

## Plato's Allegory of the Cave Bellringer & Notes

In Peg O'Connor's article "In the Cave: Philosophy and Addiction," she compares the prisoners in Plato's "Allegory" to individuals addicted to their drug of choice. In this way, O'Connor implies that Plato's "Allegory" offers the potential for better understanding of real life issues. Write a carefully reasoned, persuasive essay that demonstrates that Plato can be applied to our lives today. Use evidence from your observation, experience, and reading to support your argument.

### Thesis Practice: (Options/suggestions)

- Although what \_\_\_\_\_ says about \_\_\_\_\_ may be true in some cases, her position fails to take \_\_\_\_\_ in to account. A closer look at \_\_\_\_\_ reveals \_\_\_\_\_.
- \_\_\_\_\_'s passage is extremely applicable in that \_\_\_\_\_.

## Parallel Structures

Sentences or parts of a sentence are parallel when structures within them take the same form. Parallelism is important at the level of the word, the phrase, and the clause.

### Words

Why should we live with such hurry and waste of life?

— HENRY DAVID THOREAU

In this sentence, the words **hurry** and **waste**, both nouns, follow the preposition **with**; **hurry** and **waste** are parallel.

In eternity there is indeed something true and sublime.

— HENRY DAVID THOREAU

In this sentence, the words **true** and **sublime**, both adjectives, modify the pronoun **something**; **true** and **sublime** are parallel.

### Phrases

Men esteem truth remote, in the outskirts of the system behind the farthest star, before Adam and after the last man.

— HENRY DAVID THOREAU

To modify the adjective **remote** in this first sentence, Thoreau uses parallel prepositional phrases: **in the outskirts**, **before the farthest star**, **before Adam**, and **after the last man**.

More difficult because there is no zeitgeist to read, no template to follow, no mask to wear.

— ANNA QUINDLEN

And in the preceding sentence, Anna Quindlen uses three parallel nouns each preceded by **no** and each followed by an infinitive: **no zeitgeist to read**, **no template to follow**, and **no mask to wear**.

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## Clauses

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“Where I Lived, and What I Lived For”

— Title of an essay by HENRY DAVID THOREAU

The title of Thoreau’s essay consists of two parallel dependent, or subordinate, clauses; one begins with **where**, and the other begins with **what**.

[W]e perceive that only great and worthy things have any permanent and absolute existence, that petty fears and petty pleasures are but the shadow of the reality.

— HENRY DAVID THOREAU

The preceding example contains two parallel dependent clauses, each beginning with **that** and functioning as an object of the verb **perceive**.

If we are really dying, let us hear the rattle in our throats and feel cold in the extremities; if we are alive, let us go about our business.

— HENRY DAVID THOREAU

This example begins with a dependent clause (**If . . . dying**) followed by an independent, or main, clause (**let . . . extremities**); then, after the semicolon, Thoreau presents another dependent-independent construction, parallel to the first.

## Lack of Parallelism

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To fully appreciate the power of the parallelism created by Thoreau and Quindlen in the preceding examples, consider what happens when supposedly equal elements of a sentence do not follow the same grammatical or syntactical form—that is, when they are not parallel with each other.

Why should we live with such hurry and to waste life?

This version of Thoreau’s sentence tries to modify the verb **should live** by coordinating a prepositional phrase, **with such hurry**, with an infinitive phrase, **to waste life**. The two phrases are not parallel with each other, and as a result, the sentence lacks balance and force.

Parallelism can be tricky when the elements—words, phrases, or clauses—are separated by modifiers or other syntactical elements. The following sentence may not at first glance seem to lack parallelism:

It [the process of friendships fading] was sweet and sad and, though you’d rarely admit it, a necessity.

# Some examples of parallel structure include zeugma, antithesis, and anaphora.

Each of the following sentences is an example of parallelism. Identify the type of parallelism, explain its effect, and then model a sentence of your own on the example.

1. To spend too much time in studies is sloth; to use them too much for ornament is affectation; to make judgment wholly by their rules is the humour of a scholar. — FRANCIS BACON
2. Alas, art is long, and life is short. — BENJAMIN FRANKLIN
3. Flowers are as common here . . . as people are in London. — OSCAR WILDE
4. Where justice is denied, where poverty is enforced, where ignorance prevails, and where any one class is made to feel that society is in an organized conspiracy to oppress, rob, and degrade them, neither persons nor property will be safe. — FREDERICK DOUGLASS
5. He carried a strobe light and the responsibility for the lives of his men. — TIM O'BRIEN