

## FUNCTIONS OF EPITHET IN LITERATURE

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**Abstract;** Epithets are often used by writers to develop characters, as epithets can be used as a nickname or a title. There are endless ways that epithets can be used.

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Epithets are often used by writers to develop characters, as epithets can be used as a nickname or a title. There are endless ways that epithets can be used. Epithets can not only shine a spotlight on the characters or persons that they are attached to, but they also allow writers variations in terms of how a character is referred to. One of the most powerful attributes of epithets is that when they are used correctly, the reader readers can explore their own minds to imagine what characters look like. Here is a look at the use of epithets within verbal and written forms of expression, which includes the definition of epithets as well as the usage of epithets and the influence they have in pop culture, politics, and social change.

*Epithets are used in poetry, as well as classical literature.*

Homer was especially known for using epithets, almost to excess. Examples of some well known epithets include:

*Grey-eyed goddess*

*Rosy-fingered dawn*

*Swift-footed Achilles*

*God-like*

In poetry, these epithets also served a poetic function. Poets like the Homer or Sappho could use standard stock-descriptions during spontaneous performance to flesh out a line if they forgot some bit as they recited a verse, or use them as mnemonic bridges to the next section of the poem. Additionally, when trying to create verse like dactylic hexameter, poets would use epithets because they served as appealing "filler" to complete the last few necessary syllables in a line. Often, the Greek or Roman epithets were perfectly suitable for inserting in either a three-syllable or six syllable section of poetry, so a single hexameter or two hexameters were always available in the poetic toolbox. Here are some common epithets we've taken from Walter Burkert's Greek Religion (Cambridge, 2003):

**Epithets for Aphrodite:**

Aphrodite Urania-Aphrodite the heavenly

Aphrodite the Golden

**Epithets for Demeter:**

Demeter Epaine-Awesome Demeter

Demeter Karpophoros-Demeted the fruit-bringer

**Epithets for Hermes/Mercury:**

Hermes Chthonias-Hermes,guide into the Underworld

Mercury Fortunus-Mercury,god of luck

**Epithets for Poseidon:**

Poseidon Hippios-Poseidon,creator of horses

Poseidon Petraios-The rock Poseidon

**Epithets for Zeus:**

Zeus the Storm-gatherer

Zeus the Shepherd of the Clouds

**Epithets for Hera:**

Hera Teleia-Hera as watcher over the ultimate goal of marriage

Hera Zygia-Hera,protector of lawful marriage.

An epithet is a literary device that describes a person, place, or object by accompanying or replacing it with a descriptive word or phrase.<sup>1</sup> The word “epithet” comes from the Greek word “epitheton” (neuter of “epithetos”) which translates to “added” or “attributed.”

Once an epithet is introduced, it’s often repeated throughout a piece of writing to create a sense of familiarity for the reader. Epithets also commonly appear next to or in place of a person’s name like a nickname such as Catherine the Great, Ivan the Terrible, Alexander the Great, and Richard the Lionheart.

Known by the Latin term epitheton necessarium, these epithets specify which person is being discussed. They’re common among European nobility and Greek and Roman gods and goddesses. Other examples of epithet in monarchs include French king Charles the Bald and Spanish king Philip the Pious.

In literary terms, epithets are a characteristic of Homer’s style. When he wrote his epic poems like The Odyssey, around the eighth century BC, they were intended to be experienced through hearing, not reading. Thus, in addition to being literary devices, epithets are also auditory devices. Naming people, places, and objects with epithets and repeating them helped listeners connect better to the work and made the many elements of the story easier to decipher.

Epithets make a text more meaningful. They allow writers to describe characters and settings with more vivid, figurative language and can help paint a better picture for readers using just a few words. Epithets make sentences stronger and more vibrant, especially in poetry.

Familiarize yourself with the different types of epithets and epithet examples so you can use them—or in some cases, avoid using them—more purposefully and effectively:

**Fixed epithet.** The repeated use of a word or phrase for the same person, place, or object. Also called the Homeric epithet, fixed epithets are commonly used in epic poetry. In Homer’s *Odyssey*, Odysseus is repeatedly referred to as “many-minded,” Penelope as “prudent,” and Telemachus as “sound-minded.”

**Argumentative epithet.** Epithets that hint at a warning. Argumentative epithets are commonly used by orators to suggest a possible outcome. During a speech, a lawmaker might reference the negative outcomes of a past war or skirmish, strongly hinting that something similarly bad could happen if circumstances don’t change.

**Kenning.** A specific epithet that’s a two-word phrase that metaphorically describes an object. Kennings are commonly found in Old English and Old Norse poetry. “Sky-candle” is a kenning for the sun and “bookworm” is a more modern kenning in the English language for a voracious reader.

#### How to Use Epithets Correctly

Epithets are powerful literary tools, but they aren’t always used correctly. The most successful epithets are used strategically; they captivate readers’ attention and create consistency.

One of the main ways writers misuse epithets is by choosing words that describe an emotion, not express it. For example, rather than describing someone as “demonic,” describe them as a “hell-hound” as Macduff does in Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*. “Demonic” is your emotional interpretation; “hell-hound” paints a picture, evokes strong associations, and gives your readers a reason to believe you.

Remember: many epithets are adjectives, such as “fair Ophelia” in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* or the “wine-dark sea” in Homer’s *Odyssey*. But according to the definition of epithet—a descriptive word or phrase that replaces a person, place, or object—not all adjectives are epithets. Epithets require careful thought and strategy, and when used wisely, they will create an association in your audience’s minds that will stick with them. Epithets are one of the main lexical stylistic devices. Epithets are used in literature, and even everyday speech, yet you may not realize it. The novelty of our work is that the epithet is inspected as the necessary component of the functional whole-text; the investigation of metaphorical epithet, from the position of intentional and implicational components of meaning.

From the theoretical point of view this work presents the comprehensive study of epithet that makes it possible to reveal its linguo-stylistic and functional features.

The research of structural characteristics of epithet and revealing its role in text formation makes the certain contribution to a further work in linguistic text.

Nowadays, Journalists often use epithets to indoctrinate the readers toward a positive or negative train of thought while avoiding running the risk of appearing to editorialize a person or a subject. Take, for example, "Reality Star Phaedra Parks," "Oscar Nominee Leonardo DiCaprio," or "Tennis Champion Serena Williams." Each of these epithets leads the reader to think about the subject in very specific way. epithet stylistic literature teaching

Paying attention to epithets can help us identify propaganda and hype, letting us from our own opinions in a more deliberate way.

The epithet represents one of stylistic devices, embodying with expressivity the literary speech. The term "epithet" belongs to a number of the most ancient philological terms intended for the description of means of expression, which are used by authors of literary texts.

Since antiquity the epithet is meant as the expressive definition characterizing a subject or the phenomenon. At the same time in the philological tradition, which is going back to antiquity it was accepted to distinguish "necessary epithets" which gave information on a subject, which is not presented in the text, and "garnishing epithets", not bearing new subject and logical information, however influencing feelings of the readers.

Thus, A. A. Potebnya and a number of his followers, such as D. N. Ovsyaniko-Kulikovsky and A. A. Zelenetsky in their works opposed the "poetic" and "prosaic" speech, and, respectively, the figurative speech and not figurative: "Symbolism of the language, apparently, can be called its poetry; on the contrary, oblivion of an internal form seems to us prose of the word" [3, p.174]. Therefore A. A. Zelenetsky distinguished the words "prosaic", "which sound form serves only as a sign, a symbol of the known concept or representation also doesn't cause for us any image" and "poetic", "which pronunciation causes for us an image, concrete representation, other than that which makes a lexical meaning of the word" [4, p.33]. According to A. A. Zelenetsky, epithets belong to poetic group of words, confirming the thought with the fact that "without bringing, mostly, anything new in our consciousness, they only put forward one of the qualities inherent in a subject, and at once channelize these defined to work of our consciousness at reproduction of representations, considerably facilitating that understanding of someone else's speech"

Thus, epithets are considered, first of all, as "garnishing epithets", definitions, superfluous from the point of view of the message of new information, however helping perception of already given information. On the other hand, A. A. Potebnya, as well as his followers, expressed confidence that poetic, figurative speech is primary, and the prosaic speech – secondary. Thanks to works of these researchers the problem of an epithet has been also comprehended as a historical problem, demanding the analysis not only from the point of view of abstract expressiveness of this or that text,

but also how this means of expression was used during various eras and in various cultures what place it took in system of means of expression

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