

Types and Functions of Syntactical Stylistic Devices: One member sentence, Ellipsis, Inversion, Rhetorical Question.

One-member sentences

As has already been stated not every sentence comprises two principal parts — subject and predicate. There are sentences consisting only of one member. Such sentences are called one- member sentences. As the subject and the predicate are correlative notions, the leading member of a one-member sentence can only conditionally be interpreted as subject or predicate.

One-member sentences consisting of a noun or a noun with its attributes are called nominative sentences (номинативные предложения). The existence of the object denoted by the noun is asserted in these sentences:

The sky, the flowers, the songs of birds! (Galsworthy.) Another day of fog. (London.)

These sentences always refer to the present. They are uttered with an especially expressive intonation.

Nominative sentences

Nominative sentences differ from elliptical sentences with a suppressed verbal predicate in that they do not contain any secondary parts which might be connected with a verbal predicate. If we analyze the following sentences — A small but cosy room; in the background a little writing table; to the left a sofa — we see that only the first is a one-member sentence containing a noun with its attributes; the two other sentences are elliptical because the prepositional phrases in the background and to the left are adverbial expressions of place which may refer only to a suppressed verbal predicate. It is true that in a different context the very same prepositional phrases might serve as attributes to some noun (The table in the background was a writing table. The house to the left is a hospital), but that is not the case in our examples, where the adverbial character of the two phrases is quite evident.

Imperative sentences

Imperative sentences with the predicate verb in the imperative mood also belong to one-member sentences. Although the subject of the imperative sentence is not expressed, it is clear that the action of the verb refers to the 2nd person (the person addressed.) “Come here!” said the man with the wooden leg... (Dickens.) “Don’t wait for me.” (Galsworthy.) “Don’t laugh at me, Tom,” said Maggie in a passionate tone... (Eliot.) “Bring me that cigarette case...” (Wilde.)

When the subject is occasionally expressed, the imperative sentence is a two-member sentence:

“Don’t you believe him.” (M a u g h a m.)

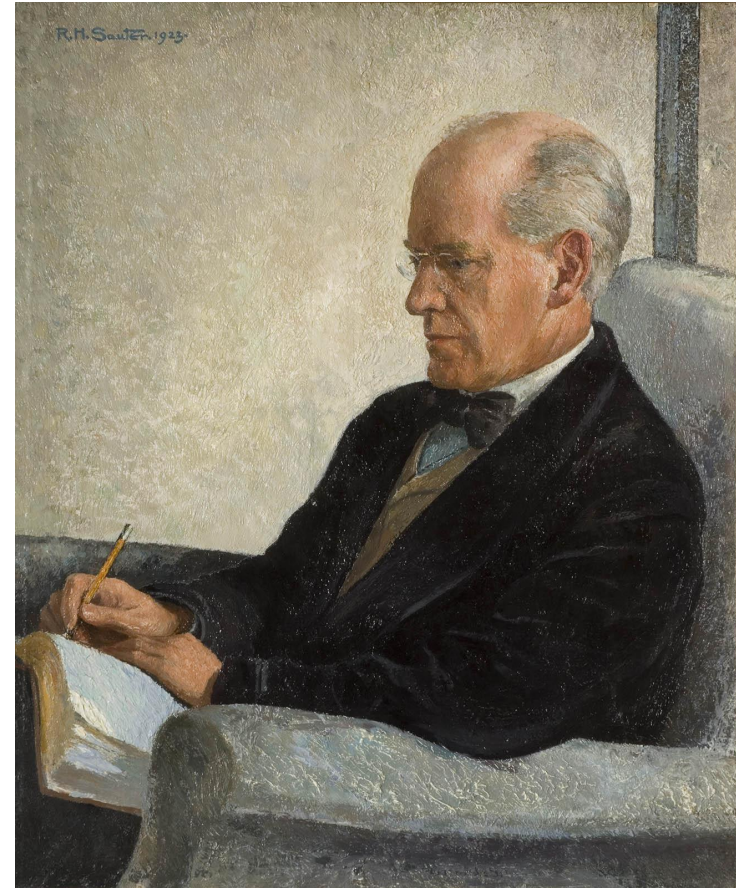
Emotionally coloured sentences

One-member sentences may comprise an infinitive in the function of its leading member. Such sentences are usually emotionally coloured:

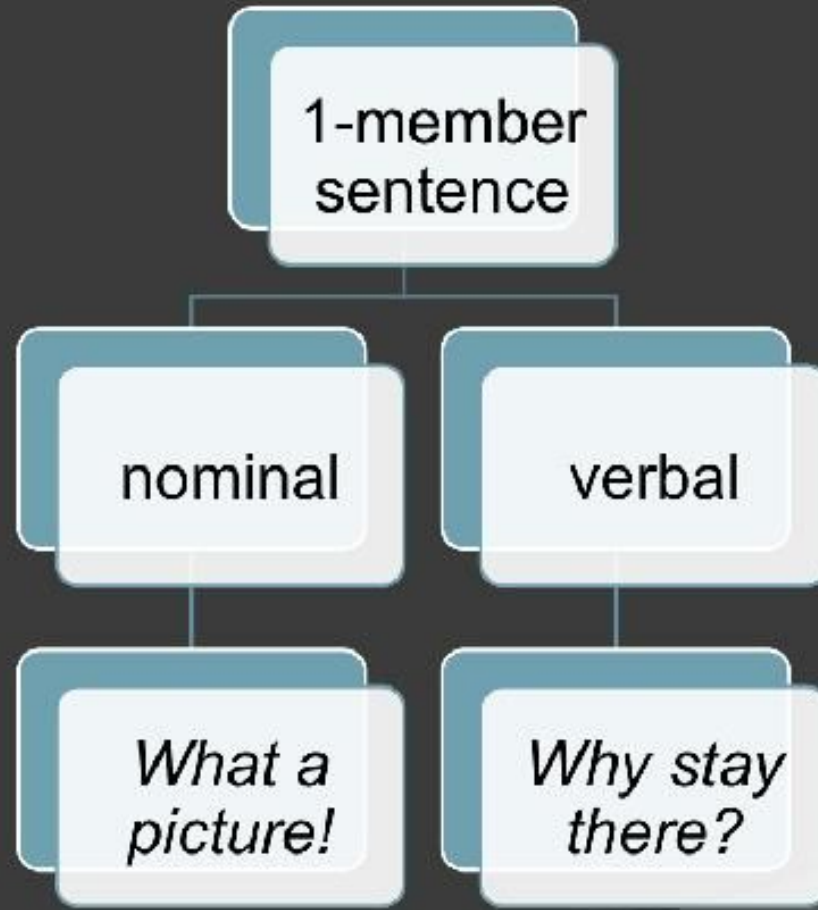
“To put a child in that position!” (Galsworthy.)
Only to think of it! (Galsworthy.)

Also in:

Why not go there immediately? How tell him!
(Galsworthy.) How keep definite direction
without a compass, in the dark! (Galsworthy.)



One-member sentences



Definition of Ellipsis

Ellipsis is the omission of a word or series of words. There are two slightly different definitions of ellipsis which are pertinent to literature. The first definition of ellipsis is the commonly used series of three dots, which can be placed at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end of a sentence or clause. These three dots can stand in for whole sections of text that are omitted that do not change the overall meaning. The dots can also indicate a mysterious or unfinished thought, a leading sentence, or a pause or silence. This punctuation is also referred to as a suspension point, points of ellipsis, periods of ellipsis, or in speech may be called, “dot-dot-dot.”

Common Examples of Ellipsis

The usage of three dots as an ellipsis is incredibly popular in texting and social media in this day and age. Many people use ellipses to signal confusion, disapproval, hesitation, or to show more is to come when writing in a chat-based application (indeed, some messaging applications use the image of three dots to show that the other person is typing). People also use ellipses in the previously defined way of showing that their thoughts are unfinished or that they are expecting a response from their interlocutors. Here are some examples of ellipsis that you might recognize or have used yourself:

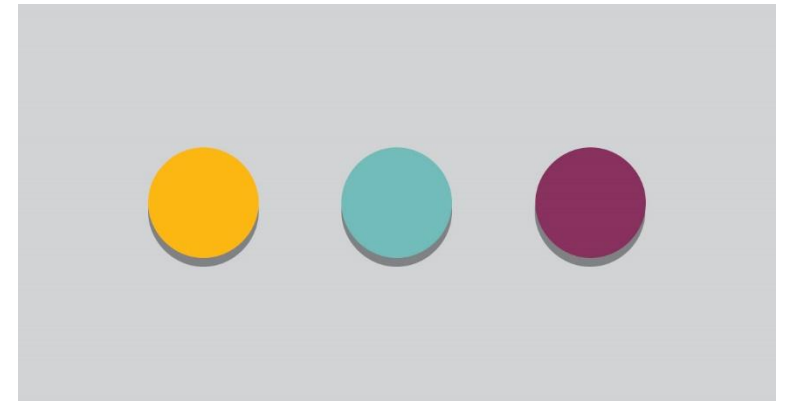
So...what happened?

Um...I'm not sure that's true.

...sure.

You went to the restaurant. And...?

But I thought we were meeting on Tuesday...?



Examples of Ellipsis in Literature

Example #1

My aunt waited until Eliza sighed and then said:

“Ah, well, he’s gone to a better world.”

Eliza sighed again and bowed her head in assent. My aunt fingered the stem of her wine-glass before sipping a little.

“Did he...peacefully?” she asked.

“Oh, quite peacefully, ma’am,” said Eliza. “You couldn’t tell when the breath went out of him. He had a beautiful death, God be praised.”

“And everything...?”

“Father O’Rourke was in with him a Tuesday and anointed him and prepared him and all.”

(“The Sisters” from Dubliners by James Joyce)



Example #2

“Come to lunch someday,” [Mr. McKee] suggested, as we groaned down in the elevator.

“Where?”

“Anywhere.”

“Keep your hands off the lever,” snapped the elevator boy.

“I beg your pardon,” said Mr. McKee with dignity, “I didn’t know I was touching it.”

“All right,” I agreed, “I’ll be glad to.”

... I was standing beside his bed and he was sitting up between the sheets, clad in his underwear, with a great portfolio in his hands.

“Beauty and the Beast...Loneliness...Old Grocery House...Brook’n Bridge....”

Then I was lying half asleep in the cold lower level of the Pennsylvania Station, staring at the morning Tribune, and waiting for the four o’clock train.

(The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald)



Definition of Inversion

As a literary device, inversion refers to the reversal of the syntactically correct order of subjects, verbs, and objects in a sentence. This type of inversion is also known as anastrophe, from the Greek for “to turn back.” In English there is a fairly strict order in which sentences are constructed, generally subject-verb-object (many other languages permit more arrangements of the parts of a sentence). For example, it’s syntactically correct to say, “Yesterday I saw a ship.” An inversion of this sentence could be “Yesterday saw I a ship,” or “Yesterday a ship I saw.”

Common Examples of Inversion

We use inversion fairly frequently in everyday speech when wanting to place emphasis on a certain word. For example, if someone asked you how you felt and you were feeling particularly good, you might say, “Wonderful is the way I feel.” Here are some other examples of inversion a person might say:

Shocked, I was.

Tomorrow will come the decision.

How amazing this is.

INVERSION

The auxiliary verb comes before the subject in several different structures. This is usually referred to as "inversion". Inversion is a literary technique in which the normal order of words is reversed, generally for emphasis or special effect. It makes a sentence sound striking or unusual. It also sounds quite formal.

When do we use inversion?

In question forms.	Is Sacramento the capital of California?
When we use a negative adverb or adverb phrase at the beginning of the sentence.	Hardly had I closed my door when I realised I had lost the keys. Rarely has he got mark 10 in Math.
In these expressions, the inversion comes in the	Not until I asked a passer-by did I know where I was.

Examples of Inversion in Literature

Example #1

Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimmed,
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance, or nature's changing course
untrimmed: So long as men can breathe, or
eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.
("Sonnet 18" by William Shakespeare)



Example #2

GLOUCESTER: Now is the winter of our discontent

Made glorious summer by this sun of York;
And all the clouds that lour'd upon our house

In the deep bosom of the ocean buried.

(Richard III by William Shakespeare)

This is an example of inversion as anacalasis. In this famous speech from William Shakespeare's Richard III, the very first line that Gloucester pronounces carries a case in which the stress is in an unexpected place. Though the majority of the lines are in iambic pentameter, the very first metrical foot is a trochee (one stressed syllable followed by one unstressed syllable). This inversion thus places special emphasis on the word "Now."



Definition of Rhetorical Question

A rhetorical question is a question that is asked not to get an answer, but instead to emphasize a point. The word “rhetorical” signifies that the question is meant as a figure of speech. Though no answer is necessary for rhetorical questions, they are often used to elicit thought and understanding on the part of the listener or reader.

Rhetorical Questions
A rhetorical question is one that does not require an answer.

It is used to make a point, rather than to find out information.
Can't you do anything right?

They can also be used to start a discussion, when the question is too difficult to answer simply.
What did the Romans ever do for us?

Rhetorical questions can also create a certain tone to a piece of writing e.g. sarcasm.
Going to bed late will leave you feeling tired in the morning. Who knew?

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Common Examples of Rhetorical Question

There are many examples of rhetorical questions in famous speeches. Orators often use rhetorical questions to emphasize an important point or to prompt listeners to imagine the answer. One of the most famous examples of this strategy is from Sojourner Truth's speech "Ain't I a woman?":

That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain't I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I have ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man – when I could get it – and bear the lash as well! And ain't I a woman? I have borne thirteen children, and seen most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain't I a woman?

—Sojourner Truth, speech delivered at 1851 Women's Convention in Akron, Ohio

Examples of Rhetorical Question in Literature

Example #1

JULIET: Tis but thy name that is my enemy;

Thou art thyself, though not a Montague.

What's Montague? it is nor hand, nor foot,

Nor arm, nor face, nor any other part

Belonging to a man. O, be some other name!

What's in a name? that which we call a rose

By any other name would smell as sweet...

(Romeo and Juliet by William Shakespeare)

Shakespeare used many rhetorical questions in his plays and poems. In these rhetorical question examples, Juliet wonders aloud the meaning of a name. She is not asking for an answer, but instead emphasizing the frustration she has that it is only a name that separates her from her greatest love.



Example #2

Yossarian attended the education sessions because he wanted to find out why so many people were working so hard to kill him. A handful of other men were also interested, and the questions were many and good when Clevinger and the subversive corporal finished and made the mistake of asking if there were any.

“Who is Spain?”

“Why is Hitler?”

“When is right?”

(Catch-22 by Joseph Heller)

This example of rhetorical question is meant to highlight the absurdity of war. The character of Clevinger asks if there are any questions, and the soldiers in Yossarian's troop ask questions for which there are no answers. They do this to irritate the men who are higher in command, but also to bring attention to the fact that nothing ever really makes sense during wartime, and the reality of their lives is just as absurd as their questions.



Thank you for your attention!

