

Apostrophe

In literature, apostrophe is a figure of speech sometimes represented by exclamation “O”. A writer or a speaker, using an apostrophe, detaches himself from the reality and addresses an imaginary character in his speech.

It is important not to confuse the apostrophe which is a figure of speech and the apostrophe which is a punctuation mark (‘). It shows possession or a mark to indicate omission of one or more letters (contractions) while apostrophe used in literature is an arrangement of words addressing a non-existent person or an abstract idea in such a way as if it were present and capable of understanding feelings.

William Shakespeare makes use of an apostrophe in his play “Macbeth”:

“Is this a dagger which I see before me,
The handle toward my hand?
Come, let me clutch thee!
I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.”

In his mental conflict before murdering King Duncan, Macbeth has a strange vision of a dagger and talks to it as if it were another person.

Example #2

Jane Taylor uses apostrophe in the well-known nursery rhyme “The Star”:

“Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are.
Up above the world so high,

Like a diamond in the sky.”

In the above nursery rhyme, a child addresses a star (an imaginary idea). Hence, this is a classic example of apostrophe.

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