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Assonance is a literary device that involves the repetition of vowel sounds within words, phrases, or sentences that are close together in a text. Unlike rhyme, which repeats both vowel and consonant sounds at the ends of words, assonance focuses only on repeating the same vowel sounds regardless of the surrounding consonants. This sound pattern creates a subtle musical effect that enhances the rhythm and mood of poetry, prose, song lyrics, and other written works. Why It Matters: Assonance contributes significantly to the artistic and structural elements of language. In poetry and creative writing, it creates internal rhythm and musicality that engages readers and listeners. Authors use assonance deliberately to emphasize certain words, enhance the emotional impact of a passage, or create memorable phrases. For young readers, recognizing assonance develops phonological awareness critical foundation for reading fluency and comprehension. It also helps students appreciate the deliberate craft of writing and encourages them to experiment with sound patterns in their own creative compositions. Understanding assonance allows students to analyze how authors use sound devices to convey mood, tone, and meaning across various genres.Similar But Different: Assonance vs. Alliteration: While assonance repeats vowel sounds (like “fleet fleet sweep by sleeping geese”), alliteration repeats initial consonant sounds (like “Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers”). Both create musicality but affect the ear differently. Assonance vs. Consonance: Assonance focuses on repeated vowel sounds, whereas consonance repeats consonant sounds within or at the end of words (like “pitter-patter” or “all mammals named Sam”). Consonance often creates harder, more percussive effects. Assonance vs. Rhyme: Assonance repeats vowel sounds anywhere within words or phrases, while rhyme repeats both vowel and consonant sounds at the ends of words (like “cat” and “hat”). Assonance creates subtle internal connections, while rhyme creates more obvious sound correspondences. Assonance vs. Onomatopoeia: Assonance is a pattern of similar vowel sounds, whereas onomatopoeia involves words that imitate the sounds they describe (like “buzz” or “splash”). Assonance affects how words sound together, while onomatopoeia makes individual words sound like what they represent.Examples in Poetry: The silken sad uncertain rustling of each purple curtain” (Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Raven”) repeats the short “u” sound. “Try to light the fire” repeats the long “i” sound. “The crumbling thunder of seas” (Alfred Lord Tennyson) repeats the “uh” sound. In Children’s Literature: “Go slow on the road” repeats the long “o” sound. “The cat in the black hat sat on a mat” repeats the short “a” sound. “The tiny child finds time to smile wide” repeats the long “i” sound. In Song Lyrics: “Fleet foot on the corrie, sage grouse on the wing” (from “Wild Mountain Thyme”) repeats the long “o” sound. “I must confess that in my quest I felt depressed and restless” (Paul Simon) repeats the short “e” sound. In Non-Fiction: “The rain in Spain stays mainly in the plain” repeats the long “a” sound. “Those yellow lemons made mellow melodies” repeats the short “e” sound. “The light night flight might be right” repeats the long “i” sound. “Stay fresh, stay clean” repeats the long “a” sound. “Bright white light might make nice nights” repeats the long “i” sound. Assonance is a literary device in which the repetition of similar vowel sounds takes place two or more words in proximity to each other within a line of poetry or prose. Assonance most often refers to the repetition of internal vowel sounds in words that do not end the same. For example, he fell asleep under the cherry tree is a phrase that features assonance with the repetition of the long e vowel, despite the fact that the words containing this vowel do not end in perfect rhymes. This allows writers the means of emphasizing important words in a phrase or line, as well as creating a sense of rhythm, enhancing mood, and offering a lyrical effect of words and sounds. In his poem Player Piano, John Updike offers a powerful example of assonance for his reader in the line never my numb plunker fumbles. By repeating vowel sounds in numb, plunker, and fumbles, Updike is able to emphasize the clunky rhythm and sounds of these words when put together. This creates an interesting contrast in consideration of the poems title, which would more likely indicate the presence of melodious words and sounds in the poem. Common Examples: Many common phrases utilize assonance. People use them in everyday speech to emphasize or to reflect the mood. Here are some examples of common uses of assonance: Son of a gun: The cat is out of the bag: Dumb luck: After awhile, crooked: Cops: and dip: Cock of the walk: Goodnight, sleep tight, dont let the bedbugs bite: Stranger: dancer: Winner, chicken dinner: Motion of the ocean: Keep your eyes on the prize: Lean, mean, fighting machine: Wild child: Surf and turf: Examples of Assonance in Song: Assonance is a useful device when it comes to song lyrics and titles. Here are some examples of assonance in well-known songs: Those Lazy-Hazy-Crazy Days of Summer (Hans Carste)! recall Central Park in the fall (Danke Schoen Wayne Newton) Rock Around the Clock (Bill Haley and His Comets) The rain in Spain stays mainly in the plain (musical My Fair Lady) Back in Black (AC/DC) Oh, give me a home where the buffalo roam (Home on the Range Daniel E. Kelley and Brewster M. Higley) Only the Lonely (Roy Orbison) Say hey, good lookin. Whatscha got cookin? (Hey Good Lookin’ Hank Williams, Jr.) Crocodile Rock (Elton John) Light My Fire (The Doors) Silent night, holy night, all is calm, all is bright (Silent Night) Joseph Mohr) Famous Examples of Assonance: Think you havent heard of anyfamous phrases with assonance? Here are some well-known and recognizable examples of this : Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary (The Raven Edgar Allan Poe) I do not like green eggs and ham. I do not like them Sam I am. (Green Eggs and Ham Dr. Seuss) Nine nice night nurses nursing nicely (English language tongue-twister) Nutter Butter (American cookie brand) This little light of mine, Im going to let it shine (gospel/spiritual Harry Dixon Loes) Girl with a Pearl Earring (painting by Johannes Vermeer) Difference Between Assonance and Alliteration: Assonance and alliteration are often confused with each other when it comes to literary devices. They are similar in the sense that they rely on the repetition of a sound in words that are either adjacent or close proximal to each other. However, assonance refers to the repetition of vowel sounds, while alliteration is the repetition of the same letter or sound at the beginning of words. An example of alliteration would be the title of a poem by Shel Silverstein: Sarah Cynthia Sylvia Stout Would Not Take the Garbage Out. The first four words of this title repeat the sound of the consonant s even though the word Cynthia begins with a different consonant. Like assonance, alliteration is the repetition of sound for literary effect. However, assonance is strictly limited to repeated vowel sounds. Both assonance and alliteration can influence the rhythm of poetry and prose. In addition, the repetition of sound for both assonance and alliteration must take place in words that are near each other within a phrase or line. Otherwise, the effect is likely to go unnoticed by the reader. When used properly as literary devices, they can enhance the meaning of literature as well as the enjoyment and artistic use of words and their sounds. Writing Assonance: Overall, as a literary device, assonance functions as a means of creating rhythm through stressing syllables with repetitive vowel sounds. In addition, assonance can regulate the pacing of a poem or line of text. For example, long vowel sounds tend to slow the pace of reading, whereas short vowel sounds tend to quicken a readers pace. This control of pacing is an effective device utilized by writers to create or indicate the tone and mood of a literary work. Like any literary device, writers should avoid the overuse of assonance. Too many instances of assonance in any form of literature can be distracting and ineffective for the reader. Therefore, its best to make subtle and sparing use of assonance. Here are some ways that writers benefit from incorporating assonance into their work: Use of Rhythm: Assonance allows writers to create a sense of rhythm in their work. This is especially effective when it comes to poetry. In writing, rhythm is based on patterns of syllables and sounds that are stressed and unstressed. With the repetition of vowel sounds, writers can control which syllables are stressed in a line of poetry or prose, thereby creating rhythms that are quick, slow, or a combination. This talent for assonance allows for variety in the pacing of words which enhances the experience for the reader. Enhance Mood: In many art forms, mood is a crucial element. In writing, assonance is an excellent way to create a specific mood. For example, a writer creating a somber, light-hearted, or playful mood can use the repetition of vowel sounds to create that mood. Assonance is more similar to internal than rhyme, the quality of repeated sound can mimic the quality of a repeated note or chord in a phrase of music. This lyrical effect has great value for the reader of a line of poetry or prose. As a literary device, assonance can demonstrate the harmony and musical quality of word choice and language. Difference Between Assonance and Consonance: As stated in consonance, both assonance and consonance are poetic devices. Whereas a consonance is a repetition of consonance sounds in a verse, assonance is a repetition of vowel sounds in a verse. They are different in that one comprises vowel sounds and the other consonant sounds, one comprises stressed and the other unstressed syllables. Also, whereas a consonance could be used in prose to make it melodious, assonance is used only in poetic verses and not in prose. Use of Assonance in Sentences: His tables stable after putting a balancer under it. On a cold winter evening; singing was not allowed on the farm. Are you sure Bob rubbed the store last night? There’s a green bee instead of a yellow one in the fantasy world. Jane asked Johnny to just trust her while cutting his hair. Examples of Assonance in Literature: Assonance is an effective literary device. Here are some examples of assonance and how it adds to the artistic quality of well-known literary works: Example 1: Look, Stranger (W.H. Auden) Here at the small fields ending pause/Where the chalk wall falls to the foam and its tall ledges/Oppose the pluck/Auden utilizes assonance as a literary device in this poem to create a sense of rhythm and lyrical effect. The words chalk, wall, and falls, are not only repetitive in their vowel sounds but there are no words in between to separate them. This has a rhythmic effect for the reader that echoes the visual image that the words conjure forth. The awkward repetition of the vowel sound in these words creates a sense of familiarity in the way that a chalk wall would be constructed. Example 2: The Mother (Gwendolyn Brooks) Though why should I whine, Whine that the crime was other than mine?/ Since anyhow you are dead. In this heart-wrenching poem about abortion, loss, and maternal love, Brooks utilizes assonance as a means of reinforcing the poets guilt and suffering. The repetition of the long i vowel in whine, crime, and mine reflects a haunting sound of a babys cries. In addition, the assonance in this poem mirrors the poets own impulse to cry and whine as a result of her suffering. This vowel sound also reinforces to the reader the presence of the pronoun I in the first line. The sound of her words underscores the poets feelings of recurring guilt and the idea that the loss of her babies is a deliberate yet isolating action. The poet acknowledges her responsibility for the crime, while simultaneously separating herself as i once again in a symbolic way from her babies, you. But is there for the night a resting-place? A roof for when the slow dark hours begin. May not the darkness hide it from my face? You cannot miss that in. In her poem, Rossetti structures each stanza with queries and responses. This is effective for the reader in that the poem appears to have two voices: one that questions and one that answers. This balance between uncertainty and surety is enhanced by the poets use of assonance in the final line of this stanza. Rossetti utilizes assonance in the form of repeated short i vowels in miss and inn. This serves to reinforce a definitive tone of certainty in the response. In addition, the short vowel sound in those words creates a rhythm in the poem by emphasizing and punctuating those short words. This literary device sets forth an effective contrast between the last line of this stanza and the longer, more lyrical lines that precede it. Although there are no synonyms for assonance, the closest resembling words are chant, lyric, music, aria, and chime. Refrain and theme also come close to it in meanings, but they are, too, literary devices, having their own distinct meanings and uses. Key takeaways: Assonance is a literary device where vowel sounds are repeated in nearby words, creating a smooth, musical flow. Assonance is commonly used in poetry, song lyrics, and speeches to make phrases more memorable. An example of assonance is “Tryn to reach my goal, my power of speech unimpeachable, where the long ee sound is repeated. Ever notice how certain phrases just sing? Thats often due to assonance, a literary device where vowel sounds echo across nearby words, creating that internal musicality. Unlike rhymes, which create their rhythm by repeating both the vowel and ending consonant sounds of words, assonance focuses specifically on repeated vowel sounds within words. This subtle repetition appeals to our natural love of sound and rhythm, giving phrases a smoother, more pleasing flow. In this post, well explore how assonance works, highlight famous examples, and show you how to incorporate it into your writing to create a greater impact. Table of contents: Defining assonance: How assonance enhances your writing: Assonance examples: Assonance vs. other literary devices: Assonance FAQs: The AI writing assistant for anyone with work to do: Defining assonance: Assonance is when vowel sounds repeat in nearby words, especially in the middle of words or in stressed syllables. Youll often hear assonance in poetry and song lyrics, but it works just as well in everyday writing. One of the most famous examples is The rain in Spain stays mainly in the plain. In this sentence, the long a sound repeats in rain, Spain, stays, mainly, and plain. That repetition gives the line a musical, catchy feel, without the words needing to rhyme exactly. Writers and speakers often use assonance to create a smooth rhythm or to highlight certain phrases. Its all about how vowel sounds work together. How assonance enhances your writing: Repeating vowel sounds can create rhythm, set the mood, and make certain words stand out. So, whether youre writing a poem or just want your sentences to flow better, heres how assonance can help: 1. Create rhythm: Assonance can make writing sound more musical, especially in poems or lyrics. Its like rhyming, but a little more subtle. I was in a dark room, loud tunes, looking to make a vow soon. Kendrick Lamar: 2. Set the mood: Different vowel sounds can create different feelings. Long oo sounds (as in moon) can feel calm or eerie, while short i sounds (as in pin) might sound sharp or tense. Cool pool, blue and deep, invites a drowsy mood for sleep. 3. Highlight important words: Repeating a vowel sound can make certain words stand out and stick with the reader. Old age should burn and rave at close of day. / Rage, rage against the dying of the light. Dylan Thomas: 4. Make prose more poetic: Even in regular writing, assonance can make sentences sound more polished or powerful. Just dont overdo it, as too much can feel forced. The low moon of the cold road: Assonance examples: Below are several examples of assonance in everyday phrases, songs, and literature, with the repeated vowel sounds bolded. While these examples focus on key instances of assonance, you may also notice other subtle repetitions of vowel sounds throughout the phrases and excerpts. Example: Format: Explanation: Train hard, play smart. Common phrase: Features the repeated long ay sound, reinforcing the connection between effort and reward. Keep your eyes on the prize. Common phrase: Showcases the repeated long eye sound (as in buy), adding rhythm and emphasizing focus and determination. Good day in my mind, safe to take a step out Get some air now, let your edge out. SZA. Good Days: Song: Highlights the repeated long ay sound (as in say), creating a calming flow that aligns with the theme of reflection. Tryn to reach my goal, my power of speech unimpeachable: Only nineteen, but my mind is older: These New York City streets get colder. I shoulder: Every burden, evry disadvantage. My Shot, from Hamilton: Song: Emphasizes the repeated long ee sound (as in see), underlining resilience and determination. Soft language issued from their spiteless lips as they swished in low circles round and round the field, winding hither and thither through the weeds. James Joyce, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man: Literature: Demonstrates the repeated short ih sound (as in bit), evoking smooth, flowing motion in the scene, about the glade in a frail agony of grace, she trailed her rags through dust and ashes. Cormac McCarthy, Outer Dark: Literature: Illustrates the repeated long ay sound (as in say), highlighting the sorrowful tone of the scene. The mailman still hands me bills like I should be lucky. Hanif Abdurraqib, Watching a Fight at the New Haven Dog Park, First Two Dogs, and Then Their Owners: Poetry: Features the repeated short ih vowel sound (as in bit), adding a cynical tone to the frustration. A bat cracks in the flickering background, and were dead tired from the horse track. Ada Limn, The Good Wave: Poetry: Showcases the repeated short a sound (as in cat), emphasizing fatigue and weariness. Assonance vs. other literary devices: Writers often use sound-based techniques to create rhythm, emphasis, or mood. While assonance is one of the most common, its helpful to understand how it differs from similar devices like alliteration, consonance, and anaphora. Literary device: Definition: Example: How it differs from assonance: Alliteration: Repeating the same consonant sound at the start of words. She sells seashells by the seashore. Focuses on initial consonant sounds, while assonance repeats vowel sounds within words. Anaphora: Repeating a word or phrase at the start of lines or clauses. Every day, every night, in every way, I am getting better and better. Repeats entire words or phrases, not just vowel sounds. Consonance: Repeating consonant sounds within or at the end of words. Pitter patter, splash splash. Involves consonant sounds, whereas assonance focuses on vowel sounds. Craft: Memorable writing with assonance: Assonance creates a subtle musicality that keeps readers engaged and helps your message resonate. Using assonance in your writing can enhance the emotional impact and create more memorable content. Improve your sentence structure with Grammarly: Looking to elevate your writing? Grammarly helps you catch structural issues and improve clarity with tailored suggestions. Use it to make sure your use of assonance stays clear, effective, and grammatically correct. Assonance FAQs: Below are frequently asked questions about assonance and its uses to help you understand how this literary device works in writing and beyond. What written formats best suit assonance? Assonance works best in writing where sound and rhythm matter. Its especially effective in: Poems: It helps create a musical feel and flow. Song lyrics: It makes songs sound catchy and emphasizes feelings. Speeches: It can make important phrases easier to remember. Stories: Writers can use it subtly to make descriptions smoother or highlight certain words. Advertisements and slogans: Assonance makes them more memorable. How can assonance be used as a mnemonic device to help with memorization? Assonance can strengthen memory by adding rhythm and repetition, making phrases stick in the mind more easily. A well-known example of assonance used as a mnemonic is the phrase Look left, look right, look both ways again. The Good Wave: Poem: Shows how assonance helps people remember the step of checking traffic before crossing the street. To use assonance as a mnemonic tool, try these tips: Use similar vowel sounds in important words to create a strong word pattern. Keep phrases short and easy to say so theyre easier to remember. Focus on repeating sounds at key moments to emphasize the most important ideas. Use common word patterns to make phrases feel familiar. Say the phrase out loud to help it stick in your memory. Are there any assonance synonyms? The closest synonym for assonance is sound repetition, particularly in literary contexts. Other words with related meanings include: Consonance: Repeating consonant sounds in nearby words. Alliteration: Repeating consonant sounds, usually at the beginning of words. Rhyme: Words that share similar sounds, usually at the end. Repetition: Using the same sounds or words more than once for emphasis. Harmony: A pleasing arrangement of sounds, often in music or poetry. What is assonance? Here’s a quick and simple definition: Assonance is a figure of speech in which the same vowel sound repeats within a group of words. An example of assonance is: “Who gave Newton and Scooter the blue tunic? It was too soon!” Some additional key details about assonance: Assonance occurs when sounds, not letters, repeat. In the example above, the “oo” sound is what matters, not the different letters used to produce that sound. Assonance does not require that words with the same vowel sounds be directly next to each other. Assonance occurs so long as identical vowel-sounds are relatively close together. Assonant vowel sounds can occur anywhere (at the beginning or end, on stressed or unstressed syllables) within any of the words in the group. How to Pronounce Assonance Here’s how to pronounce assonance: as-uh-nuh-uh Assonance vs. Consonance Assonance is identical to another figure of speech called consonance, with one critical difference: assonance has to do with repeated vowel sounds, whereas consonance has to do with repeated consonant sounds. Assonance is used as a mnemonic device to help with memorization. Assonance and alliteration are often confused with each other when it comes to literary devices. They are similar in the sense that they rely on the repetition of a sound in words that are either adjacent or close proximal to each other. However, assonance refers to the repetition of vowel sounds, while alliteration is the repetition of the same letter or sound at the beginning of words. An example of alliteration would be the title of a poem by Shel Silverstein: Sarah Cynthia Sylvia Stout Would Not Take the Garbage Out. The first four words of this title repeat the sound of the consonant s even though the word Cynthia begins with a different consonant. Like assonance, alliteration is the repetition of sound for literary effect. However, assonance is strictly limited to repeated vowel sounds. Both assonance and alliteration can influence the rhythm of poetry and prose. In contrast, must occur either in the first syllables of words or on the stressed syllables of words. In practical terms, these rules mean that assonance can sometimes also be alliteration, but isnt always. Assonance That Is Also Alliteration Here are two examples of assonance that is also alliteration. In the first example, the assonance occurs at the beginning of words in the group. In the second example, assonance always occurs on stressed syllables of words (note that the second syllables of the words “decline” and “define” are the stressed syllables): “Aunt Agnes! Ack! Another accounting error!” I like to decline an offer of wine to define my style. Assonance That Is NOT Also Alliteration In the example below, assonance is not also alliteration, because the repeating vowel sound almost never occurs on either the first or stressed syllables (only on “imp” does it do either): Alice ignored the malice of the imp and bought the palace. If you read this example aloud, and also read aloud the assonance examples that are alliteration, you’ll sense that, while both have repeating vowel sounds, the examples that are also alliteration have a kind of rhythm to them that non-alliterative assonance lacks. Assonance and Rhyme Assonance also plays a role in rhyme. Rhyme is the repetition of identical sounds located at the ends of words. Rhymes can be either repeated consonant sounds or vowel sounds (or combinations of the two). A rhyme, then, can be assonant, but not all rhymes are assonant. Here’s an example of assonance functioning as rhyme at the end of lines three and four of the limerick below: There once was a man named Clark Whose dog refused to bark But when he gave the dog pie It stopped being shy And is loud nonstop until dark Assonance also plays a noticeable role in slant rhyme, a type of rhyme with words whose sounds are similar but not identical. Slant rhymes often pair similar vowel sounds with dissimilar consonant sounds, which means that slant rhymes often contain assonance. In the example below from the song “N.Y. State of Mind” the rapper Nas uses assonance to create slant rhymes between the first syllable of “prosperous,” the word “cops,” and the first syllable of the word “hostages.” In addition, the assonance of the “uh” sound in final syllables of “prosperous,” “dangerous,” and “could just” establishes the slant rhyme that ends with the slightly different vowel sound in “hostages.” And be prosperous, though we live dangerous Cops could just arrest me, blamin us, were held like hostages Assonance Examples Assonance is common in all sorts of writing, including poetry and prose literature, as well as song lyrics. Assonance Examples