
ONOMATOPOEIA

What Is Onomatopoeia? – Meaning and Definition

Onomatopoeia is a figure of speech that uses words to describe the sounds made by all living things including people, animals, birds and all inanimate objects. The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms explains onomatopoeia as “the formation of a word from a sound associated with what is named (e.g. cuckoo, sizzle)” and according to the Oxford Learner’s Dictionary, onomatopoeia is defined as “the fact of words containing sounds similar to the noises they describe”.

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines onomatopoeia as “the naming of a thing or action by a vocal imitation of the sound associated with it (such as buzz, hiss)” and according to the Cambridge Dictionary, it is defined as “the act of creating or using words that include sounds that are similar to the noises the words refer to”.

How to Identify and Use Onomatopoeia? – Points to Remember

As already discussed, the usage of words to describe any sound that is created by a living being, a non-living object or entity is termed onomatopoeia. In some cases, the sound itself is used as the word. For example, ‘meow’ is the sound made by a cat and the onomatopoeic word to mention the sound of cats is also meow. Onomatopoeia can be identified easily. The only thing you will have to look for is see if the word denotes a sound.

Examples of Onomatopoeia

Here are a few examples of onomatopoeia from literature, movies and songs for your reference.

Examples of Onomatopoeia from Literature

E.g. 1

- “While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a *tapping*,
As of someone gently *rapping*, rapping at my chamber door.
“Tis some visitor,” I *muttered*, “tapping at my chamber door—
Only this and nothing more.” (‘The Raven’ by Edgar Allen Poe)

E.g. 2

- “Hark, hark!
Bow-wow.

The watch-dogs *bark!*

Bow-wow.

Hark, hark! I hear

The strain of struggling chanticleer

Cry, '*cock-a-diddle-dow!*'" ('The Tempest' by William Shakespeare)

List of Onomatopoeic Words

Here is a table of words you can add to your vocabulary.

Bow	Meow	Chirp	Rattle	Cling
Ting	Clap	Croak	Neigh	Mumble
Clang	Buzz	Burp	Boo	Boom
Giggle	Clatter	Murmur	Whisper	Snort
Knock	Crinkle	Crack	Fizz	Drip
Hiccup	Ding a ling	Whiff	Belch	Thud
Flick	Tweet	Whimper	Tick tock	Pop
Screech	Squeal	Hiss	Sigh	Bleat
Crunch	Grunt	Sniff	Swish	Slam
Quack	Bark	Bash	Howl	Purr
Toot	Whine	Yell	Yelp	Whack
Zing	Pitter patter	Hoot	Groan	Growl