **child**. (1 Cor 13:11)
- (NABRE) When I was a **child**, I used to talk as a **child**, think as a **child**, reason as a **child**. (1 Cor 13:11)
- **of the people, by the people, for the people**

4. Tricolon

- A series of three parallel words, phrases, or clauses.
- Creates a sense of completeness, satisfaction, and wholeness. In Western rhetoric, “three” feels like a finished unit.
- Ex) I came, I saw, I conquered. (Julius Caesar)
- **We cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow**
- **of the people, by the people, for the people**

5. Chiasmus

- A “mirroring” structure where the grammar of the first clause is inverted in the second.
- Flips the perspective, creates a “criss-cross” logic that feels clever, balanced, and authoritative.
- Ex) Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country. (JFK)

6. Asyndeton

- The deliberate omission of conjunctions (like “and”) between parts of a sentence.
- Increases the speed and urgency of the prose; makes a list feel like a rapid, “living” pulse rather than a static list.
- Ex) An empty stream, a great silence, an impenetrable forest. The air was warm, thick, heavy, sluggish. (Joseph Conrad, Heart of Darkness)
- **We cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow**
- **of the people, by the people, for the people**

7. Polysyndeton

- The use of several conjunctions in close succession, especially where some could be omitted.
- Slows down the pace, making each item feel heavy, deliberate, and significant; creates a sense of accumulation and gravity.
- Ex) And it was dark **and** there was water standing in the street **and** no lights **and** windows broke (Ernest Hemingway)

8. Anadiplosis

- Repetition of the final word of one clause at the beginning of the following clause.
- Creates a “chain-link” effect; shows a direct logical progression or a clear cause-and-effect relationship.
- Ex) Fear leads to **anger**. **Anger** leads to **hate**. **Hate** leads to suffering. (Yoda, Star Wars)
- **... gave their lives that that nation might live**
 - It is not an anadiplosis in a strict sense, but we can see that the author used some rhetorical device in the sentence.

Other Rhetorical Devices Used in **The Gettysburg Address**

1. Alliteration

- Poor power
- four... father... forth...
- New nation
- field... field... final... fitting
- people... perish...

2. Imagery

- The image of birth and life
- conceived in Liberty

Other Points to Think About in **The Gettysburg Address**

1. Style

- economical, telegraphic; conveys an important message in a short passage
- Lots of antitheses are used.

2. Demonstratives

- The repetitive use of demonstratives makes a connection inside the passage, intertwining the words together.